

WESTMINSTER PULPIT

by Campbell G. Morgan

G. Campbell Morgan's expository sermons delivered at Westminster Chapel, London, showcasing his renowned method of opening Scripture with clarity and spiritual depth.

262 Chapters

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Introduction

Introduction

For forty years, beginning in the first decade of our century, the entire Christian world acknowledged that the greatest Biblical expositor known in the pulpits of both England and America was Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. As far back as 1896, when Dr. Morgan was only thirty-three years old, D. L. Moody, who knew most of the great preachers of the Western world, brought him to the Moody Bible Institute to lecture. In 1904, at the age of forty-one, Dr. Morgan went to London to begin the most epochal ministry of Biblical exposition, covering a thirteen-year period, that London had witnessed for a century. I am speaking here strictly of Biblical exposition, not simply preaching or Gospel preaching, though Dr. Morgan could preach the Gospel with tremendous power. I am fully aware that for many years Charles H. Spurgeon drew larger crowds and that Canon Liddon was recognized as the greatest preacher of London in his day (his ministry at St. Paul's having closed a few years before Dr. Morgan came) and that there was a certain brilliance about Joseph Parker (whose ministry at City Temple also closed just before Dr. Morgan came to Westminster Chapel); but I must say that for sheer Biblical exposition Dr. Morgan stood above all of his contemporaries.

It was not long before Westminster Chapel, seating some 2,500 persons, was filled to the second gallery. Soon after coming to London Dr. Morgan began his famous Friday night Bible class, probably the largest and most fruitful Bible class London had ever seen, when, week after week, with note-books and Bibles, from 1,500 to 1,700 people moved across that great city to sit for an hour at the feet of this master teacher.

Dr. Morgan began to publish books as early as 1897, when thirty-four years of age, with his little book, *Discipleship*. In 1903 appeared what is probably his greatest work, *The Crises of the Christ*—a volume that every minister should read and study early in his life as a preacher. Altogether, more than seventy volumes came from his pen. The greatest series of pulpit messages for which he was responsible are those which appeared in what was entitled, "The Westminster Pulpit." These appeared annually for about forty Sundays each year from 1906 to 1916. Here are the foundations of many of Dr. Morgan's books. These volumes contain some of the greatest Biblical preaching of the twentieth century. Now they are exceedingly scarce. In twenty years I have known only one volume of the series to appear in any catalogue of secondhand books. The set just cannot be purchased. The Fleming H. Revell Company, therefore, deserves the deepest gratitude of all ministers of our generation for making these glorious messages available once again.

In rereading these messages and remembering the unique ministry of Dr. Morgan, one cannot help but ask, "What made G. Campbell Morgan the greatest Bible expositor of his day? Why was it that in his prime he could draw more people with sheer Biblical exposition than any other man in the Western world?" In the first place, he gave himself utterly to the Word of God day and night. He himself said in 1937, "I began to read and study the Bible in 1883, and I have been a student

ever since, and I still am." Once he told a close friend that when he was asked by young ministers what was the secret of his success, he replied, "I always say to them the same thing—work, hard work, work." The title of one of his greatest books, *The Ministry of the Word*, might be taken as the clue to all he did.

I have always felt that of all the various gifts named in the New Testament Dr. Morgan possessed two: he was both teacher and prophet. In addition, there was something about his public ministry that we can only call magnetic, which Jill Morgan (Mrs. K. J. Morgan), in the truly great life of her father-in-law, *A Man of the Word*, refers to as "the intangible atmosphere of union between teacher and taught." Still vivid in my mind are those winter afternoons in Baltimore, now a quarter of a century past, when I heard Dr. Morgan unfold the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel: we felt a tenseness, a magnetic pull, a lift, an atmosphere saturated with terrific intensity; our souls were confronted with eternal and transforming truths that sent us out of that sanctuary cleansed, ennobled and determined to go back to the Book. I have been moved by others, in one way or another, but no Bible teacher in the world, in the twentieth century, could cast over his audience, without flash, without show, that mystic spell that Campbell Morgan cast when he was at his best. In reverence, I think it can be truly said that after attending one of Dr. Campbell Morgan's meetings, a most appropriate comment would have been to quote the words of the two disciples returning to Jerusalem from the walk to Emmaus with our Lord, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

This very day in which I am writing this introduction a letter came to my desk from a faithful Christian worker of years of service in our country who had gone to a Bible Conference for greatly needed spiritual refreshing, but had found only a deadness in the meetings and the poorest kind of spiritual food, which led this servant to ask, "What is happening in the Christian Church today?" How wonderful it would be if the republication of Campbell Morgan's masterly, moving, Biblical, passion-born messages should be used of God to lead hundreds of ministers into a new life of the study of the Word of God, if they could be led to say, with the Apostles of old, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

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The Origin Of The Westminster Pulpit

The Origin Of The Westminster Pulpit

When Dr. G. Campbell Morgan commenced his unique ministry at Westminster Chapel in 1904 there was an immediate request for the publication of his sermons in order to extend the influence of his ministry.

On most of the Sundays in the year, Dr. Campbell Morgan would preach morning and evening sermons. As only one could be published weekly, the plan adopted was that each week Dr. Morgan would select the sermon most likely to be of world-wide interest and influence, and have it available in print at the close of each service on the following Sunday and for those attending the Friday evening Bible school.

In this way, the Westminster Pulpit sermons were given a wide circulation, and, in addition, through a subscribers' list, they found their way through the mail into all parts of the world. At the close of each year a large number of bound volumes were produced and published under the title of The Westminster Pulpit, which had a ready sale.

The value of these volumes is best understood if it is remembered that from the day when inquiries had to be answered, "out of print," requests have come from all parts of the globe for second-hand copies. And from those fortunate enough to obtain a single volume there has invariably come an inquiry regarding the cost of the remaining volumes of the set. The undersigned, who was largely responsible for the task of publishing The Westminster Pulpit, has in his library a complete series of this work, for which he has had many offers, without regard to price.

Dr. Campbell Morgan excelled in the art of expository preaching. It was his conviction that no minister would ever lack a congregation who adopted the expository rather than the topical method of preaching. In these volumes, which are being reissued after careful selection, the art of expository preaching is magnificently displayed in sermons covering a wide range of Biblical subjects.

I verily believe that those who obtain the first of the proposed ten volumes will not rest until they have secured the complete set; indeed, I strongly advise that the whole set be bespoke. I further believe that in launching and carrying out this project Fleming H. Revell Company will be making a valuable contribution to the greatest of all causes, the extension of the Kingdom of God.

Arthur E. Marsh

Westminster Chapel,

London, England

Genesis 1:1. "In The Beginning God".

Genesis 1:1.

"In The Beginning God".

In the beginning God....

Genesis 1:1

I am quite conscious that the text is not a complete statement. It does not give us the full affirmation of the writer, but it reveals his assumption; and the affirmation is valueless apart from this assumption. To the affirmation itself, I do not propose to give anything more than passing reference by way of illustration of the larger subject suggested by and included in the assumption, "In the beginning God."

That phrase takes us beyond the seen to the unseen, behind the sensual to the spiritual, beneath the passing to the permanent, before the temporal to the eternal.

If then, I am charged with mutilating a text, I shall reply that the murder of the letter is in this case deliberate in order to the liberation of the spirit.

Let us consider the general spirit or atmosphere into which we are brought by these words. They constitute, first, the recognition of a starting-point. The phrase may have reference to matters of time or of place, to the subject of order or of rank. If you think of time, "In the beginning." If you think of place, "In the beginning." If you think of order, consecutive and regular movement, and progress, "In the beginning." If you think of rank, dignity, position, precedence, "In the beginning." This recognition of a starting-point is in perfect and absolute harmony with science.

The phrase is also the recognition of a cause; and the cause is written for us here in that old Teutonic form which defies the attempt of philologists to place it or explain it, "God." On the page of the Hebrew Bible the word is Elohim, the plural form of El. The word stands essentially and simply for might. There are three numbers in the Hebrew—singular, dual, and plural; and the plural is constantly made use of to indicate intensity. When some thought possessing the mind of a writer could not be expressed for very greatness by the singular number, he would employ the plural.

That in this connection is the suggestiveness of the word Elohim. It is used here not to define nature, or to unveil character; not even to solve the mystery of personality; it is used rather to indicate the recognition of a cause at the beginning of time, place, order, or rank. The phrase thus recognizes a Being separate from everything hereafter to be described, and yet sufficient for everything hereafter to be described.

If the recognition of a starting-point indicated by the words "In the beginning" is in perfect harmony with science, the recognition of a separate, sufficient cause transcends the demonstration of science. Science has never yet found its way to the honest possibility of making the declaration with which this Book of Genesis opens. Science has at times been compelled to say there must be

a first cause: but there is a very distinct difference between that affirmation and this "In the beginning God created." The one is the admission of an apparent though not demonstrated necessity on the part of men of sincere investigation; but the other is the quiet, dignified affirmation of a Person and a fact. Thus the Divine Library in its present arrangement opens with a phrase which is a voice from without, speaking to the depths within, and its message when perfectly and earnestly considered is found to be in harmony with everything around.

Here is no apology for God, no argument for God, no defence of God, but the opening affirmation, which for the moment may be received as an affirmation and not necessarily believed; then, as we take our way through page after page, and book after book, of the library, it will be for us to say, when that work is completed, whether the revelation of the library, the revelation of the facts and forces within and around us, harmonizes with the great opening assumption of the Book, "In the beginning God."

It is not my purpose this evening to defend the accuracy of this assumption. I accept it as true, and, proceeding from that standpoint, submit that it is axiomatic, that courses and consummations must be related to causes. If I can find a beginning, then that which begins must inevitably in all its course and in its consummation bear some relation to that which was its cause. The deduction in the present case is self-evident. If this opening affirmation of the Word of God be true concerning creation, concerning the Library itself, concerning man, that the first originating cause is God, then there surely can be no escape from the fact that all the course of creation, all the course of the Divine Library, all the course of man, that crowning fact and wonder of Creation, must inevitably be in some form or fashion, in some way or other related to the original cause; and that the consummation of creation, of the Divine Library, and of man must also be related to that originating cause, God.

Thus we are confronted in this first verse in the first book in the Divine Library with a fundamental truth that has its bearing on all life, "In the beginning God." At the back of all the forces in the midst of which we live, forces blossoming in beauty, moving in rhythmic order, even startling us by their differentiations and changes and new manifestations and developments; at the back of everything is God. Therefore, all these forces, in their movements and in their working, and in what they produce, are related to God, and are moving toward a consummation which must in some way be related to Him.

Let us then attempt to give ourselves first to some considerations, and finally to some applications.

Let us consider our phrase in its relation to the actual affirmation of the writer, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Let me quietly, earnestly, and solemnly warn my young friends especially that in the study of the Bible we need to disabuse our minds of all human interpretations, ever remembering that not what the Fathers thought, or the schoolmen taught, or the theologians held, is necessarily true; but what the Word itself declares. The first fact declared concerning the creation is that the potential stuff—call it matter, if you will—is God-created. For the moment we are not considering the process by which the work was done, nor the processes which followed that initial act of God, through which the thing first made has come to be the things we now know and touch. The fundamental declaration, that with which I am now dealing, is that "In the beginning God created."

What is your particular theory of the origin of the things in the midst of which you live? Do you believe still that this universe came into being suddenly; that God, by some sudden, immediate act, made everything as you find it? I dismiss that as being utterly out of harmony with the first chapter of Genesis. Or, do you say, I have been compelled to the acceptance of what is known as the evolutionary theory? Then remember that the evolutionary theory postulates perpetual beginnings. What is its last product? Its last product is something self-evident. Whence came it? It is the product of something lower. Whence came that? From something lower still. Whence came that? From something still lower. In each case there was a new beginning; call it differentiation if you will. It was a new start, a fresh development, a coming of the new out of the old. Trace this process back and back, and where will you end? Thirty years ago the scientist would have told you, in the primordial protoplasmic germ. The scientist now says nothing of the kind; he whispers electrons, and then speaks of a psychological fact beyond. The scientist, with honest integrity and splendid heroism tracking his way back, finds ever a beginning proceeding out of something which also has a beginning, until at last he arrives where there is no place on which to step off; his last word has been said, and, beyond, the scientist of today tells us he hears whispers, thunders of mind, and is conscious of psychological mysteries. In that strange, magnificent gap my text stands, and out of it comes the word "In the beginning God." Let that be granted, and that which I have already declared to be axiomatic follows. All the developments, all the processes are related to that first cause from which everything sprang. All that which science has discovered is the method of God. Between the first and second verses of this chapter there is a great gap, so great that we cannot bridge it, a mystery so dark that we cannot explain it. "The earth was waste and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." That is not how God made it. That is not the suggestion of the first verse. The suggestion of the first verse is that of perfection, harmony, a cosmic order. What happened between the first and second verses? I do not know. There is no solution anywhere in the Word of God; but God did not create a waste. La Place's theory of nebulae is exploded. He declared that everything might be explained as proceeding out of nebulae; but when Rosse turned his reflector upon those cloudy masses, which even Herschel had described as nebulae, and had scientifically declared as impossible of resolution into order, they were seen to be perfected systems of stars. The first verse of the Bible declares that God did originally create, and from the third verse to the end of the chapter we have the account, not of original creation, but of the restoration of a lost order, the bringing of cosmos out of chaos. How the chaos happened none can tell, for the Bible has no whisper of the secret, and science has as yet not attempted an explanation, perhaps because it has not recognized the fact. Yet the marvel of scientific investigation is that it is going behind that chaos of the second verse, and is discovering the footprints of God in that earliest method of creation, in fossil remains which must have been lying hidden for millenniums. The testimony which it bears is that all the way, through all evolutions or devolutions, through all developments or progress, God Who started has accompanied. Paul, speaking of the Son of God in that marvelous Colossian passage, says not only is it true that by Him were all things created, but also that in Him all things consist, are cohesive, hold together and march forward in rank and order and rhythm toward the ultimate consummation.

If this great assumption be accepted as to the cause of creation, then the consummation is assured as being a consummation related to the God of creation and according to the purpose of the God of creation. I am not now speaking of man, but of creation itself. This Bible is not the Bible

of creation; it is the Bible of redemption, and the story that we often speak of as the story of creation is in reality the story of the starting of redemption—that is, of reconstruction. The gospel flames upon the first page of the Bible, not perhaps in the terms in which we know it, the terms of our human salvation, but in terms that reveal the heart of God. That is the thought of the second verse, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" for reconstruction, not for first creation; for renewal, not for origination. This is the gospel fact revealed to those who have eyes to see. That which he created, being ruined in some dark mystery unrevealed, He will make again a second time. Even though in this process of second making there shall come a catastrophe somehow growing out of the first, yet He will move forward toward the establishment of a new order, "Behold, I make all things new.... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." So that from the first page to the last the consummation is set in relation to the first cause; and if that first cause be God, the courses are under His command, and the consummation must harmonize with His will.

For second illustration, which of course must be dealt with in the briefest way, let us take the divine Library.

What is the story of the Bible? The cause is again the same: "In the beginning God"; holy men of old spoke, as they were moved by God.

The course of the Bible is that of the chronicling of actual events and spiritual interpretation of their meanings. As to the story of their writing I use three words—selection, advancement, incompleteness. That is true from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible is perfectly complete in its revelation of all that man needs to know; but there are things about which the Bible never says the final word; it never finally explains the mystery of the Divine Being, it never attempts the solution of the problem of evil in the universe, it never explains the part that pain is playing in the economy of God. Then it is the result of a method of selection. There has been a great dispute about the first chapter of Genesis, as to who wrote it, and how he knew what he wrote. Hugh Miller suggested, as you remember, that visions were granted to Moses or some other, in the same way as the visions in the Book of Revelation were granted to John. I should describe that as a pious hypothesis having no foundation in fact. It has been said that it is now established beyond a doubt that the man who wrote this, whether Moses or not, owed very much to Chaldean inscriptions, and we are perfectly certain that there is an element of truth in that declaration. Today we are in possession of Chaldean inscriptions in the reading of which things stated in the Book of Genesis are to be found, but it is interesting to note in passing that in no inscription yet found has the first assumption of this Book been discovered, "In the beginning God." What shall I say, then, when I am told that some of these things are found in Chaldean inscriptions, believing as I do that Moses wrote this book? I remember Moses' relation to Abraham, and I remember that Abraham came from Chaldea, and I have no doubt that he brought with him legends, traditions from Chaldea, which legends and traditions contained elements of truth, and Moses' account is the result of selection from the mass of material. The process was that of God revealing to this man the element of truth in the midst of the darkness in which he found himself. The true missionary ever comes, not to destroy but to fulfill, to find the gleam of light without which God has never yet left a people, to destroy the accretions, the things of evil that contradict the essential light. The Bible is the result of that Divine presidency over human thought through which there has been the separation of the true from the false. In poetic statement we have the account of that process by

which the chaos became the cosmos. There was reconstruction, and as I read that first page, and watch the process described, I see also the process by which man wrote the story; it was accomplished by the presidency of the Divine mind over his mind, leading him to the selection of the thing that is true from the mass of false; and the result was that he wrote in such a fashion that while millenniums have passed he who considers the story in the light of advanced science finds how absolutely accurate it is. This element of growth and development runs through the processes.

The consummation of the Bible is found in the One to Whom the Bible leads, in the central Person Who is not merely the One Who speaks the Word, but the Word of God, the expression of God, pronouncing in human history the final, inclusive truth. The Bible leads at last to the Spirit Who interprets that Word. Jesus Himself declared that the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

Our final illustration of the things suggested by this phrase is that of man; and now we may leave behind us those dim distances full of light and glory, and think within the sphere of our own personality. What is the truth about man. "In the beginning God." Every man is the creation of God. In that fact the race is unified, in spite of all its apparent division. There is nothing in all Scripture more remarkable than what may be termed an incidental word in the letter to the Hebrews, in which the writer says: "We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" It is incidental, but it is a word flaming with light showing that every individual man is related to God in his first creation, that the spirit-life of a man, which is his essential life, is not the creation of his father after the flesh, but the creation of God, the Father of the Spirit. In that spiritual fact, I repeat, lies the unity of the race, not the uniformity of the body, for we are differently formed and fashioned, not in the unanimity of the mind, for our mental outlook and temperament varies infinitely and gloriously; but in the unity of the spirit the race is united. Black and white, high and low, these are the incidental differences of the physical, and sometimes of the mental, but beneath the whole of them, unifying into the magnificent solidarity of the human race, is the spiritual nature which every man receives individually as the creation and gift of God. So that the essential truth concerning every man is, "In the beginning God." In a great and wonderful mystery, with which I cannot attempt to deal in this presence or time, God has linked Himself to the human race, so that in the creation of individuals He is forevermore in fellowship with man, even though man may have fallen and have sinned. The essential, central fact in the life of every individual is this, "In the beginning God."

If that be the true cause of every individual life, I pray you remember the course of every individual life is held in relationship to that cause. All the course is under His government. How often shall that be stated? How often shall I declare that which has become a great conviction to my soul? No man ever escapes for any five minutes of his earthly career from the government of God. A man may be in rebellion against that government, but he lives in the grip of it. By the laws of God each man is made or marred; which, depends upon his attitude toward those laws. It is impossible for humanity to separate itself from God. Take the lowest method of illustration; I breathe His air; I trample upon His earth; I derive the sustenance of the physical from the forces which have emanated from Deity; I employ mental powers which are the reflex of His own infinite knowledge; all my aspirations spring out of my spiritual being. I may degrade them, prostitute them, but they are all things which I am, and have, from God, and I cannot ultimately escape the touch of the

government and law of God, the rule of God in my life. All the course of every human life is related to the originating cause of every human life.

The consummation of every human life must therefore inevitably be related to the originating cause. No man can escape God here or hereafter. I am not now dealing with the experience of the man. Let me only say the experience of relationship may be blessing or blasting, according to whether our yielding to Him is the yielding of sane, spiritual loyalty, or our rebellion against Him is that of insane, carnal disloyalty. But escape Him we cannot; not for this evening, not for the hour in which we sin, not for the time in which we have tried to forget Him that we may indulge the passions of the flesh; never! The touch of God is on our spirits, and the hand of God is holding us even at such times. Never can I escape the originating cause, present in the course, and there in the consummation.

Already I have merged from consideration to application. Let me close by the enforcement of one or two matters. What is our relation to God as Cause? That is a fact, and there is no escape. I am His stuff. I take the old Hebrew figure of the clay in the hand of the potter; I am the potter's clay. The Hebrew figure breaks down, for no potter manipulating clay originated the clay; but this great Potter originated this clay, this stuff of my substance. The figure is a very beautiful one. Remember, the potter can never make a vessel either for use or ornament out of steel filings; he must have clay. Man is the very stuff God wants in order to accomplish His work. God is the originating Cause; man is His stuff, His design, His workmanship. These are the things from which I cannot escape. I live and move and have my being in Him, whether I will or not; the beating of my heart, the throbbing of my nerves, all these things are of Him.

If the fact of the originating Cause is settled, what shall I say concerning the course? That is forevermore the opportunity for my choice, the point of my responsibility. Write it as a motto everywhere "In the beginning God." In veiled language let me utter it in this assembly. With regard to the birthright of the bairns, fathers and mothers, "In the beginning God"! Then when the children are coming to adolescence, boys and girls, write over that sweep period, "In the beginning God." Help them to make their choices in relation to Him. Instead of asking your boy whether he has made up his mind what he wants to be, ask him if he has found out what God made him to be. A little further on, the great moment of human life, that of love's dawning, comes. Alas and alas! that we have trifled so long with the sacred subject of the love of youth and maiden. There also let us say, "In the beginning God." If the writing over that dawning wonder of love reveals something that is unlike Him, contrary to Him, banish it, though it be as dear as the right hand or right eyes. In the beginning of vocation, when looking to the future, choosing a calling in life, deciding what you will be, "In the beginning God." Then when in marriage a new world opens, you are to live no longer in your heroic and pure loneliness, but now and for tomorrow in association; then inscribe over the portal of your new home "In the beginning God," erect a family altar, and observe the same, upright recognition of God as interested in and presiding over all the affairs of home life. In other words, set the course in right relation to the Cause.

If you will, what then? Then in the consummation the relation will be one that results in crowning, in the ultimate fulfilment of life, in all spaciousness of being and of doing.

My brother, "In the beginning God," you are God-created. Submit yourself to Him so that your whole life may be God-governed, and that at last you may come to the full infolding of your own

life, and be God-crowned.

I dare not finish there. Someone is listening, and saying, "Yes, I think you are right, but it is all too late. 'In the beginning God,' but I broke His law and set Him at defiance, spoiled my chance; I am waste, void, a ruin and a wreck." Is that so? Thank God the chapter is not ended, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light." O'er the waste and ruin and wreckage is seen the brooding Spirit of God, bringing back order. So that if you say you have no chance in the first verse, you have in all the rest of the Bible that follows! He can come to you in healing restoration as surely as He came to the scarred earth in the dim and distant past, and make you fair and beautiful as His own heaven. Let him. May God help you.

Genesis 2:15-17. What Is Man?

Genesis 2:15-17.

What Is Man?

The Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:15-17

This passage of Scripture includes terms which demand the context if we are to understand them or gain the full value of the statements made. The terms "Jehovah God," "the man," "the garden," "every tree," all demand the context for interpretation.

I have selected this particular paragraph, because it presents before the mind a simple picture of primitive conditions; the picture of a virgin garden, and of a man, perfect in condition of body, mind, and spirit.

These first two chapters of Genesis deal with Divine activity. The first activity is that of primal creation. There is no description; no account of the method; and no portrayal of the final issue of that primal activity. In a brief and comprehensive declaration, the fact is broadly and inclusively stated, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What that earth was, what its form and fashion, what its peculiar characteristics, who were its inhabitants; these are things not revealed. We have no story beyond that declaration of a primal creation. Then, with startling suddenness, the whole scene suggested to the imagination is overclouded, and instead of a creation fresh and bright and beautiful, and full of splendour, we look upon the earth void and waste, desolate and dark.

Then that which is the particular story of this second chapter commences, the account of another Divine activity, the activity of God in the restoration of a lost order. We know nothing of what happened between the facts chronicled in the first verse, and those described in the second; but we have the story of reconstruction, of the renewal of a lost order. All the processes of this restoring activity of God culminated in man. Everything moved toward that consummation. Everything was in preparation for the advent of man. The coming of light, the redistribution of land and water, the restoration of the earth to its solar relationships, the creation of new forms of life, vegetable and animal; all these prepared for the coming of another; and all culminated in man.

In this paragraph which I have read, that man is seen in all the strength and beauty and simplicity of his manhood. He is seen in a garden, a garden not yet cultivated, but a garden potential, and presently, under the touch of his hand to be prolific. It is the simplest of all scenes; it is the most primitive of all pictures.

According to the teaching of these Scriptures, this man is the father of the race, the progenitor of that humanity which in the process of millenniums has multiplied and divided into the strange and bewildering complexities of races, temperaments, and accomplishments, in the midst of which we live today. We turn to the picture, that we may escape for a little from the bewilderment of the complex and find the illumination of the simple, in order that by the blessing of God we may presently return to the complexity and live therein the true life of simplicity, and make our contribution toward the working out of the Divine consummation for the human race. It is difficult to escape from the complexity of the life of today; how complex it is, yet in the complexity I see no reason for grief or complaint. Let me say at once, that we are not now dealing with the subject of sin. We are dealing with essential humanity, and in doing so, it is difficult to escape from the complexities of life, complexities which are the outworking of the marvelous potentialities of the simple as we see it in the garden; for every city is the result of a garden. London is a garden, or it is on a garden! It is a long time since we saw it, but right underneath this great city with its appalling multitudes there is old mother earth, and flowers once bloomed and blossomed, and the harvest was reaped. London is humanity's complexity. By the inspiration of the Spirit of God let us get behind these complexities; away from the multitudes to the individual; away from all the marvels of humanity in its toil, and suffering, endeavor, defeat, accomplishment, back to this simple picture and see man as he is there revealed to us.

There are four things for our consideration. They are recognized in the text and explained in the context. First, the being of man; secondly, his true circumstances, surroundings, environment; thirdly, his vocation in the economy of God; and finally, his limitation.

As to the being of man, the context teaches us three things. First, it reveals his origin; secondly, it declares his substance; and finally, it unveils his nature.

It first of all declares that this being is the creation of God. In the declaration it makes use of two different terms to describe the Creator. In the first picture one name alone is used; in the second two are employed in conjunction. In the first chapter the name used is God, or—and I am bound to use the Hebrew word because of its values—Elohim; the Hebrew word in the plural number, signifying not two or three, but intensity, a method adopted by Hebrew writers when some fact is to be expressed, and the singular form will not convey all the strength and glory of the thought. This name stands for might, essential, sufficient might.

The second chapter of Genesis gives an explanatory account, in order that we may more perfectly understand the nature of the man described as the culminating glory of the process of restoration. Now the same word, Elohim, is linked to and prefaced by that word which we have translated and which has become familiar to us as Jehovah; a word suggesting voluntary and sufficient resource at the disposal of man. We see then that man, according to Scripture, was created by the God of all-sufficient might; and by the God Who in the interests of that man He has created is Jehovah, the becoming One, the One Who voluntarily becomes everything that man needs, or ever can need, for all the processes of his being to consummation. Man is the definite, direct, immediate, voluntary, creation of that Being.

The second teaching concerns the substance of man. He is of the dust of the ground; but as dust he is not man; even as dust when formed and fashioned into some external shape or manifestation, he is not man; he becomes man only when enswathed, enwrapped, permeated by

the breath of lives. Man then as to substance is a mingling of dust, and the essential spirit-life of God.

Finally then, emerging from that declaration concerning the substance of man, we have the revelation of the nature of man. Because he is of the dust and of the very essence of the Spirit of God, he is, in the whole creation, the only link between the material and the spiritual. He is not material alone, and not spiritual alone; no man is a man as a disembodied spirit; no man is a man as body minus spirit. Every man is at once of the dust, and of Deity; of the material, and of the spiritual.

The final fact as to the nature of man is that he is made in the image and likeness of God. That is not the same thing said twice over. By the words "image" and "likeness", two separate ideas are conveyed. "Image" suggests the fact that he is the one by whom God is represented. "Likeness" suggests the fact that he is in himself like God. There may be an image which is unlike. A man may set up as representative of himself a sign or symbol which may not be in the least like him. Only yesterday, moving along one of our streets, I saw upon a waggon a vast block of stone, and one sign upon it, the broad arrow. Whose image and superscription is that? The king's. The broad arrow is the image of the king, but not the likeness of the king. Man is placed in creation as the image of the King, the representative of the King to all creation beneath him. He stands in the midst of the earthly order as the representative of God to everything beneath him; to all beasts, and fowl, and fish; to all fruit, and flowers, and trees. But man is not merely a broad arrow, something unlike God, nevertheless representing Him; he is in the likeness of God, modeled upon the pattern of the infinite mystery of the personality of God. Personality is not perfect in man; but perfect in God. Personality is perfect in the infinite God, but man is in the likeness, though he is finite. In the great essentials of human nature, intellectual, emotional, volitional, man is not only in the image of God, he is in the likeness of God; only it is necessary to remember that I am speaking of man as I see him in this garden, and not of man as I meet him in London. The image has never been entirely defaced, but the likeness has been almost entirely lost.

Now let us consider the simple suggestion of this passage concerning man's surroundings, his circumstances, his environment. We see him in a garden with—what for lack of a better term I will describe as a double environment. As he is dual in his nature, material and spiritual, so also his environment is dual, material and spiritual. His material environment was that of the garden. We have all sorts of foolish notions about the garden of Eden, notions unwarranted by the actual facts of the story in Genesis. I have seen pictures of it, and they were mostly pictures of Italian gardens. Genesis gives the picture of a garden uncultivated, in which God had planted trees; none of which had yet appeared, because there was no man; but they were there, in the soil, scattered there by God—and I hope that term does not suggest anything capricious, "I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law!"

The garden was potential. There was potentiality resident within the garden, not merely of tree and flower and fruit, but of the city which has never yet been built; for not only is it true that London today stands upon a garden; it is equally true that everything in London has come out of a garden; all the stones, all the woodwork, all materials have come from a garden. The garden was imperfect; the flowers not yet blossoming, the final issues waiting for the touch of power, waiting for the guidance of the hand of the man God made. Into that, man was placed. Materially, that was

his environment.

But that was not the closest fact of his environment. There was a spiritual environment. This man was living in the midst of the very spirit life of God. That spirit life which being inbreathed had made him a living soul was that in which he lived and moved and had his being. Man lived in the deepest fact of his nature in immediate touch, and connection with God. Man as I see him here in the earliest picture of the Divine library was not only in immediate contact with God, he was in conscious contact with God. There was speech between this man and his God. There was, to use our great evangelical word, communion between this man and his God. The agonized cry that perpetually breaks from the lips of sinning and fallen humanity, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him" is the natural, and necessary outcome of the very nature of man himself. Here in this garden was a man conscious that the nearest fact of his environment, from which he never could escape, and from which he did not in these early days desire to escape, was not that of the garden which in some senses was outside him, but that of the God of the garden in Whom he lived and moved and had his being, and with Whom he had communion.

Let us take the next step, and notice what this picture teaches us concerning primitive man, original man, as to his vocation. There are two little phrases, how easily we read them, how glibly we pass them over, how little we understand them. His vocation was to dress and to keep the garden. The whole vocation of man in this temporary and probationary life in the economy of God stands startlingly revealed in that sentence.

What is this word, to dress? Quite simply the Hebrew word is one which in a score of instances is translated to work. If you feel after the heart of the word for its true significance and original intention, when the verb is transitive or causative, it means to enslave. We must not abuse that word by thinking of slavery as something cruel; man was put into the garden to capture it, to discover its secrets, to lead them out to fulfilment, to lay his hand upon its potentialities and guide them into generous realization. To dress it, to work it, to capture it, to realize it. Ponder that conception long enough, and you will see that the ultimate completion of it will be the city of God. As I have already said, there is more in the garden than flowers and weeds, all the potentialities of material life lie slumbering in any garden covered with green grass. Charles Kingsley manifested a fine instinct when in effect he wrote to his friend, "Don't be anxious to entertain me. Put me down under any hedgerow and in two square yards of mother earth I can find mystery enough to keep me occupied for all the time I stay with you." In the garden were all the potentialities. The vocation of man was to discover what God had hidden there, and in cooperation with God to lead it toward its ultimate blossoming and fruitage; and to its final, glorious perfection.

Not only was he to dress it; he was to keep it. I confess that to me is a startling word. What does it mean? Literally to hedge it about, figuratively to guard it. In that little word there is the suggestion of the fact that whereas this is the picture of a restored order, and whereas man is seen in all the primitive strength and simplicity of his new-made manhood, he is in a universe in which there are forces that threaten. He is not merely to capture the garden, he is to guard it; and his very vocation, as here revealed, is suggestive of the fact that somewhere, not clearly defined, there are forces that threaten his garden; that there is possibility of blighting, possibility of these forces spoiling the best fruit. He is therefore to capture and develop the garden; and to guard it against attack.

Once again, what does this simple picture of man in a garden say to us concerning his limitation? You will notice that the symbols here are trees. What else would you have in a garden? If I am asked if these trees were real trees, I ask, "Was the man a real man, and was the garden a real garden?" The symbols of this man's limitation were in the realm of the sustenance of the physical; for the physical is always in the economy of God the symbol of the spiritual. The outward signs and tokens of limitation were in the realm of the material, but they were the signs and symbols of limitation in the spiritual. I pray you mark the first fact, it is not that of narrowness, but of breadth; not that of restriction, but of infinite possibility; the first fact is not that of bondage, but of liberty. The word limitation does not necessarily connote narrowness; it simply indicates a bound and a boundary. Where is the boundary? Of every tree he might freely eat, of all the trees, including the tree of life. Surely you say, that is a figure of speech. By no means. You have here the picture of primitive conditions, and there was one tree the fruit of which was peculiarly good for the maintenance of life, that is for its sustenance. Of all these trees he was allowed to eat, and he had to cultivate them and keep them and find his sustenance therein. The material fact was the symbol of the spiritual fact. This man in material surroundings was a spiritual being, and the nearest fact in his surrounding was spiritual, and so the spaciousness of spiritual possibility was revealed; of all the great spiritual sources of strength this man might partake. It is a picture of wide and glorious liberty.

Then we come to the word "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." What was this tree? I do not know. It might be quite helpful to us if we cease talking about an apple tree; there is no warrant for it in Scripture. The fact as declared is that there was one tree which was made the symbol of man's limitation in the economy of God. One tree was marked off, looking upon which, man must remember that his moral life could only be led to perfection, and his spiritual life to glory, as he lived in relationship to God. In the activities of his finite life in that garden, that tree was the sacramental symbol, for which he must care, and which he must tend and guard, but of which he must not eat.

Such was his limitation. First the spaciousness "Of every tree"; then the boundary which indicated that he was not supreme but a subject; just one tree that reminded him of his relation to God.

Let it be remembered that this is a picture of primitive man, potential, imperfect, but sinless; elemental man. The only adumbration or shadow of sin or evil that I find in all the story is in the revelation of vocation in which he is told to guard the garden, and in the indication of his limitation, the one tree of which he must not eat. This man is sinless in his nature, perfect in his being; not perfected, not completed, because his work is waiting for him, and the essential glory of man is not that of his being, but that of his vocation. Until he had fulfilled his vocation, until by dressing the garden and guarding it, he had produced results, until he had become a worker with God, producing results after which God was seeking, he was not perfected. No man is perfect because he is a perfect being. It is only by fulfilment of function that man can be absolutely perfected.

These then are the simple facts of every human life. I say simple facts; these are not, in some senses, the facts of your life and mine; but these are the facts of our life, fundamentally.

In its being, human life is of God and like God. That is the profoundest truth concerning every human being.

In its environment, human life is placed among the things of God; this world is God's world, the seas are His, the hills are His, the birds are His, the flowers are His; all the mysteries and forces which men today are discovering and harnessing for the accomplishment of their purposes in the world, are God's forces. The environment of every human life is that it exists among the things of God.

As to vocation, every man is made to be a fellow-worker with God. By cooperation with God, man perfects Creation.

As to limitation, according to this picture, human life is absolutely free within the government of God.

All this is strange to us today and one of the reasons men are so anxious to get rid of these chapters of Genesis is that they do not suit the facts of human life as these men know it. This is not a picture of human life as we know it. This is not even a picture of human life as we have found it in our own experience. Superadded to these things are other things with which we shall have to deal presently; swelling rivers of poison that desolate the life, great forces and fires that burn the life; great foes of evil that are against the life. We have not reached that point in this evening's meditation. We are simply considering what the Bible says about our nature in the economy of God.

Men do not start today where this man started. This man was innocent knowing neither good nor evil. Today innocence is only true of infancy, and ah me, how soon it is gone! How soon? I do not know; but ah me, how soon! Neither is the man in Christ standing where this man stood in the garden. The man in Christ is not innocent. The man in Christ knows good and evil; but blessed be God, he is made able to choose the good and to refuse the evil.

We have been turning back to elemental things. I have been trying to bring this life of mine, so full of mystery, to the measurement of this picture; and in spite of all the changed conditions, in spite of all the forces of evil, the presence of which we shall attempt to understand in the progress of our studies, in spite of all, I find that my own life beats true to this revelation. The very mystery of my being makes me believe I am after all of God. Dust is not the final word concerning me. Yes, I believe I am in God's garden even yet. I wander a little away from the place where man has bunglingly attempted to realize the city, and has always realized sorrow, and I know it is God's garden. Yes, I am among the things of God. Somehow I am coming to be quite sure that I am intended for cooperation with Him, for my life rises to highest heights, and feels the largest ecstasy, and becomes conscious of the greatest things, in those moments when I know I am doing something with God. I am not speaking only of Christian service—that ultimately, that is the crowning glory—but of the smallest things. When you are really in your garden, doing the thing in the garden that presently will smile back at you in all the colors and beauties that come out of God's earth, those are the days and moments when you live. Ultimately, when we are dealing with the spirit of man or woman, helping to lead such into realization of relationship to God, these are the moments, of all moments, the greatest. There is nothing like it. I believe I am intended to cooperate with God. Then as to limitation, how spacious it is. Would you have the story in the terms of the New Testament? "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." That is the spaciousness of life. Yet, how definite it is; not a tree always, but that

which is of your position, of your calling. For a man in a garden, it is a tree. You know what it is for you; your ledger, something else! As you turn your way back to tomorrow, to the office, or shop, or store, you know it, there it is; not some mystic heavenly vision, but simple and natural, close at hand, something reminding you of your relationship to God. These elemental things are still with us; we are of the first man, and of the God of the first man; sons of Adam, "the son of God."

Genesis 13:14. Faith's Outlook.

Genesis 13:14.

Faith's Outlook.

Lift up now thine eyes; and look from the place where thou art.

Genesis 13:14

This was the word of Jehovah to Abram under strange circumstances. The point and the power of the particular words are found when they are placed in contrast with an earlier statement of the chapter, a statement found in the tenth verse. "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt."

After that survey of the land, and after the choice he made, Lot moved east to the plain of the Jordan, to the circle of the five cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, Bela. Abram remained at Bethel, as it was subsequently called, the historian here using the later name, Luz, which, in all probability, was its name at the time. Abram remained in that neighborhood, where later Jacob arrived as an exile from home; it was a place that offered practically no hospitality to him in his wandering, a place where, after the long journeyings, it was necessary for him to pillow his head on a stone in order to rest, a neighborhood at that time undoubtedly characterized by its rocky fastnesses and its barrenness. Abram remained there, and there the word of the Lord came to him, introduced by the words of my text:

Lift up now thine eyes; and look from the place where thou art.

Let us consider the story and attempt to deduce some of its values for ourselves. In the light of these particular words there are three matters of interest to me in this story: first, the command itself coming to this man to lift up his eyes and look from the place where he was; second, I am necessarily interested in what he saw when he obeyed the command, and, finally, I am interested, therefore, in the results which followed that uplifting of the eyes and the vision which greeted him when he obeyed the Divine order.

In regard to the command itself, you will at once see that it was perfectly simple. Abram was told to look north, and south, and east, and west. We immediately see that he was told to look in every direction. In imagination, we see him looking away to the north. His vision would not penetrate far, for the mountains would be in front of him; but they would suggest the things that lay beyond them. He looked to the south. There, perchance, he could see farther, and he knew that beyond what he could see lay Egypt. He looked to the east, the very direction in which Lot had traveled. He looked to the west to what remained of the land until it came to the uttermost confine, from where the great sea stretched beyond. Thus he looked north and south, and east and west.

But the command becomes more than simple; it becomes significant if we lay our emphasis on two points. First, on the little word "now"; and, second, on the final phrase: "from the place where thou

art." These indicate a particular time and a particular situation. "Now!" And immediately we begin to remember the things behind the point at which this man had now arrived in his life. Away there in the back, how far none can tell, was that mystic experience in which at Ur of the Chaldees Abram had heard in exile the Voice of God. In all probability the voice had first been a whispered suggestion. But we know certainly that there in Ur of the Chaldees Abram had become discontented, discontented with the conditions in the midst of which he found himself, discontented with the splendor and the glory of that city, discontented with it because he had discovered its hollowness, its emptiness; discontented because he had learned something of the infinite glory of a better order of things. This discovery was born of his knowledge, through mystic intercourse, of the one God. At last, that whisper in the soul, perchance, as I have said, long continued and persistent, became a clarion trumpet call commanding him to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to travel long, long distances across the desert lands until he arrived almost at the confines of things in this strip of land which we now call Palestine. He had arrived at Shechem, the valley between Ebal and Gerizim, from which, perhaps, the grandest views of the land can be obtained. There he had pitched a tent and built an altar.

Then there had come famine in the land, and the man who had dared to leave everything for God became fearful; there was deflection from faith, and hurriedly he passed south, and crossed the borderland into Egypt. The man who was able to trust God with his whole destiny when he left Ur of the Chaldees was not able to trust Him when there was famine in the land. There had been strange experiences in Egypt, in which even this great soul had descended to deception, but there had been restoration, and he had come back again, back to his own land, back to Bethel. So we come to the immediate circumstances.

A vulgar household quarrel had been an occasion for the manifestation of two men, Lot and Abram. To Lot, the man seeking his own, first choice had been given, for faith is ever able to be magnanimous in its dealings with men; and he departed to this well-watered plain, choosing it because it was well watered. Mark the significant word: like the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Lot, pausing in that particular situation of possibility to compromise between his faith and his selfish desires, saw a region like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. The Garden was near to the cities, where he might seek for his own enrichment. He had pitched his tent toward Sodom, and Abram was left—a man declining to be progressive, a man having learned a lesson through past deflection from faith and his sojourn in Egypt. Now, said the Lord, look in this hour; from the place where thou art lift up thine eyes.

Lifting up his eyes that day, what did Abram see? In the first place he saw, north and south and east and west, lands which belonged to others. There on the east was the land which now, in some senses at least, belonged to Lot, for Lot had chosen it, and Abram had handed it over to him, so that he could not travel there, nor take his cattle through. He must keep away from the circle of the cities. The Canaanites were then in the land, says the historian. That place where Abram stood was in the center of territory that belonged to others. No foot of land belonged to him. That is what he saw by sight.

What did he see that day as he looked by faith? The whole land as belonging to him. It was all given to him, even the land that Lot had chosen for himself belonged to Abram; those lands stretching away to the north that were possessed by strange and strong and warlike tribes

belonged to him. Those lands stretching away south, leading on to Egypt, from which he had traveled, were his. The rich and fertile borderlands, down to the margin of the sea, all belonged to him.

What were the effects produced in this man as the result of his obedience to the Divine command, as the result of the things on which his eyes looked that day?

The first result was the march from Bethel to Hebron. The Lord said to him: "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it"—a poetic way of saying walk through the central strategic points of this land—and walk through the land as its proprietor and possessor. Bethel was nearly as far north of the site of Jerusalem as Hebron was south thereof. Of course, Jerusalem was not there. The stronghold probably was there even then, the fortress of Jebus which presently became the City of the great King. But Abram walked from Bethel to Hebron through the strategic center of the land, and he walked through it as its proprietor.

Suppose that we could have communicated at the time with any of the possessors, and told them that the man walking from Bethel to Hebron was the owner of the whole land, they would hardly have taken the trouble to oppose him. Probably, they would have smiled at his unutterable folly. Yet this is the picture of a man marching over a land that he does possess because God ordains it so.

Arrived at Hebron, he settled down, so far as settlement can ever be consonant with loyalty. He pitched his tent and he erected an altar, the two abiding symbols of his relationship to the land and to his God, the tent forevermore a symbol of his readiness to obey the Divine command to remain or to move; the altar surely the symbol of his relationship to God through sacrifice, and the Divine grace. This man moving down through the land owned by others was the owner of it; this man journeying through a land that other people possessed was the possessor of it. He pitched his tent and erected his altar as the sign and symbol of the fact that he owned the land by the deed of God and the gift of the Almighty.

Then I glance on. I cannot go far. One page will suffice, half a page in the Bible, the next chapter. What is the next recorded activity of this man? There came news to him that the opposing kings had taken Lot captive with all his possessions, and had carried him and his possessions away to the far north. Immediately, this man, who by Divine deed possessed the whole land, went forth to restore the land, the things that really belonged to himself, to Lot. Struggling with the opposing kings, meeting them in battle, mastering them, he brought Lot back. He traveled over 150 miles in pursuit of those kings. He mastered them and came back. He restored to another man the things which God had given him. When he had done his work the king of Sodom offered to give him presents, and he declined. He would receive nothing from any other than the One by Whose deed he possessed everything.

But let us go a little further, and we will do so by turning to a New Testament letter and reading some sentences:

By faith Abraham became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise....

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

So far, that was the end of it all. This man never possessed anything in the land except a grave. He heard the Divine covenant which set aside every other right of possession; he walked through the length and the breadth of the land, and pitched his tent and erected his altar; he greeted the ultimate realization from afar with a song in his heart and confidence in his soul; but he died never having possessed; and yet, by faith, he possessed from the moment of the Divine covenant until the day of his passing.

Such briefly is the story. Now, from that story I want to deduce some of its lessons as I see them. Here is a wonderful revelation of the true outlook of faith in an hour of darkness. I may condense the whole thing into a very simple phrase: when faith looks, things are seen to be not what they seem to be. Faith sees farther than man's sight can perceive. The vision of faith is a clearer and more penetrating vision into the very heart and essence and truth of things than is ever possible to sight and to calculation. When faith looked out on the land on this occasion, it was seen that the land did not belong to those who were in possession, but to God, and to whomsoever God chose to make it over in the covenant of His great and sacred will. I am not proposing to delay to make any detailed application of this. It is the great conception that I would fain pass on to you at this hour. If, however, I make any application, let it be along these lines.

This is an hour when civilization is at an end. This is an hour when the very props and foundations of order seem to be shaken, to be going down in catastrophe and clash. To faith this is an hour when true civilization is seen producing the shaking and the catastrophe, and the things that are true and abiding are seen deeper down than all the things that shake and tremble and totter and fall. The vision of sight fills the soul with fear. The vision of faith fills the soul with songs. I choose my words carefully. He giveth songs in the night. Because, even in this terrible hour, the men of faith see God, endure as seeing Him Who is invisible.

I will make the illustration somewhat more personal. Take the kind of experience into which we all come ever and anon in our pathway through life, a situation created in a thousand varied ways, and yet a situation in which we are inclined to say, looking at things as they are, The bottom is gone out of everything. I have heard that said more than once this week. Faith knows that it is not so. The foundations are unshakable. If we seem to have lost the sense of foundation, it is only that life may become better, profounder, and that we may pass down to the things that never shake, that cannot be moved.

Let us clearly understand that this outlook on life is created by the Word of the Lord, and by human confidence therein. This outlook is not created by our own desires. Again and again, our desires are in conflict with the things which by faith we see. Again and again, our desires, if they were granted to us, would ruin both ourselves and all those with whom we are associated. Not according to our desires. If I simply take up an outlook on life which is inspired by my desire, then I have no peace, and no sense of rest, no quietness, no assurance, no authority. Neither does this confidence spring from our own conclusions. This man did not move with quiet, kingly dignity through the length and breadth of the land and pitch his tent and sustain his heroic soul in patience because he had concluded thus and so, and knew presently what the issue was likely to be and was assured that things would work out all right. By no means. This man heard the Word of God in

his own soul clearly in spite of all appearances, and so he knew the final abiding truth concerning the things in the midst of which he lived. That is always the secret of quietness and peace.

I want to emphasize at this point the duty of this outlook to the man of faith. This was a command which God laid on Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes from the place where thou art." It was Abraham's duty thus to look, and his duty to look in the light of the word that God spoke in his soul. Here faith might have halted, here faith might have wandered from its right relationship to God. Had this been so, then there had been no quiet triumphant march through the neighborhood, no pitching of the tent and the altar, and no conflict presently to restore the possession to another, no travail, no holy prayer after a while that Sodom might be saved. The great nation would have failed if faith had failed at this moment. Of course, this is our difficulty. There are days when faith is a march with banner and song and joy; there are days when faith is a march into the mists, into the darkness, with no glimmering light except the assurance within the soul that God is right and God is truth.

In the second place, observe what this story suggests as to the activity suggested by the outlook thus inspired. Life will now be conformable with the truth which it receives. In all the attitudes of the life there will be evidences of the conviction that possesses and masters the soul. Here perhaps is the point when faith becomes most difficult. I have referred more than once to this man moving down from Bethel to Hebron along that central tract of the land now given to him. Look at him again. It was the march of proprietorship. I think there is a word that we often have need of: "Strengthen the hands that hang down, confirm the feeble knees." There should be to the man of faith no trembling, no feeble knees, no yielding to the pressure of circumstances, but the courageous definite positive authoritative triumphant march that is conformable with the inner, sacred, deep conviction between the soul and God.

But if the activity is that of conformity to the truth it is that also of submission to the Revealer. There must be a pitching of the tent, and it must be a tent of submission, an erection of the altar, and it must always be the altar of sacrifice. Finally, here must be an activity which is the activity of cooperation with the patience of God, getting things ready for others, the ability to do without things. This is the picture of Abram to the end. Further on in the story, Lot is dwelling in the city, and, more, he is raised to a position of eminence, he is the chief magistrate, for that is the meaning of the Hebrew phrase, "sitting in the gate of the city." What influence had he in the city of which he was chief magistrate? None morally, none spiritually; in the day of Divine wrath not ten souls could be found that he had influenced. Yonder was the man who had pitched his tent and built his altar and walked, a lonely pilgrim, in the unfathomable comfort of the comradeship of God. He very nearly saved Sodom by his prayer, and would have, if Lot had created just one vantage ground from which God could move. So we see a man co-operating in the patience of God, enabled to wait, without ever possessing the things which were his own, and content to be without them, because of his comradeship with God Himself.

The last thing I learn from that story, coming naturally and simply out of the things already said, is a lesson concerning the results which we may expect when we obey the Divine command and lift our eyes and see, not the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. What may we expect for ourselves? Nothing! Everything! Nothing of the land of promise, nothing of the success desired, nothing of the business which we toiled to do. Yet everything of the land and the fulfilment of high desire, and the ultimate glory, and the work accomplished in the God with Whom we work,

and Who, when our pilgrimage is over and our day of toil is spent, will take our little things and link them with His eternal might, until the final goal is reached and the ultimate glory is obtained.

So, then, for the future we are to expect victory and realization, and for today the honor and the joy of cooperation with God.

Therefore we may draw these simple conclusions of faith. It is never important that we should get anything we desire. It is supremely important that God should get what He purposes. It is glorious to do without, and still to have by sharing in the process that moves toward God's final victory:

Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong,—
Finish what I begin,
And all I fail to win.
What matter, I or they,
Mine or another's day,
So the right word be said,
And life the sweeter made?
Hail to the Coming Singers!
Hail to the brave light-bringers!
Forward I reach and share
All that they sing and dare.
Ring, bells in unrequited steeples,
The joy of unborn peoples!
Sound, trumpets far off blown,
Your triumph is my own!
I feel the earth move sunward,
I join the great march onward,
And take, by faith, while living,
My freehold of thanksgiving.

Exodus 20:20. Grace And Law.

Exodus 20:20.

Grace And Law.

Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not.

Exodus 20:20

In those wonderful days of the emancipation of the Hebrew people and their realization of the constitutional national life Moses twice uttered these words, "Fear not." In each case they were addressed to the people when they were filled with fear. In the first case the fear was fear of Egypt; in the second, it was fear of God.

The fear of Egypt was born of what appeared to be imminent and inevitable destruction. The Hebrews were encamped before Pihahiroth, caught in a trap, the sea before, the foe behind, and they themselves unarmed and undisciplined for war. In their terror they cried out against Moses, and complained that he had brought them away from Egypt, and he replied, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

In the second case, that of our text, the Hebrews' fear was fear of God. After three months' journeyings they had encamped beneath Sinai. There God had spoken to them through Moses, first in terms of tender grace and then in terms of law. The giving of the law had been accompanied by manifestations of majesty and might, thunders and lightnings, a thick cloud covering the guarded mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud. The people trembled and stood afar off, and besought Moses that they might not hear the voice of God, and to that sense of fear he uttered these words, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not." These words, then, are supremely valuable in revealing the meaning of law.

First, they describe the true attitude of men toward the law in the words, "Fear not," which relate the law of God to the grace of His heart; second, they describe the method of the law of God in the words, "God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you"; and, finally, they reveal the purpose of grace and of law in the words, "that ye sin not." This is a consideration full of importance. Innately man is an anarchist; experientially, that is as the result of observation, he admits the necessity for law, and he is always anxious that the other man should submit to it. But for himself he desires freedom from it. Restraint is irksome. We would fain go our own way without any reference to law. This attitude of mind colors our thinking of the law of God, and strangely persists even in the life and the experience of Christian men and women. Unconsciously to ourselves, we think of the law of God as hard and severe, the opposite of love and of grace; and we perpetually quote certain words in the New Testament in a tone of voice which reveals a false

conception of contrast between law and grace. I refer to words occurring in the first Chapter of John which we render thus: "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." That intonation—which by the way cannot be printed—is a commentary on the text and a revelation of our misconception of it. We read the earlier declaration, "The law was given by Moses," in a tone of thunder and severity; then suddenly our voice melts into tenderness as we read, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In doing so we prove that we understand neither the law which came by Moses nor the grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ. The law of God is the expression of the love of God, and its giving, even in the midst of the old economy, was as certainly an activity of the grace of His heart as was the coming into this world of His Son. Law expresses the rules of conduct for a man and for all time; truth is the essential integrity out of which all such expression comes. It is in the discovery of this fact, that law is the expression of grace, that is found the inspiration of obedience which prepares the way for that final and further operation of grace whereby a man is enabled to obey the law. To know that the law of God is the language of love is to exclaim, "Oh, how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day." Until a man is brought to recognition of the excellency of the law of God he will never yield himself to the redeeming power of God. In this sense also it is true that the law is our custodian to lead us to the faith; for it arrests us, and compels us toward God, and so prepares the way for that activity by which He rescues us and enables us to do His bidding.

Our theme this evening, then is the relation between grace and law; and I propose that we consider law, first in its inspiration, which is grace; second, in its method, which is that of revelation; finally, in the purpose, which is purity; and all this as preliminary to a consideration of the fact that there are things that the law cannot do, but which grace is able to do.

That grace is the inspiration of law cannot be more perfectly illustrated than in the context. Everyone knows the content of the twentieth Chapter of the book of Exodus. But how many are familiar with the nineteenth Chapter? The twentieth Chapter cannot be accurately read unless the nineteenth Chapter has been read. They are closely and intimately related; they form parts of one great whole; they constitute a contrast and a harmony. To read the nineteenth without the twentieth is to read an unfinished fragment; to read the twentieth apart from the nineteenth is to read that which standing alone is indeed full of error. "In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai." So the nineteenth Chapter begins. It is the story of Pentecost, that is, the story of fifty days after emancipation. Fifty days after emancipation the children of Israel found themselves in the wilderness of Sinai. There they pitched their camp, and God, through the mediator Moses, began to deal with them in order to give them their national constitution. Now let us summarize Chapter nineteen. We have, first, the terms of grace. These were immediately followed by the answer which the people gave to the message of grace. The Chapter closes with the response of law to the answer of man. In the twentieth Chapter the order is reversed. It opens with the terms of law, the Ten Words of the Decalogue. Immediately following we have the answer of man to these terms of law. The Chapter closes with the response of grace.

This is the account of God's first messages to this emancipated people, half vulgarized as the result of the long process of slavery. They were now to be organized into national life, a life of peculiar character. In God's dealings with the world they were to constitute a theocracy, a nation through which He would reveal Himself to other nations for their healing and blessing. The story

records, first, God's terms of grace, the Hebrews' answer, and His immediate response in law; then His terms of law, their answer, and His final response in words of grace.

The terms of grace in Chapter nineteen are remarkable:

Thou shalt say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine.

Mark that interjection. At the very beginning of their history God reminded this people that they were not His peculiar people in the sense of the rejection of other peoples: "All the earth is Mine"—and "ye shall be unto Me a dynasty of priests, and an holy nation." These were the terms of grace. I think no one will quarrel with that definition when I remind them of the fact that we find in the New Testament that when Peter wrote his letter for the strengthening of trembling souls, he climbed no higher height in his description of the Christian Church than that of these words. The words thrill with the tenderness of a great love. They constitute the revelation of the infinite purpose of the heart of God.

They answered, saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Then, if we were reading this Chapter for the first time and could have that inestimable blessing of coming to it with a fresh mind, we should inevitably be impressed by the change in the language. The Lord said, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee." Let the people not come nigh! Set bounds and fences round about the mountain so that no beast shall touch it! This was God's response to man's answer to His terms of grace. Then followed the giving of the Ten Words, the terms of law amid the thunders and the lightning, out of the darkness and the cloud; and then men answered, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." To that cry of fear the response of God through Moses was, "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not." This was followed by instructions concerning an altar, and sacrifices, and the promise of God, "I will come to you."

The opening note was that of grace: I have "brought you unto Myself"; the final note was also of grace: "I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." Between the two we find man's arrogance, God's unfolding of law, and man's trembling. Fear not! God's purpose is that of grace, and therefore His plan must be that of law.

Let us glance at this matter from a slightly different standpoint, that of law as a method of grace. The ready answer of these people, which I have already described as the answer of arrogance, demonstrates to us how little they knew of their own hearts. They said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This is not to condemn them for saying this. I hope nothing I have said, even this description of their words as words of arrogance, would convey that impression. When these people said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," they were uttering the deepest thing of their lives. They were speaking out of the very depth of their souls. Surely He had brought them out of Egypt, surely He had borne them on eagles' wings, surely He had shown His power, and now in terms of infinite grace He had spoken to them: I have brought you unto Myself, to make you a dynasty of priests, for all the earth is Mine, and you are to be a blessing to all nations. To this they replied, Yes, we will fulfil that high vocation, we will be obedient, and do anything that God says.

This was the voice of noble aspiration, but they did not know what lay between them and realization; they had not found the measure of their own incapacity; they had not learned their weakness. Therefore law was given, revealing God to them, and themselves to themselves as in the presence of God. The function of law was that of revelation, never that of salvation. In the words of Paul in his Galatian letter, one little sentence reveals the truth concerning law, "The law is not of faith."

Law is a revelation. It was a revelation to these men, first of life according to the will of God. It was a revelation to men of the standards of life in the economy of God. As the first ten words were uttered they constituted a revelation of holiness in human life. They are words which define man's relationship to God and man's relationship to his fellow man: broad foundation words, on which all future codes were to be erected. They discovered God in His purity, in His holiness, in His justice, in His righteousness. The first four revealed man's relation to God as the foundation of all morality; the last six revealed man's relationship to his fellow man as the expression of his obedience to the first four. From these words of the law there shone upon men the light, the awful light of the holiness of God.

That revelation of holiness was in the hearts of the men who heard it inspiration, the creation of desire, or of admiration of the ideal. Perhaps as Paul became the most remarkable illustration in the apostolic records of incarnate Christianity, so also Saul of Tarsus was the most remarkable revelation in the Bible of incarnate Hebraism. In his Roman letter Paul declared that after the inward man, he delighted in the law of God; he knew its glory, he knew its beauty. That is the first thing that the law does for a man. Men who break the law with apparent ease and wicked persistence, nevertheless do know in the deepest of their lives the glory and the beauty of the law they break. The most depraved and immoral man—and herein lies the heinousness of his sin—knows the excellency of the ideal to which he will not conform. Strange paradox of human consciousness, but undoubtedly true. The law reveals God and reveals holiness, and carries to the souls of men inevitable conviction as to its height, its nobility, and its grandeur.

If the law is thus a revelation of God it necessarily becomes to the men who receive it a revelation of themselves. When the light of the law flamed on these men they knew their failure, and they knew their weakness; and so while it is true that law becomes an inspiration, the final word is that law becomes a condemnation. It is the revelation of failure. Because in the light of the requirement of the law I learn how I fail and how weak I am, it rests on me as a perpetual condemnation and denunciation. The law, then, is a revelation which inspires and creates admiration for goodness in the soul of a man; but as it reveals it condemns, making a man conscious of how far he has come short and of how appallingly weak he is. Grace declares a purpose beneficent and beautiful, and man says, I will obey. The law then reveals to him the conditions on which he may enter on the purpose beneficent, and he is filled with fear; but the language of law is the language of grace.

Thus we come to the final note: "That ye sin not." There are many words in our Bible translated "sin" in both Hebrew and Greek, but the common word in the Hebrew and the common word in the Greek have exactly the same significance. Sin is missing of the mark, failure to realize; and that whether it be wilful or ignorant. If we are dealing with sin as guilt, then the sin of ignorance brings no guilt with it. It is wilful sin that brings guilt. But if we are dealing with man, and attempting to see his place in the economy of God and the purpose of heaven for the true realization of life, then sin

is failure. If a man comes short of the highest fulfilment of his own life, that is sin. The law was given that men may not sin, that they may not miss the mark, that they may not fail to realize the real meaning and purpose of their own lives. In what sense does law minister to that end? Only as it reveals to man the standard, as it brings to him the measurement of his own life, as it unfolds before him the possibilities of his life, and reveals, to him the conditions on which it shall be possible for him to fulfil those possibilities.

In this connection we must take a wider view of law than Exodus affords. We go back to the beginning of human history as the Bible records it, and there we find law, not the law which was here uttered, but human life conditioned in the will of God, God uttering His own word, a commandment laid on man as a safeguard and revealing to him his relation to a supreme authority. That is law. Leave these earlier records and come to the New Testament, and in the teaching of Jesus we find law; but the Master goes to deeper depths, searching the profound things of human life, no longer merely conditioning external conduct, but setting up His standard in the inner recesses of motive and desire. The broadest conception shows that law is a revelation to man of himself, made by the grace of the Divine love; a kindly and tender declaration of the path in which he should go, that he may not miss his way; statement of the principles that govern his life, that he may not violate them. In Christ men are set free from the law which is Hebrew; but they are brought under the law of the Spirit of life. Thus in the new economy we have a yet clearer unfolding of the truth that law is the language of love. God bending over a nation or bending over a man says to it or to him, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." That is not the language of hardness, of severity, of unkindness. It is love showing the nation or the man that life must be adjusted to the supreme things in order that it may rise to the height of its possibility.

This is true of every one of the ten words; and it is equally true of the words of Jesus. They are severe, they are awe-inspiring, they search and scorch and frighten the soul, if men will listen to them. Nevertheless they are the words of infinite compassion, of infinite tenderness; they are words uttered to my soul in order that I may know the way wherein I should go, if I am not to miss the meaning of my life, if I am to realize it in its height, its breadth, its depth, its glory. Jesus said that He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might have life. Bear in mind that great declaration, and then hear me while reverently I say that He did condemn the world. That is not to contradict the word of the Lord, it is to attempt to understand it. Jesus is not in this assembly to condemn; but how He does condemn! The purpose of His heart is not condemnation; but if I remit my soul to His inquiry, to His investigation, then I lay my hand on my lip, and say, Unclean, unclean! He condemns me.

That, however, is not the ultimate fact. The condemnation of His scorching law is in order that I may be driven closer yet to Him for salvation. Grace utters the law, that man may discover sin, and, remitting himself to its measurement, may find his failure.

If law is the expression of grace, it is not its final word. Law brings man to a consciousness of his sin, and has no more that it can do. What will grace say to a man who stands condemned by this uttering of law? Let us first remember this. Grace does not deny that man's sin. The business of grace is not to hide sin or cloak it over or deny the reality of it. Let us remember, in the second place, that grace does not excuse the sinning man. Nevertheless, in some infinite mystery of love, grace operates in such a way that the sin of sinning man may be forgiven and the sinning man

himself be conformed to the very ideal of purity and beauty which the law has revealed. To go back to the illustration in Exodus, grace first says God's purpose is to bring man to Himself, and man agrees. Law then discovers to man his own weakness, and man is afraid, and says, "Let not God speak." Has grace no more to say? Grace then says, "Fear not." There is a way of approach. It is the way of an altar, the way of a sacrifice. The central word of grace is that of God, "I will come to thee." That is what grace says to the man condemned under the law; it draws near with healing, with renewal.

If you ask me how grace can accomplish this, I point you to the Cross and ask you to listen to the words of inspiration as you gaze on the profound mystery. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." Or again, "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died." By an infinite transaction in the very Being of God, grace, having spoken in the law and thereby revealed to me my failure, reaches me, captures me, holds me, remakes me, energizes me; and all this in order that I may become that which law has revealed to me I have failed to be.

If again you ask me for an illustration of how this can be, I shall take you to the simplest figure in the New Testament used by Christ and His holy apostles, realizing that it is but a figure, realizing that it is a figure that we do not often make use of in this regard, and yet convinced that it is one of the most illuminative in all the New Testament. I mean the figure of the forgiveness of debt. What is it to forgive debt? Remember, in the first place, that no man can forgive debt except the man to whom the debt is owed. Let me reverently place the illustration on the commonplace level of the currency. Here is a man who owes to another man a hundred pounds. He has nothing to pay, he is bankrupt. The man to whom it is owed, in grace forgives it. Has he a right to do it? No one will question the right. How does he do it? By himself suffering the loss. That is the principle of the Cross. He bore our sins, He carried our sins, He made Himself responsible for our moral debts. He Himself took over our suffering. Grace is set upon the perfection of man. Grace initiates the law whereby the man may be made perfect, and reveals to man his imperfection and his weakness. Then grace confronts the bankrupt soul and says, I forgive by suffering the loss. I know the frailty and the imperfection of all this illustration. I would not use such a figure if it were not a figure in the New Testament. Yet this is exactly what God does. He forgives by suffering loss. The very grace that is set on my perfecting and has given me the law that I may know what perfection is, and thereby has revealed to me my imperfection, steps into the breach, gathers into itself the infinite loss, cancels the bond, and so gives me forgiveness and life.

Think once more in the realm of that illustration. On the level of human interrelationships the illustration may break down in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, but in the one-hundredth it is fulfilled in the sense in which I now use it. Let us go back to the two men. The one owes the other. The other forgives his debt, himself suffering the loss of that which is owed. What happens? The forgiven man goes out to begin again, freed from encumbrance, freed from the burden. In the passion born of gratitude for the act of grace he gives himself no rest until a day comes when he pays his debt.

I do not hesitate to use the illustration now. So will it be with all the truly ransomed. He Who met me, and revealed to me my failure, and made known to me how far I am in debt, He Who then in infinite grace bore the loss Himself, and uttered the word of freedom, He, at last, by the inspiration

of the love and gratitude of my heart, by an operation of power given to me in the economy of that grace, will present me faultless before the throne of God; He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Law is beneficent, the language of love, and yet it condemns. The grace that utters law has other things to say, and by virtue of what it is in itself brings to men more than law. It brings the pardon and power by which at last, measured by the standards of law, they will be perfect in the sight of God.

Genesis 28:16. The Nearness Of God Discovered.

Genesis 28:16.

The Nearness Of God Discovered.

Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

Genesis 28:16

Last Sunday evening I preached from this text, leaving my message unfinished. I return to it tonight that I may say some things which were then omitted.

In order to have sequence of thought I must briefly summarize what already has been said. The words of the text reveal the waking consciousness of Jacob after the dream in which he was brought to first-hand, practical consciousness of the omnipresence of God in discovering in that barren place and in unexpected circumstances that God was actually with him. Said he in the waking hours of the morning, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." In that confession two matters arrest our attention: first, the man's unconsciousness of the nearness of God; second, the discovery of the fact of God's nearness, its method and its meaning.

The first of these occupied our attention last Sunday evening: man's unconsciousness of the nearness of God. In the case of Jacob it was confessed in the hours of the morning as he looked back, "I knew it not." In all likelihood, and almost certainly, Jacob believed intellectually in the presence of God everywhere; and yet when he arrived that night after the long journey and chose for himself the only pillow available, a hard stone, and laid his head thereupon to rest, he was not conscious of the nearness of God, had not thought of God, was not engaged on a quest for God, was not seeking Him. In the morning, looking back, he said, in effect, I arrived here last night, tired and weary, chose my stone, pillowed my head thereon, and went to sleep with God; but I did not know it. This unconsciousness of God is patent in the ordinary life of men, and in the life of men who intellectually believe in the nearness of God, men whose conception of God is the Biblical conception, the Christian conception, that wherever man is found, there also is God, and that man cannot escape from Him. If a man shall ascend into heaven, God is there; or if he may descend into hell, God is there; or if he take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, even there God's hand holds him, supports him; if man shall say, The darkness shall hide me, even the night is light round about him, for he has to do with a God Who seeth in the darkness as well as in the light. Nevertheless, in spite of intellectual conviction, men live unconscious of the God in Whose presence they ever are.

The reasons of this unconsciousness of God are intellectual limitation, spiritual dullness, and moral failure. Intellectual limitation, for no man by searching can find out God unto perfection; He must be apprehended of the Spiritual sense, and where that spiritual sense is dead, atrophied, inactive, man is unconscious of God. He may affirm the fact of God's existence, believe in His nearness, and yet never touch Him or be conscious of His touch on his own life. Man is

unconscious of God because of spiritual deadness, and all spiritual deadness in human life is the result of moral failure. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God," said God to His people in the olden days. Because of moral failure there is spiritual deadness, and because of spiritual deadness men live and move and have their being in God, and never touch Him consciously or see Him or know Him. "Surely God is in this place; and I knew it not."

The second fact suggested by this text is the method and the meaning of discovery of the fact of the nearness of God to the soul of a man. These things are illustrated in the story in the midst of which the text is found, and for that purpose we shall again this evening make certain references thereto.

As we approach this part of our theme we have to remember not only the fact of man's prevalent unconsciousness of God, but the issues of that unconsciousness. Unconsciousness of God shows forth in the dwarfing of the life and in the corruption of the life.

Unconsciousness of God means, first, the dwarfing of the life. A man unconscious of God sees only what is near. Peter, writing to Christian souls who had deflected from the straight course, said that if a man lack the graces of the Christian character, it is because he is blind, "seeing only what is near." That is the perpetual outcome of lack of consciousness of God: man sees only the things that are near; his life is horizoned by the material; his outlook is horizontal, not vertical, as Dr. Jowett has expressed it in his recent lectures on preaching; the outlook is upon the level on which the material stands, and he sees only the thing that is near. I know well that we speak of men in the commercial world and in the world of statecraft as far-seeing men. It all depends! How far can they see? If they see but the bounds of the present world, and understand no more than its methods and its markets, its policies and its arrangements, then they are nearsighted men. Yonder old woman, poor in this world's goods, entirely illiterate, who for forty, fifty, sixty years has lived in the light of the uplifted face of God, sees farther than all commercial princes and statesmen whose outlook is bounded by time and sense and things material. The man who has lost his consciousness of God sees nothing beyond the near, the things of today. If a man sees only the near he can become only the little. He has lost that which appeals to life so as to lift it: the sense of the things that lie beyond the sense of the ages, of the eternities, and of the spiritual. If a man lives hemmed in by the things of today and the things of the material world, he himself becomes of today and of the material world; his long gazing thereupon, bends and stoops him downward until he is dwarfed because he is unconscious of God.

Unconsciousness of God, therefore, issues in corrupting life. Life without God is life lacking its true quality, the atmosphere for which it was created, to which in the mystic fact of its being it does finally and actually belong. It is indeed true that in trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home. It is not only true that in Him "we live and move and have our being," as Paul declared on Mars Hill; it is also true as Paul also proclaimed, quoting from the Greek poets and declaring the truth of their affirmation, "We also are His offspring." To live apart from the fountain of life is to know the corrupting of life. To attempt to satisfy life on the level of the material is to debase, to degrade life. If men have no consciousness of God they are dwarfed, and presently corrupted; for there must forever remain within them the clamant cry for that for which they are made, and of which in the mystery of creation they form a part. If there be no answer to that cry, then the life is dwarfed and withered, and becomes corrupt because it turns to other sources,

which do but destroy the life.

Twenty years later Jacob turned his face back again to his own land, and on his way home he had another spiritual experience. God met him in some form and semblance by the running brook Jabbok, and, wrestling with him through the night, mastered him and so changed him from Jacob, heel-catcher, to Israel, ruled by God. When the light of morning broke, Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is healed." Men read that verse and imagine that Jacob meant, I have seen God face to face, and I am not destroyed. He meant something far finer. I have seen God, and my life is healed. Wherever the vision of God is lost the people perish. Wherever a man lacks the consciousness of God his life is dwarfed and corrupted; and as the vision heals, the absence of it destroys life.

The supreme note of the text, however, is that to this man, unconscious of the nearness of God, there came the discovery of the fact of God's nearness. Having the story in mind, let me, first of all, observe that the discovery of God to the soul of a man is always the act of God. Not only is it true that no man by searching can find out God to perfection; it is also true that man as you find him today is not consciously seeking God. Unconsciously, yes; in every enterprise of his life, in every enthusiasm that he allows to master him, in all the things that drive him, he is, without his knowing it, following after God if haply he may find Him. But not consciously, not willingly, does man set his face toward the face of God in the hope that it may shine upon him through the gloom. Wherever there comes to a man the actual revelation of the fact of the nearness of God, it is by the act of God. By that I do not mean to say that men may not come to intellectual apprehension of the fact of the Divine existence as the result of their own investigation. I believe men may come to that apprehension in that way. I am speaking of something more personal and immediate, more vital in the matter of life. I am speaking of the consciousness in the soul of a man of the positive fact of God; and I affirm that wherever the discovery of God is made to the soul of man it is by the act of God. God uses many ways of discovering Himself to the souls of men. I like this particular story because here it was through a dream. We emphasize the value of this story when we remember it was but a dream; there was no actual ladder, no actual angels visible to sight, no actual form of Deity standing by the side of the man: it was a dream, to be accounted for, in all probability, quite naturally. Nevertheless, through that dream of the night God made Jacob certain of Himself, so reaching Jacob's inner consciousness, so appearing to his spirit life, that when morning came—and morning is the time of disillusionment, morning is the hour in which you laugh at your dream and see the unreality of it; but in this case the man came to the morning and when the mists melted from the rough and rugged hillside and light was everywhere, and no actual thing in nature had the strange, weird appearance of something supernatural—when the morning came he said, "God is in this place; and I knew it not." So by way of a dream, explain it as you will, God rode into the consciousness of this man, and He made the dream of the night the vehicle of His approach. He came to the soul of a man by way of a dream. Let me assure you that the day for even that method of God has not passed away. Even in these days of ours, if we did but understand it, God will ever and anon appear to men in dreams, natural dreams, and through them speak to the souls of men. If you are not of that particular temperament, then God has other ways of speaking to you. The thought of God comes to you in an unexpected place and moment: some arresting thought in the midst of the busy rush of life in the city, some startling thought that possesses you while the train is bearing you sixty miles an hour to your destination, some thought born within your mind as

the result of some remark made by a friend on a totally different subject. In these ways God approaches the soul. By a word spoken, by some deed, in an hour of peril, in an hour of catastrophe, in an hour of high ambition and noble aspiration, in a moment of supreme joy, God makes Himself known. These are but faulty, halting illustrations. What I would emphasize is that God discovers Himself to men, directly, immediately, setting aside the priest and the prophet and the preacher, and Himself coming to the soul. God does this in the case of every human being. The trouble is, we do not always recognize that it is God. We treat the illumination as though it had been some will o' the wisp, some wild fantasy; yet in the moment, howsoever it came, from whencesoever it came, God was a reality; and God was a reality because He Himself was breaking through upon the consciousness of man.

We of the Christian faith, of the evangelical faith, and of the evangelistic method, are greatly in danger of imagining that God comes to men only through our preaching, and because we have such vain imaginings we lose many an opportunity of leading men to walk in the gleam of light that has come to them until they find the perfect day. God makes Himself known sooner or later, most often in childhood's days, and with greatest clearness; as the years pass, the sense of God recedes, until we still intellectually affirm our belief, but emotionally and volitionally deny it. Even then God ever and anon breaks through upon us. In such hours of breaking through, an opportunity is created for the soul of man. In that hour, come when it may or how it will, whether in the sanctuary or in the market place, whether in the loneliness of our own inner chamber, or amid the multitudes of men, in that hour, in that moment, God by that breaking through creates for a man an opportunity; and in that moment the man will seize his opportunity and follow the gleam, or else refuse to walk in the light until presently—not immediately it may be, but after a lapse of time—he will laugh at the idea that God ever did speak to him. It was not very long ago that a man in public life in this country said to a great company of men in a Northern town, in what he thought was a humorous vein, You know, many years ago, I was almost converted myself! Oh, God, that he might have known the tragedy of his own confession! Many years ago God broke through the mists and shone on his soul, and he very nearly answered, but not quite; until, after the lapse of years, he looked back and laughed at the folly of the idea, the infatuation of the notion that God had touched Him. Are not some of you very nearly in that condition? God broke through when He took your child away. God impressed Himself upon you in the hour of your new joy; almost involuntarily you found yourself desiring to be a priest, that you might offer the sacrifice of praise. God broke through in the midst of tragedy, or in the rapture of the comedy. What did you do? If you followed the gleam and worshiped, then there were other revelations for the path of the just man: the true man "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Let me speak of such as obey after discovering this fact of the nearness of God as a great reality. What does this discovery mean to the soul of the obedient? It is, first of all, a new interpretation of life. All life is different when a man is conscious of God. I do not think we can do better than go back to the old story and take the whole of that dream, for in that dream of the night great things were suggested to the soul of the sleeping man, the power of which abode with him as the morning broke and day succeeded to day.

The ladder which he saw was a ladder whose foot was set solidly on the earth and whose top reached the heavens. These are all figures of speech, but the facts they suggest are perfectly patent. In that night Jacob saw that wonderful suggestion of interrelationship between heaven and

earth, of mediation between heaven and earth. He saw angels ascending and descending, and there came to him the conception of this life, this present life, with its wounds and weariness, as ministered to by angels. The supreme fact in the new interpretation was the nearness of God and the interest of God in him, the perfect knowledge of God concerning his immediate position, and the awareness that God committed Himself to his need.

When a man becomes conscious of God he becomes conscious of the relationship between heaven and earth, conscious of the spiritual ministries all about him of which he had never dreamed, conscious of the interest of God. Two men are in a beleaguered city; without are their foes, waiting for them. One of them cries to another, Master, what shall we do? The other said, O Lord, open his eyes, and

Lo, to faith's enlightened sight,

All the mountain flamed with light.

He saw on the mountain heights, gathered about the place of peril, the angels of God. Someone is saying, Of course we do not believe in that! Of course not, because you do not believe in God, and you do not know God; and therefore you limit your own life to this little world, and trust to your own wit and cleverness and your own manipulation of dust; but the man who has seen God knows not only that God created us, but that other worlds and other beings are round about us, and that in the mystery of His unfathomable and unquenchable love He sends angels and spiritual forces of which we had never dreamed to minister to us and to help us. In the light of the Christ revelation the writer in the New Testament catches up the great thought and expresses it in infinite music as he says of the angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service to the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?"

To be conscious of God is immediately to have a new interpretation of life, to discover that the earth itself is more than dust, that all flowers are more than the operation of blind force; to believe with Jesus that God clothes the grass, and robes the lily as Solomon was never arrayed, that He is with the birds, and remains their comrade in their dying. All creation utters forth this great evangel when a man is conscious of God. "This is the age-abiding life, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." All life becomes new, so that the apostle will write, "If any man is in Christ,"—which is the Christian way of saying, If any man has come to knowledge of God—"he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." To be conscious of God, to know the fact of Him, to obey the revelation and to walk in the light of it, is to see every human face changed. We can no longer look with contempt on the bruised and battered face, for beneath the bruising and the battering we see the image of God. The measure in which we become conscious of God is the measure in which we cease to be narrowly patriotic, for we have come to the consciousness that "He made of one every nation of men." So flowers, birds, the sky, the earth, man, everything, becomes suffused with the glory of God when a man himself is living in the consciousness of God.

This necessarily means that a man comes to a new standard of action. His standard of action henceforth must be that of obedience to God, of co-operation with the angels. A man conscious of God has as the standard of his action the inspiration of his endeavor, a passion, all-consuming, to make this earth like unto His heaven; or, to express the thought in the older way, his passion will

be that God's Kingdom shall come, that God's will shall be done, that God's name shall be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven.

This consciousness of God means not only a new interpretation of life and a new standard of action, it means also a new enablement, and that is the supreme matter and the supreme value. "God is in this place; and I knew it not."

Why? Because of some moral failure and consequent spiritual dullness, whereby I am precluded from finding God. Then God, in infinite grace, and in ways that I know not of, breaks through upon my soul, and does that for me which I never could do for myself, and I, obeying, find moral enablement. There comes to me a sense of His great mercy and His great compassion. There comes to me a sense of the forgiveness of my sins, and out of that sense, if it indeed be a true sense, there springs a hot resentment against sin, a passionate endeavor to master it; and as I start on my crusade against sin in my own life, and in the world, I find I am being empowered by mystic forces of which I never dreamed, by spiritual might which is from God. He works in me to the willing and the doing of His good pleasure. When there is moral enablement there is spiritual quickening, and I come to know the Lord, "growing up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ," the horizon being put ever further back, all life widening, broadening, becomes more and more glorious. The intellectual limitation is negated by the spiritual apprehension, and there comes that abiding certainty of God which no argument can destroy.

Finally, let us remember that of this great fact of the nearness of God the incarnation was the final unveiling. Surely that is what our Lord meant when speaking to Nathanael, the Israelite in whom there was no guile, he said, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." In other words, all that was suggested to Jacob in the dream of the night is vindicated, and verified in the Lord Christ Himself. By incarnation God revealed His nearness to men. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from a Father), full of grace and truth." So opens this gospel of John in which alone is recorded the story of Christ's employment of the vision of Jacob for the suggestion of this truth. If in that incarnation the fact of God's nearness is interpreted, in what sense is God seen to be near to men? In the life of Jesus it is revealed that He is near to human circumstance and human experience of all kinds. Immediately following on the employment of the ancient story in the conversation with Nathanael three days afterward, He went to the house of joy to attend the wedding. God is near man in the hour of his joy, interested in his joy—I will say it reverently but I will say it—laughing with human joy, the merriment of the human heart causing gladness in the heart of God! Take the keynote of the Manifesto of Jesus, "Blessed," and it misses some of the music, or "happy," as some translate it, and even then you have not caught all the significance of the word the Lord did use. Not that the word "blessed" is wrong, not that the word "happy" is wrong, but that we are using them in peculiar ways; happy has become almost a flippant word, and blessed has become almost a sanctimonious word, which is worse. I venture to affirm that the word Christ used meant, Well-to-do, prosperous. "Well-to-do are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." "Prosperous are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The word insufficiently translated by our word "blessed" or "happy," and ill-translated by the phrase I suggest, is a revelation of God's purpose for man, it is that of joy, gladness. The Bible tells us that He will wipe all tears away, and that sorrow and sighing shall flee away. It never

tells us that He will stop humanity's laughter, or end its merriment. There is no parable in all the New Testament finer in its revelation of the Father than the parable of the prodigal. The language of the father when the son comes home is this, "Let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Jesus first went to the house of joy, near to human joy; but the last of the seven signs which John records gives us Jesus in the house of death, in the house of sorrow, God drawing near to the broken heart of humanity, and telling it the secret of the resurrection life, and illustrating the joy of the knitting up of severed friendships and reunions that are yet to be, as He gives Lazarus back to his brokenhearted sisters. Between that first sign, and that final sign, all the gamut of human emotion and experience is illustrated. The nobleman's son is sick, and God in Christ will heal him. In Bethesda's porches lies a man, eight and thirty years in the grip of an infirmity, and God in Christ will break sabbath to give that man sabbath. Five thousand folk are hungry for bread, and God in Christ knows that hunger, and supplies bread. A few souls are full of terror as the storm sweeps the sea, and God in Christ will hush the storm and give them comfort. One man blind blunders on his way, longing for the light of day, and God in Christ will open the blind eyes. Incarnation is the revelation of the God in Whose hand our breath is and Whose are all our ways.

By that incarnation He has revealed to us the purposes of His nearness. He is near to save—a great word, the most gracious word of all—to save men, to remake them in their spiritual life, and by that means to renew them in their moral life and ultimately to perfect their entire being. He is near man to save, and in order to do it He is near men to govern them.

The discovery of the nearness of God, come when it may or how it may, creates responsibility. It is possible that even now, in this evening hour, God has broken through in some life, and the sense of His nearness has come to the soul. If it has been so, follow the gleam, adjust thy life toward that light, take up the poise of soul that answers the call out of eternity, consent no longer to think of thyself as of the dust and as of today alone. Follow the gleam. To obey is to follow on to know more perfectly. To follow on to know more perfectly is to come to enlargement of life, and is to come ultimately to the perfecting of life. "Surely God is in this place," and let us say, We know it. If so, if ye know this thing, happy are ye if ye do all that the great truth suggests!

Genesis 28:16. The Nearness Of God Unrecognized.

Genesis 28:16.

The Nearness Of God Unrecognized.

Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

Genesis 28:16

A preacher of a generation ago introduced a sermon on Jacob's dream by saying, "A long journey, a hard pillow, an uneasy conscience, and a heavy heart. These are the things that make men dream." If that be the natural explanation of the dream of Jacob, the supernatural value of the story is that through the medium of the dream God impressed Himself on the mind and the heart of this needy man.

I see no reason to doubt the suggestion that the dream of Jacob was very natural. After the long journey he was weary; the locality in which he halted for the night was characterized by lack of beauty, by rocky fastnesses, and barren, almost desert, expanses; the hillside swept up in terraces. As the man laid his head on the hard pillow of stone, the only kind available, what more natural than that, as he fell asleep, the strange stuff that dreams are made of should borrow the appearance on which his eyes would most likely last rest, and people the terraced hillside with angelic beings? And what more likely than that a man who believed in God as Jacob did and never ceased to do, whose father had believed in God as Isaac did and had never ceased to do, and whose grandfather Abraham had been a man of venturesome and heroic faith, what more likely than that such a man in such an hour in such a dream should imagine that God Himself stood by his side?

I say the dream is perfectly understandable and quite natural, for in every dream there is the foundation of previous experience and an added something that we cannot account for by previous experience. We can always find the first reason for our dreaming in the things through which we have been passing, and in our dreaming we always find matters introduced which seem to have no relationship to anything through which we have passed.

That recognition of the naturalness of the dream does but make it the more remarkable that God used that which was thus a perfectly natural process of the human brain, and made it the medium through which He impressed Himself on the soul of a man, and brought him to new comprehension of the fact which I venture to say he had always believed in intellectually.

It is not with the dream itself that we are proposing to deal now, but with the waking consciousness of the dreamer, especially with that aspect of it which was new and resulted from the dream. If, however, you will allow yourselves to call up this old story, which I venture to imagine is one of those which you remember most clearly, because in all probability it formed one of the foundation stones of that Biblical structure which your mothers gave you in the days of long ago—if you will recall the circumstances, you will see what I mean when I speak of the new consciousness of the

man. When Jacob lay down to sleep that night he had no immediate, direct, actual consciousness of the nearness of God. When he woke in the morning he said, "Surely the Lord "is," not was, "in this place; and I knew it not," not I know it not. Mark the tenses, they are all suggestive. The new consciousness was of the fact, not that God had been there the night before, not that God had visited Jacob in the night, but that God was there at the moment: "Surely the Lord is in this place." The new consciousness, moreover, was one of Jacob's past ignorance, "I knew it not." On arriving here last night after a long and weary journey, tired and lonely, homeless and exiled, wondering and perplexed, I did not know God was here. I lay down to sleep without knowing it, without any thought of it, without it playing any part in my final resolutions or adjustments of life. "I knew it not."

Now let me invite you to follow me in a meditation on some of the thoughts suggested by this exclamation of Jacob when he awoke in the morning after the strange and wonderful dream of the night. First let us consider the fact which Jacob discovered that night, "The Lord is in this place." Second, let us consider the unconsciousness of the fact which he confessed, "I knew it not." Third and finally, let us think of the discovery of the fact to him, how it came about, and what it meant.

First, then, as to the fact discovered. The whole matter may be stated in a very brief sentence. That night, by the impression made on his soul in a given locality and in certain clearly defined circumstances, Jacob came to discover what we speak of as the omnipresence of God. That is a phrase with which we are all familiar. It is a phrase of the theologian which has become a commonplace phrase in Christian experience. This was the hour in which Jacob came to actual, practical consciousness of the fact of the omnipresence of God, and it found expression in his case in language that spoke of God, not as omnipresent, but as being right there where he was.

That is the Biblical doctrine of God. It is impossible to conceive of the God revealed in the Bible without at once admitting the fact of His omnipresence. As is the case with every great essential truth of revealed religion, there is one classic passage in the Bible in which it is most clearly set forth. All the great doctrines and truths of revealed religion are expressed somewhere specially in the Bible; if we desire to know poetically and truthfully the relation of God to creation we turn to the book of Job and read there the theophanies of its later Chapters; if we would know the value of the whole revelation of God in the sacred writings we study Psalms 119; if we would know all that can be said concerning love we turn to the thirteenth Chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians; if we would comprehend the full force of faith in the affairs of men we study the eleventh Chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. So the great doctrine of the omnipresence of God is declared in that psalm which constitutes our lesson:

Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there:

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou are there.

If I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall Thy hand lead me,

And Thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night;
Even the darkness hideth not from Thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.

And so on through all the majestic language of the psalm as it sets forth the omnipresence and the omniscience of God, that He is everywhere, and that no secret can be hidden from Him.

I repeat, this doctrine is the common faith, not merely of definitely Christian men and women, but of all those who intellectually receive the Christian faith as the Divine revelation to man. Yet it is a truth which men are not easily mastered by. It is a truth which is held in the upper reaches of the intellect, but which strangely fails to reach down to the volitional powers of the life, and rarely affects, even among Christian people, the emotional capacities of the life.

This fact of the omnipresence of God, what a fact it is! To state it in general terms like this is to fail to make it impressive. Even the reading of Psalms 119 is too mighty an exercise for the mind of man, and the only thing that any man can say who attempts to read that psalm is what the psalmist himself does say in the midst of its rhythmic beauty:

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.

To speak in general terms of the omnipresence of God, even though the mind accepts the truth, is to fail to be impressed by it.

Let us take two Biblical illustrations as illuminating the Biblical doctrine. I take the two which perpetually impress my own heart and soul. The first is in Daniel's prophecy, the story of Belshazzar's feast. It is the story of a night of carousal, drunkenness, debauchery, and ribaldry; the story of how in the midst of revelry there came the semblance of a human hand and the mystic writing on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." Then I listen to the prophet's interpretation of that great message to the king, and among the things he said this arrests my attention: looking fearlessly into the eyes of that drunken, debauched king, the prophet said to him, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." I do not quote the passage at this moment to deal with the declaration that the man had failed to glorify God, but to ask you to observe the conception of God that filled the mind of the prophet. "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways." Belshazzar's breath at that moment was foul with drunkenness and obscenity; nevertheless, that breath was in the hand of God! To speak of the omnipresence of God in all its vastness is to declare that which must be accepted intellectually if the doctrine of God which the Bible presents be true; but it does not impress the individual, it is too great; but when I see a drunken king, obscene and vulgar, and I watch the heaving of his breast and recognize the operation of his frame fearfully and wonderfully made, fashioned according to the plan of the most high God, and when I recognize that man's breath is in the hand of God, then I begin to understand the doctrine of the Divine omnipresence. Passing from the Old Testament into

the New, I find myself in Athens with Paul and hear him saying to those Athenians—those decadent philosophers who knew nothing of a living philosophy or a vital idea, but were trading on the memory of past philosophies—that he has come to make known to them the God they ignorantly worship, and then declaring that "He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Thus in language of the simplest I am brought face to face with the sublimest of all truths, and am brought face to face with that truth in such a way that the general doctrine becomes a personal arrest. It is that great doctrine of the nearness of God which became reality in the life of Jacob through that dream. How, then, do men come to the consciousness of this truth which makes it powerful and prevailing in their lives? Take the case of Jacob. It was the consciousness of the presence of God in an unexpected place. I have already hinted at that. Let us consider a little more carefully the unexpectedness, first, as to the place itself. Jacob was near Luz. Hugh Macmillan has described Bethel thus: "At Bethel the natural landscape is so bare and exposed, that it opens no door into the supernatural." There was nothing there to suggest God to man. It seems to me there are signs in nature that must suggest God to the mind of the intelligent man. During the past week, in different parts of this country, I have looked at the autumn tints and felt as though in spite of myself I was being reminded of God, for the flaming fires of autumn, cleansing the floor and preparing for the new springing of life, seemed to me to suggest the altar fires of Deity. But there are places so barren that no such suggestion seems to be made, and Bethel was such a place. Jacob was far away from his home, far away from anything that spoke to him of religion. He said presently, "This is... the house of God"; but there was no temple there, for the temple was not yet erected; no tabernacle was there, for the pattern had not yet been given; there was no shrine, no altar; these he had left behind in the tents of Isaac in Beersheba. He was away from the things of worship and religion, away from everything that would be likely to suggest God to him. Yet God was there with him. That is the truth to which he awoke in this place near Luz, away from Beersheba, a place barren and bleak, away from the fruitfulness of the valley and the beauty of the hills. In this unexpected place he found God.

Take the case of Belshazzar: in the hall of sensuality and carousal God was present; He could not be excluded.

Take the parable of the rich fool, which came from the lips of the Lord Himself. He said, My fields, my fruits, my barns; and suddenly, in the midst of his calculations and his commercial enterprises, all perfectly legitimate (for I pray you notice whenever you read the story that this man was not guilty of fraudulent getting), God said, "Thou fool." God broke in upon him suddenly. Where was God? Right there in the man's fields, and in his harvests, enwrapping him more closely than the atmosphere he breathed, enabling him to get wealth. God was forgotten, but He was there.

This truth of the omnipresence of God means that God is where man is; man never escapes. My brother, you faced some stern duty today, and you were obedient thereto with a sense of almost unutterable loneliness possessing your soul until, perchance, you said, with Elijah, I only am left true to the ways of God. But you were not alone in that hour. When you stood firm, four-square to every wind that blew, God was with you. It may be that even today you have come to the sanctuary hot from sin; when you sinned you were not alone; God was with you. He is the God in Whose hand your breath is, and Whose are all your ways. There are those tonight who are in the midst of pain and suffering; they are not alone. "In this place," the chamber of physical torture, God is. "In this place" of mental anguish God is. Someone has come into this congregation lonely. Oh,

the tragic, agonizing loneliness of London! Hardly a week passes over my head in this ministry but that someone talks to me of loneliness. You are alone; you know no one who sits by you tonight, you are away from home and friends and all old associations, apparently you are alone; but God is with you!

Jacob did not say, God came to me in the night, God has visited me, God was here yesternight and now has gone. He did not awake to the consciousness of a visit; He awoke to the consciousness of a presence. The thing that he found out that night was not that God visits man, but that God is with man wherever he is. We expect to meet Him in the sanctuary; but He is near us in the market place. We look for the gleaming of the glory of His face at the holy shrine; but he is as surely with us in the den of wickedness. Not alone in the sanctuary, but where the multitudes gather in defiance of His law, He is there. This is the truth to which Jacob awoke.

Consider, in the second place, this man's unconsciousness of the fact of the nearness of God. The note of tragedy in my text is this, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." God is here, but I did not know it. How are we to account for the fact that Jacob did not know that God was there? It may be accounted for by intellectual limitation. It may be declared that he had not come to the consciousness of this great truth of the omnipresence of God. It is said by some that to these men of the past Jehovah was merely a tribal deity, one of a number of gods. That I will not argue. It may be true; but I do not believe it for a moment. I believe that what took Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees was a conception of God as One, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

I think we must go deeper if we are to find out why this man was not conscious of the presence of God. Not intellectual limitation only, but spiritual dullness. Remember, a man never finds God intellectually if he be spiritually dull. Man is more than matter. Man is more than mind. Man is spirit. If the spiritual fact in man's life be atrophied, dead, inactive, he cannot find God. He may be an intellectual giant. His mind may be trained perfectly, it may act with remarkable precision in every department of human life; but he never finds God. The great inquiry of the book of Job can be answered only negatively until this hour:

Canst thou by searching find out God?

Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

As I look back at Jacob on that night I see that he was spiritually deadened, dulled. God was there when he chose the stone on which to put his head. God was nigh when he rested his head on his chosen pillow. God was with him, but he did not know it, he had no sense of it. Intellectual limitation. No, something profounder: spiritual deadness.

But why the spiritual deadness? Because of moral failure. In the past lay trickery and baseness, meanness and deceit. Remember, this was not a man whom you can describe as godless. He was a godly man. He believed in God. The trouble with Jacob was never that he did not believe in God. The trouble was that, believing in God, he did not believe God could manage without his help. He was always trying to hurry the Divine economy by his own wit and wisdom and cleverness. That is the story of Jacob: in doing that he had descended to baseness, meanness, evil courses; and moral depravity had dulled the spiritual sense. That night he was not conscious of God.

This unconsciousness of the Divine nearness is widespread—how widespread who shall tell? In the case of men generally it is true that they do not know the presence of God. There are thousands of men today who, if you were to ask them as to their belief, intellectually, in God and His omnipresence, would affirm both; but they do not know God as near, they have no immediate consciousness of God, they have no commerce with God. The scientist as a mere scientist is unconscious of God. I want that statement to be correctly understood. It is quite possible for a man to be a Christian man and a scientist, and to have perpetual consciousness of God. When I speak of a scientist merely, I mean a man who is dealing with things that are of this earth, and who has no traffic with heaven. Here is the marvel of all marvels, that he will touch and handle, analyze and synthesize, examine and re-examine, investigate and reinvestigate, and continue to investigate the stuff which has come from God, and yet never recognize God, never find God. We have had a remarkable exhibition of that during this autumn in the meeting of the British Association in Dundee. If anyone shall ever refer to what President Schafer then said, let it be remembered, whatever he may have meant by it, that he declared he was dealing with life and not with soul. I think that he should always have the benefit of that admission, though I do not profess to know what he meant, and I have a shrewd suspicion that he did not know himself. One of the most highly trained scientific minds of the present day, a man of intellect, culture, refinement, reverence, is seen dealing with matter itself, recognizing the marvel of it, observing its mutations, changes, differentiations, and yet never finding God, having no consciousness of God.

It is equally true of the philosopher. That is why that man is sorely mistaken who finds his refuge in modern philosophy. The most modern philosophy will be the laughingstock of the philosophers of a generation yet to come. I make that affirmation in the light of the history of philosophy. Every philosophy has made its contribution, and has at last broken down, and been respectfully dismissed, while new philosophies have been introduced. This will continue so long as man is simply thinking on the level of the finite and the immediate and material. Yet here is the marvel of marvels: men will attempt to deal with wisdom, and yet be quite unconscious of God. They will argue for Him or against Him, but they do not feel Him, do not know Him, have no sense of Him.

Come to quite another illustration. There are men and women to whom I am preaching tonight to whom travel is a perpetual revelation of God; they cannot stand and gaze on the sun-capped heights of Alpine splendor without being conscious of God; they cannot cross the mighty sea and look at the wide expanse of rhythmic, orderly waters without feeling the presence of God. But there are multitudes of men who see no gleam of God's glory in the light of Alpine snows, and hear no thunder of His presence in the roar of Atlantic billows. I have crossed the Atlantic now forty times, and often have I stood and gazed over the sea, and always as I have done so, sometimes in the silence of the night, able to see little in the darkness, or at other times able to see much by the light of the moon and the stars, or as in the day I have looked at it stormy, or lying sweet and placid as though kissed to sleep—always the great word of the Bible has come back to me,

Thy way was in the sea,

And Thy paths in the great waters.

Then I have turned from the contemplation of the sea to the contemplation of men and women, and I have found people who have never looked at the sea for six days, they have been so busy playing bridge! God is close at hand, but they do not know it, they have no sense of it, no

consciousness of it. They burn incense on Sunday, not to God, but to the respectable notion that they manifest their belief in Him by attending morning service; but they do not know Him. Yet He is there—in the sea, and in the ship, and in the cabin where they play bridge, the God in whom they live and move and have their being. Their breath is in His hand.

Closer is He than breathing,

Nearer than hands or feet.

But they never know it.

It may be equally true of the statesman. He may deal with national things and international things, and be busy with policies, diplomacies and arrangements; with frontiers, and readjustments, and partitions, even today at this very hour, and yet be entirely unconscious that God is abroad in the Balkans, and that business long deferred is being done in the resistless will and economy of God, Who will not be trifled with forever! No consciousness amid the clash of war of the presence of God and the overruling of God! "I knew it not!"

Or a commercial man watching the markets, lamenting the fall of consols, speculating on the effect that war will produce, waiting for news of the success or failure of the harvest in the distant parts of the world, may have no consciousness of God. God is there, but he does not know it.

Or even a physician, passing in and out of homes of sickness, and perpetually in the presence of pain, may not find God. God is there, but he does not know it.

Men everywhere, busy here and there through all the busy days, and wherever they are, God close at hand; but they do not know it. That is the tragedy of all tragedies. The supreme, ultimate tragedy of human life is unconsciousness of God. The supreme fact of human life is that in Him we live and move and have our being. The supreme tragedy is that we do not know it.

"I knew it not." Why not? We speak of intellectual limitation, that we cannot comprehend the fact. That is not the answer. The answer is spiritual deadness, spiritual dullness, the atrophy of the essential glory of life; for if man be spiritual he will discern the spiritual. There are very many who do discern God. In science and in philosophy and in statecraft and in every other walk of life there are men who have "endured as seeing Him Who is invisible." In these lives God is seen, and God is known, and God is recognized.

Behind all spiritual dullness are moral perversity and failure. It is sin that dims my vision of God. It is sin that atrophies my spiritual life and makes me unconscious of the nearness of God, so that I may live and move and have my being in God and yet not know Him. This is of all tragedies the supreme tragedy, that men live and move and have their being in God and do not know Him.

There for tonight I leave my message, broken off and unfinished for lack of time. We will attempt to return to it, that we may consider what that forgetfulness of God really means in human life, that we may speak of His method of discovering the fact of Himself to the soul of man, and also of what that means.

Genesis 32:28. The Crippling That Crowns.

Genesis 32:28.

The Crippling That Crowns.

And He send, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Genesis 32:28

Taken in all its simplicity, it will readily be granted that this old and very familiar story is, nevertheless, most remarkable. To summarize with almost brutal bluntness, it is the story of God crippling a man, the story of God Himself taking the form of a man in order to lay His hand on a man, and that in order to cripple him.

This is not the story of Jacob's triumph over God, save in a secondary and yet a very spiritual sense. This is primarily the story of God's triumph over Jacob. Old as it is, familiar as it is, I propose to give a little careful attention to it, for it is one of those Bible stories which have made a most profound appeal to the heart of humanity. I venture to suggest to you that our very fondness for it has led us to accept interpretations which I cannot characterize in any way but as superficial. Gradually, by the transmission of these interpretations, slightly modified as they have been transmitted, we have been in danger of missing the deepest thing in the story.

Just a word in an aside; perhaps this word is a sort of open secret for my brethren in the ministry who may be here. I suppose that at some time or another all of us who have been preaching for any number of years, say a generation, have preached from the words, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," in order to prove what wonderful power there is in prayer. I certainly have done so. Now, I do not think that idea is here at all. I have no doubt the sermon on prayer was true, but it did not properly belong to this text. That, I fear, is rather a common trouble with sermons. That confession, which is good for my soul, if not for yours, will help me to say that I have returned to this story, and after further consideration, I want to utter, so far as God shall help me, the things it has been saying to my own soul.

Let us first remind ourselves of the story of this man up to this point. I will omit all the things of his earlier years, and simply take the happenings of the twenty years prior to this event. At seventy years of age Jacob left home, a keen, hard man, intellectually convinced of God, but self-reliant, and at that moment defeated and disgraced. After twenty years, the story sees him returning wealthy, embittered, hardened; still intellectually convinced of God, still self-reliant, but afraid, haunted with a strange sense of fear. This particular day, to which we are brought in this Chapter, and the happenings of which are so closely related to our text, was a day of hosts. Behind Jacob was Laban's host departing, returning after a bitter interview between the men. Then, somehow, to Jacob, in that very day, there came a vision of angels; he saw hosts of angels passing before him. It does not at all matter for the moment whether we say that this was simply a reminiscence of the

days when he started away, and had a dream of angels and a ladder; or whether we believe that God in that moment gave him an actual vision of some great company of angels. The fact that abides is that to this man, hard, astute, by no means emotional, there came the sense of the angels' presence. He saw a vision of angels, and said, This is Mahanaim, or, to translate, The place of two hosts. And, moreover, there was another host. His servants returning to him, brought him this news, "We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him." Thus it was a day of hosts, the hosts of Laban returning from him, the hosts of Esau approaching, and God's host of angels round about him.

Jacob set himself with characteristic carefulness to arrange for the coming of Esau. He was still the self-reliant man, arranging for the presence of Esau by sending him presents. We see the man if we read the story fully and carefully. See how he arranged. He divided his present into parts, and gave his servants strict instructions, When you come to Esau, if he receive you, well; if not, give him the first instalment of the present, but do not give him more than you can help; if that does not help matters, bring up the next instalment, and so on.

That is the revelation of the man, a wonderfully clever man. I am perfectly sure he would have been a most successful business man in London or New York!

But there was more in the man than all that cleverness. There was haunting fear, a fear which would not have been there if he had not been a man of faith. Contradictory as that may appear, it is certainly true. There was a feeling in his heart that everything was not done, although he had done everything. There was a consciousness that something was left unattended to, something which he could not do alone. Therefore, as in that Eastern land the sun suddenly sank to its rest, he sent across the Jabbok the vast companies of his household, and he was left alone. That which happened in the hour of that loneliness is the theme of our meditation; that which led up to the word spoken to him as the next day broke, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." No more Jacob, heel-catcher, but Israel, governed by God. What led to that word spoken to the man?

We shall notice three things. First, Jacob's need as he himself felt it and his need as God saw it. Second, the struggle of the night, that strange happening, which always fascinates us, however often we may return to the story. Finally, the blessing as it is crystallized into speech in the words, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel."

The need: first of all as Jacob saw it. We have tried to pass over the ground and to watch him up to that moment of loneliness. We have spoken of a haunting fear, a mystic sense that everything was not done, that took possession of him. Let us look a little more carefully at the man, and attempt to enter into his consciousness at that moment. I think we may do so by saying that he was looking back, and looking on, and looking round about, at the immediate. As he looked back, what did he see? Those twenty years. There can be no question but that as he looked back over those twenty years he had a sense of great satisfaction. They had been years of wonderful success. I am warranted in saying all this by the prayer which he had offered earlier in the day, when in the presence of the God of his father Isaac and of Abraham, he had recognized how wonderfully successful he had been. To our Western ears the words "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies" have very little of meaning; yet we know, if we take time to think, that in these words we have the expression of great and wonderful success, of a

fortune twice amassed in those twenty years. As he looked back Jacob was conscious of victory, of success. I cannot help saying—for I am trying to understand the man on the human level, on the level of my own humanity—that he was conscious of a pardonable sense of satisfaction in that he had proved himself too strong for all the cunning of Laban. Read at your leisure the story of the conversation with Laban. Jacob reminded Laban that during those years he had ten times changed his wages, yet, nevertheless, in spite of all Laban's trickery, this man had moved through to a great and assured success, and such a success—do not forget this—that when talking to Laban about it he could say that Laban could bring no charge of dishonesty against him; he had never robbed Laban; he had only outwitted him. He had the knowledge of twenty years of success wrung out of adverse circumstances. A man is always permitted some amount of satisfaction as he looks back over twenty years of that kind. That was the backward look.

Ah, but that is not quite far enough back! Why those twenty years in Laban's country? The answer would remind him of that business of the blessing, and that business of the birthright! Over all the twenty years of success was the haunting shadow of meanness and baseness and wrong. Jacob knew those years. There in the loneliness of that night, with the Eastern sunset and darkness round about him, or only the light of the stars overhead, while the little Jabbok murmured on its way down to the Jordan, he was thankful and pleased about the success; but there was Esau! Phantoms of the past were floating in front of him. He shook them off and looked on!

What was ahead? The land, the land promised, and therein faith was operating. That land was not fairer than the land he had been dwelling in. Why did he desire it? Because God had sworn to give it to Abraham and to Isaac and his seed, because the possession of that land was within the Divine economy, because Jacob knew, however much through base deceit and meanness he had interfered, hindered, postponed the Divine purpose rather than helped it, Jacob knew that in the purpose of God he was a link in the chain of the Divine economy, moving ever on toward high purpose. He returned to the land because God had called him, because it was in God's purpose to create a continuity: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; but the phantoms of the past were the terrors of the future. Esau was in possession in that land, and was traveling toward him with four hundred men.

After the backward look and the forward look, the look around at circumstances followed. Everything was done that could be done; presents were sent to Esau which were in themselves confessions of a sense of wrong done in the long ago and evidence of Jacob's desire to placate his brother. The mother and the children were guarded, so far as he could guard them. What now? One thing he needed, he thought, and what was it? That God should help him. Is not that perfect? Is it not exactly what a man ought to feel at such a point? Let us leave our inquiry and find our answer in the sequel.

Now, with all reverence I approach what seems to me to be, in the way of exposition, the more difficult part of the subject, that which must be approached with reverence. As I read the story itself, up to this point I see Jacob's sense of need. How did God see that hour? What was God's vision of that man? How did God understand his need? How near together, or how far apart, were Jacob's sense of need and God's knowledge of it? I affirm that God saw a man whom He knew to be a believer in Himself. It is impossible carefully to study this story of Jacob without seeing that. Criticize him as we may, and we surely shall do so, as we find out how much he is like ourselves; nevertheless, through the story from beginning to end we are conscious of the fact that deep down

in the profoundest things of his life this man believed in God and never wavered in that belief. God saw him as a man profoundly believing in Himself. He saw him, moreover, as a man who believed in the Divine purpose, and who desired to come into line with the Divine purpose, to cooperate with the Divine purpose. He saw him as a man who, in a wonderful degree, had entered into the appreciation of the master principle of faith in the spiritual, which had made his grandfather Abraham a man of strong initiative, and his own father Isaac a man strong in the quietness of passive faith. He had entered into this great inheritance; he believed in God and His purpose, and he passionately desired to be in line with it, to cooperate with it, and so to fulfil his destiny.

God saw this man not only as a believer in Himself, not only as a believer in His purpose, and not only desiring to cooperate therein; He saw him self-reliant. He saw this man as one who felt himself able to help God, who felt that it was necessary in certain conditions for him to manipulate events in order to bring about the Divine consummation. That had been the story of all the past, the story of every blunder he had made. There is no single tale of infidelity in the life of Jacob. There is no story of hours of deflection from the pathway of desire to cooperate with God. His failure lay in the fact that he had said, in effect, It is God's desire that I should have the birthright; I will help God by taking advantage of Esau's hunger to obtain it; it is God's purpose that I should have the patriarchal blessing; I will clothe myself in these skins and go and help God by cheating my father. Every blunder had as its motive the desire to help God. This self-reliance made him imagine that it was necessary for him to hurry God, to manipulate events so that they should minister to the speedy realization of the Divine consummation.

God saw that what Jacob supremely needed was first to discover his own weakness, and that in order that he might discover, as he never had done before, the power of the God in Whom he believed. On the threshold of possession of the land he must be brought to that attitude of soul in which he would be willing to receive the possession as the gift of God rather than imagine that he had gained it by his own cleverness and his own wisdom.

I believe there are those who are listening to me, brethren and sisters in comradeship of faith, who are really in revolt against this presentation of this story, those who are saying, Is it not the right thing for a man to work out his own destiny on the basis of his own belief in God? There is a sense in which that is true; but there is a deeper truth, and in order to discover it we need to ponder this story most carefully in the light of the whole movement of this man's history. In order that we may be preserved from the crippling, it is good that we should do so in the days before we come to the sense of weakness that will drive us back to it. Let it not be forgotten, Abraham was never crippled. With all reverence, if I may say it of One Who was more than man and yet was very man, Jesus never passed through such an hour as this in order to perfect His faith. However much we may be in revolt against this way of stating the story, let us consider it before we dismiss it. This is the lesson that God would teach Jacob, this is the need as God saw it: that Jacob should understand that a man can enter into possession of God's inheritance and destiny only as he receives it as a gift from God. He never can enter on the Divine destiny merely on the basis of intellectual assent to the fact of God and by means of his own cleverness.

That will be further illuminated if we take a step forward and glance, in the second place, at the story of the struggle. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." That is so easily read, and yet it is so impossible of interpretation by a preacher in the pulpit; but I know that

there are men and women in this house who in their own experience understand it. Through the long, long night there wrestled a man with him. God was limiting His own strength in order to create a consciousness of it to Jacob. God incarnate, that is the story. God—to use Charles Wesley's daring phrase—was contracted to a span, limiting Himself to the level of humanity, a man facing a man, yet infinitely more than man! God stooped to the level of man and put on the man Jacob the hand of man in the night. What for? To bring into play all Jacob's force, that it might express itself to the uttermost, and so learn its limit and its weakness.

As I watch the long struggle of that night I am more than ever amazed at Jacob; how wonderful a man he was. He knew, of this there can be no doubt, that the touch was supernatural, even though it was the touch of another man. As I watch him through the night I see the old character manifesting itself, the determination to make the most of an opportunity. It is not said that Jacob wrestled with the man, but that the man wrestled with Jacob. There is no question that Jacob wrestled too; but the beginning of the struggle was on the side of God: it was the man who wrestled with Jacob.

When the first sudden flush of the new day shot up the Eastern sky the man who had wrestled said to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." This was said after that strange, and wonderful, and appalling touch which crippled Jacob. I cannot explain it any further. The man might have crippled Jacob at the beginning of the night; but he did not. He might have done it at any point; but not until Jacob had wrought out all his own strength in answering the strength of God did God touch him and cripple him. It was when Jacob discovered that his strength was ebbing away, and that he could no longer resist the power that was laid upon him that the strange, wonderful thing happened. Jacob replied to the voice of his Master, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." We could not know what the man said unless we heard him say it, and caught the tone and accent. The spirit of a man is never in the words he utters, but in the tone in which he speaks. How did he say it? I am always so thankful that what seems to me to be the Divine interpretation of the story was given long centuries afterwards. I turn to the prophecy of Hosea and listen to the great prophet as he was denouncing Ephraim for his sins, and from that denunciation I am going to read only a few words:

Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he continually multiplieth lies and desolation; and they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt. The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will He recompense him.

So far, the prophet was dealing with the people about him; then in a flash he went back to the actual Jacob of long ago: "In the womb he took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angels, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him." It was not by tremendous courage that he won the victory, but by the sob and sigh, by the agony and the utter sense of defeat. It was an appeal out of helplessness. He said it with tears, with a sob, in a moment when all the resoluteness of the years was breaking down. He came to a sense of weakness and inability, and out of that hour of defeat he rose into higher strength and greater majesty than he had ever achieved: "I will not let thee go,"—he hardly had strength to finish it; I think his voice was choked with tears—"except thou bless me!" It was the last sob of a defeated man. The last sob of the defeated man, the man defeated by God, is the first

note in the triumph song of the selfsame man: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." "What is thy name?" My name is Heel-catcher. That is not so poetic as Jacob; but it is well to be truthful. Every Jew will read that every time he reads Jacob. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed," so reads the text. We discover that there is difficulty in this text; the translations of the Revised and Authorized versions are different. I venture to suggest to you that the words may have meant, as I certainly believe they did mean, not that Jacob had struggled with God and had prevailed over God—there is a secondary sense in which that is true—but rather that Jacob had striven with God and God had prevailed, and therefore that God had striven with man and God had prevailed. I do not believe that the reference was to past victories over men; but rather that it was a prophecy of the new type of victory over man in that hour when, paradox of the faith-life, he had won his victory over God through defeat by God. If a man will prevail with God he will do so in the hour in which he is mastered by God.

What was the blessing? We have already touched on it; let us but return to it for a moment. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power," said the old version, and that has been the reason of the persistent declaration that Israel means prince. It means nothing of the kind; neither does it mean one who has power with God, save as that may be a deduction from what it really does mean. These Hebrew words occur all through the Bible, made up in some way with the name of God ending them. Isra-el means God-governed, a God-mastered man.

The sun had risen now, and Jacob was going back to join his company. I cannot help it if you charge me with imagination. I never go back with him. I prefer to be with the company that met him. On the other side of the Jabbok I am waiting in imagination with his friends, wondering what has happened, why he does not come. At last, there he is, he is coming. See him? But can that be the man who went down last night? He has had an accident; he is limping; he is a cripple! I hasten to meet him, and I ask, What has happened? Why are you limping? I think he would have said, Do not call me Jacob, I have a new name; and there is no need for anyone to draw any special attention to this limp in the way of commiseration or pity; this limp, this halt as I walk, which will go with me to the end of my days, is a patent of nobility.

Presently he entered the land. And how did he enter the land? what of Esau? Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him. "Thou hast striven with God; and with men hast prevailed." Because in the strife with God thou hast been mastered, Jacob, therefore hast thou risen into co-operation with the forces of God that can disarm your brother and bring him to you with kisses and tears. That is the lesson of all lessons. Do not misunderstand me. This man had a great deal to do and a great deal to learn, as subsequent history teaches; but he had learned the central lesson, and all its values and experiences would now be wrought out into his own experience, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

You say that this is a very old story, and that times and customs and conditions are all changed. Why bring this story to men in these modern times? Why go back there? For the simple reason that if it be true that times and customs and conditions have changed, God has not changed, and man has not changed. If for a moment you were inclined, in a kindly way, to criticize me for leading you back to Genesis, you have surely discovered that there is wonderful comradeship between

you and Jacob. God has not changed, man has not changed; therefore the values are permanent. What are they?

Let me attempt to gather them up. Granted the principle of faith—and I am speaking only to believing men and women—then God will perfect it by teaching us our dependence on Himself. Happy indeed are we if we yield to the truth at the beginning, as did Abraham; or as did Joseph even more perfectly; but so many of us are like Jacob, we struggle independently of the God in Whom we believe. We do believe in Him. We do desire to be conformed to His will, and to cooperate with His purpose; and then we struggle and make our plans and we succeed wonderfully; but inevitably, sooner or later, there comes a crisis, not necessarily in circumstances, though sometimes in circumstances; but some crisis, in which by the direct act of God He lays His hand on us and we are brought to the appalling sense of our own incompetence and weakness. That is a great hour, an hour of overwhelming disappointment merging to despair; to some, let it be carefully said at once, an hour of actual, personal affliction as the result of which we shall never again be what we were, but shall go softly all our days, shall always halt by the way, and in certain senses be cripples.

Let us look carefully at such hours. I may be speaking to some man or woman in the midst of such an hour. Consider it carefully, and try to find out what God means. Is He not saying to thee this morning, clever, astute, capable man: Always hast thou believed in God, yet always hast thou manipulated thine own life, made thine own arrangements with wonderful success; suddenly thou art crippled, broken? God is saying to you, What is thy name? Is there not the strange, new light on the eastern sky that foretells a day of triumph? You may go softly all your days, you may never walk quite as you walked before. Shall I ever forget that hour when I heard a friend of mine, whose name I will not mention here, preach as I had never heard him preach before; when, going into the anteroom afterwards, I took him by the hand and said, Man, what has happened to you? Quite literally he walked his vestry with a limp, and as I looked at him I saw that this magnificent man was crippled for life, and he said, By that limp I live! In that hour of his unmaking he was made.

To gather up everything as I see it and feel it, let this story say this one thing: When God cripples, it is in order to crown. May we learn the secret and rise to the place of power by yielding ourselves to Him.

Exodus 23:15. The Presence Needed.

Exodus 23:15.

The Presence Needed.

If Thy presence go not... carry us not up hence.

Exodus 23:15

In the history of the world there has been nothing comparable to the creation of the Hebrew nation and its attempted realization of the theocratic form of government. Moreover, in the history of that nation no time was more wonderful than the period during which Moses was dictator. He was a man of vast learning and singular force of character. To him the greatness of the nation consisted in its relationship to God, and his greatness as a leader lay in the wonderful way in which he was able to keep alive among the people during the period of his oversight this conception of their greatness.

The occasion of the words of my text is to be noted, and that with some care. Three months after the exodus the people came to the wilderness of Sinai, and there encamped, and Moses ascended the Mount. In those lonely heights he saw and heard that before which all former sights and sounds were as nothing. The pomp and splendor of Pharaoh's court, in which he had been nourished, paled into insignificance before the glory of the great King as it was unveiled before his wondering eyes.

During a period of months he spent his time passing backward and forward between the people and God, and during this time he received the Divine constitution of the nation, its laws and its ritual. The Sinaitic peninsula became the theater of revelations that were to affect humanity to the end of time, and Moses was the medium of revelation.

After his last sojourn of forty days in the Mount, he descended to find the golden calf, to find the people hankering after a representation of God—for the people had made the golden calf, not as an attempt to supersede God, but to represent Him. We know the story of this man's fierce anger and sorrow, how he smashed the tables of stone to fragments and instituted most drastic methods of dealing with the people. Then we see him returning from those terrible hours to God, and in God's presence breathing out his soul in a petition that was never finished, and is all the more eloquent and forceful because it was never finished. He said, "If Thou wilt forgive their sin..." and the sentence is unfinished; "and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." In that hour of solemn and awful communion between Moses and God he was commanded to return to the people and resume his position as leader. God said to him, I will not go up in the midst of these people lest I consume them. I will send an angel. Then follows one of the most wonderful of all Bible pictures, the picture of this man mediating between God and the people, arguing the case with God. We are to remember that the very argument of Moses was inspired by God. At last God said to His waiting servant, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will

give thee rest." Then all the pent-up agony of Moses' soul expressed the resolution inspiring all his mediation as he cried out, "If Thy presence go not... carry us not up hence."

I want to lead you, so far as I am able, or rather so far as I may be helped, in consideration of this story, and then to leave it to make its own application, to speak its own message to us. We fix our attention on that word which was the response of Moses to the word of God's grace, that word in which there is revealed all the terror which had assailed his soul at the thought that God was about to withdraw Himself from His people. "If Thy presence go not... carry us not up thence."

Let us inquire, first of all, the reason for that word. Why did Moses say such a thing, and how did he come to the resolution which expressed itself in that word? Then, second, let us observe the definiteness of his decision, and inquire the reason for it.

First, then, the reason for the decision itself, and the way by which Moses reached it. He took this position because he realized that the presence of God met the people's needs. This is the simplest of all statements, and I have made it so, in order that we may come face to face with the great teaching. Let us go back with this man and find out what he had been learning concerning God that made him decide that progress without God was impossible, for that is the meaning of the declaration, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." We cannot go back on the past, it is too glorious. We decline to go forward on any conditions other than those which have made the past. Progress without God is impossible; retrogression is out of the question. What revelations had Moses received of God that brought him to that decision? For the moment I am going to confine myself to those latest revelations of God that had come to Moses during those months in which he had been holding communion with God on the height of the mountain. I shall go further back presently to find out the process by which he came to the ultimate decision. What did he know of God as the result of those recent revelations?

He had discovered that God was a God of law. He had discovered that He was a God of order. He had discovered that He was a God of gifts. He had discovered that He was a God of love.

He had discovered that He was a God of law, that He was a God of law because the people needed law. In that wonderful code which, according to this record, he had received in the solemn and high hours of communion he had found a law perfectly adapted and adjusted to the needs of these people. It was a Divine law, coming from One Who knew the whole need of these people, and it was perfectly adjusted to that need. It was a human law in its image of man's weakness. We read these Old Testament Scriptures somewhat carelessly. At least, we are in danger of doing so, and there is a reason for this in that we have grown away from some of the incidental things of these laws; but to read them carefully and intelligently, and in the atmosphere of the hour and in the midst of the conditions of the people, is to realize what Moses realized—as they were whispered in his soul, spoken to him with a voice articulate perchance, or more probably in the high altitude of communion with God—that these were the exact regulations and requirements that these people needed. Think of the people, semi-barbarous, vulgarized by over two centuries of brutal slavery, suddenly led out of slavery into freedom. Is there any more perilous situation? With profound respect, and making no claim to an understanding of the problem, my friends in the United States, men of the North and men of the South, will agree with me that the most terrific hour that came in their history was the hour when the Negroes were freed—and still the problem of the Negro is not solved. Think of these people, then, as freed from two hundred years of slavery. They

had never lost the sense of relationship to God and of some Divine purpose in their history; but, nevertheless, they were vulgarized by the brutalities of human oppression. At your leisure, read again the whole code as you find it in Exodus, and observe its perfect adaptation to the needs of these people. Moses had discovered that God was a God of law, adapting Himself to the needs of men, speaking words to regulate their conduct and their relationships, of infinite wisdom.

He had discovered, moreover, that God was a God of order. All this had been revealed in details which seem to us to be so trivial that we read them carelessly. "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it." Then instructions were given, such as, eleven curtains of goats' hair, the length of each, thirty cubits, and the breadth of each, four cubits; and thou shalt couple them with clasps of gold and loops on the edge! This is the kind of thing which we read hurriedly, and sometimes even smile at, saying, Did God really say all that? He said all that, and I venture to affirm that Moses had been supremely impressed with the orderliness of God, with the fact that when He gave instructions to a people in this stage of development, He descended to the details of loops and clasps and couplings and lengths and breadths and materials. He is not only the God of the infinitely great, He is also the God of the infinitely small, careful not only concerning constellations, but also concerning the order of the leaves on the branches of the trees, so that, if we examine it, we cannot discover anything irregular in nature. If a tent is to be made for a people to worship in, God knows the materials and the couplings. At last, in the final chapter, we find the majestic music of the sevenfold repetition, "According to the pattern."

Moses discovered, moreover, that God was a God of gifts. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by the name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." What for? "To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood." Men inspired by the Spirit of God to be goldsmiths and silversmiths, workers in brass and stone, and carvers of wood. Moses had heard that wonderful word. God would take hold of Bezaleel and fill him with the Spirit to make him cunning to work a work of delicate beauty to which he was called. Fingers hardened with the brutality of brick-making were to be made delicate enough for fine gold work. Moses had found that if God is indeed particular that the order He chooses be observed, He is also One Who gives a new and mystic power by which fingers shall become deft to do the appointed work.

Finally, Moses had found in that agony of argument that God was a God of love, for he had heard God say amid the fiery indignation of His holiness against the failure and sin of the people in the valley, "I will not go up in the midst of thee... lest I consume thee by the way." The inspiration of the anger was the tenderness of God's love; the threatened withdrawal was the evidence of His patience and longsuffering.

Thus Moses came into the presence of God knowing that if God remained in the midst of His people to direct, control, suggest, then all their need was met; he was convinced of this thing also, that if God were absent, then only need remained.

There is no suggestion in the story of the withdrawal of God actually, for God never withdraws Himself from humanity, and, speaking within the limitation of human expression, God cannot withdraw Himself from humanity, for in Him men live and move and have their being. The thought is of the withdrawal of the consciousness of God, withdrawal of the sense of His presence. The angel proposed to lead them did not mean the absence of God, but the absence of the consciousness of God in the minds of men; and thus the terror that seized the soul of Moses was that this God—Whose presence had been made known to him, and was symbolized to the people by the thunder and the cloud and the lightning on the Mount, and was now to be evidenced in this very law and ritual—should withdraw the consciousness of Himself, and there should be between Him and His people the intermediation of an angel. This terror was born of his profound conviction of the need the people had of God, and of the fact that God perfectly met that need.

How did this man come to this conviction of the sufficiency of God? My inquiry may be answered briefly by declaring that successive revelations of God had been given to him to which he had been obedient, and by obedience to which the capacity had been created within his soul for new revelations. If the story of this man be pondered, it will be seen that God was ever breaking in on him with new methods and with new light. After forty years of shepherd life, forty years of preparation, forty splendid years of loneliness in the wilderness, God appeared to him. When next you think of Moses do not pity him when he leaves the glitter and gaud of Pharaoh's court. It was a great hour when he left all that behind and reached the essential grandeur of the loneliness of the wilderness, and that high sense of the nearness of God that always comes to a man when it is possible for him to escape from the tinsel and show of earthly things. After forty years, one day, as he was leading his flock as a shepherd, he saw a strange sight, a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed, and he heard within his soul a voice that said to him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." This was a mystic and inclusive revelation, but not the perfect explanation, of the fact revealed. The suggestion was that God is a fire, which does not necessarily consume, but, drawing near to which a man must put the shoes from off his feet, or, in the language of our own day, recognize the need for reverence and submission and awe. Then Moses heard speech, the condescension of God as He took the speech of man and spoke to Moses' soul, revealing the fact of God's consciousness of what had bruised and broken Moses' heart forty years before in Egypt; "I have surely seen the affliction of My people, which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." Trembling and afraid, Moses had shrunk from the great mission to which he was called, and said, I am not eloquent; and had been rebuked as God said to him, "Who hath made man's mouth?" Following on blindly, blunderingly, yet heroically, Moses had watched the power of God destroy the great nation and deliver an oppressed people. During those three months between the escape from Egypt and the arrival at Sinai, he had found that this God was a God of resource. Draw a contrast, for the sake of the light that comes from it. Think, first, of that night of the crossing of the sea, the sweeping of the wind of God, the holding back of the waters, the mystic awfulness of the stress and strain and storm, the march of the people through the sea; and the breaking of the morning and the music of the great song of victory. Then think of Marah, the bitter well, of the healing tree close beside it, and of God discovering the natural secret to His servant, so that the water was healed. Thus God was discovered as a God of resource, not merely the majestic might that breaks the yoke of the oppressor and divides the sea, but as a God of hidden secrets of healing, and of

springs among the rocks, so that waters gushed forth for the quenching of His people's thirst. At last Moses came to Sinai, the culmination of everything that preceded it, where the burning bush found explanation, and all the secrets that lay behind the operation of the Divine power were unveiled. Do you wonder that in this hour of national failure and national sin, when it seemed as though God would withdraw Himself from the people He had so wondrously made, that this man cried out in the agony of his soul, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence?"

Now, observe the definiteness of this position. In an earlier chapter of this book we find the word concerning God's personal guidance of this people: "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light," and, again, "And the angel of the Lord, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." Such had been the experience of the past, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night: symbols, merely, necessary to meet the need of that peculiar people. We see no cloud by day, no pillar of fire by night. We have never seen cloven tongues of fire sitting on the heads of assembled saints. Why not? Because we live in a day of greater light and privilege, when signs that are natural are unnecessary because of the fulness of spiritual illumination. Remember, we are now thinking of that dim and distant time, when these people were, as I have already described them, semi-barbarous, vulgarized by slavery. God fulfils Himself in many ways, always adapting Himself to the immediate need of His people. The supreme fact was the presence of God, and this was suggested to them, and kept before their minds, by that mystic cloud which burned and gleamed in the darkness of the night. The deeper truth is that the Angel of Jehovah was there, not seen but present. We must ever draw a very clear distinction in reading the Old Testament between "The Angel of the Lord" and "An angel of the Lord." Wherever we find the phrase "The Angel of the Lord," we discover that it has quite a separate significance, and refers to an entirely distinct person. It is difficult to say so much without saying a little more. To my own mind, there is no doubt whatever that the One spoken of as "The Angel of the Lord" was the Son of God Himself, Who thus appeared in many a mystic manifestation in the olden days, and Who must never be confused with the angel ministers. Through that figurative, poetic language of the time, the truth is revealed that God had been actually leading, overshadowing with the cloud by day, and shining in the gleaming fire by night.

In this hour of peril and of sin God said to His servant, I will send an angel, and Moses declined to accept an angel, he declined to go forward if there was to be some substitute for God, even in the form of an angel. That would have been retrogression, a going back. That is the meaning of one of the things that Moses said in the course of his praying, "See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know him whom Thou wilt send with me." It is as though Moses said to God, I have come to know Thee, through these unveilings and revelations, but I do not know the angel. I know nothing in all literature more wonderful than this, a man saying to God, I decline angel guidance after having known Thy guidance. God answered this man—appalling as seems his daring, so appalling that we almost tremble to put it in that way—by saying, "My presence shall go with thee."

Observe now, most carefully, that to which I referred by way of introduction. Moses did not suggest that they should go back. Retrogression was impossible, the past was too glorious. A little while after, the people suggested that they should go back: "Were it not, better for us to return into Egypt?" There was no such thought, however, in the mind of Moses. It was impossible to go back

on that glorious past. That I do not now dwell on, but this I do want to insist on: he did not dream of progress without God, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up thence." Better to die here, underneath all the magnificence of this mountain in the wilderness, and be buried, than to cross the Jordan and enter the land that flows with milk and honey without God. "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." The deliberate choice of the lawgiver was that, having arrived at that point in the glorious history when the onward march was checked by sin, if God was withdrawing Himself, the best thing was to die in the wilderness. All this is the language of high faith and clear belief.

How terribly we fail here, oftentimes, in individual, church, and national life. If in very deed God has departed from us, then let us cease. Oh, the agony of attempting to go forward along a line of the Divine pathway when God has withdrawn Himself. What insufferable agony—if you will permit me the superlative illustration, as it seems to me—would be that of the preacher who, having seen the vision and heard the voice and known the thrill and power of the Spirit's presence, should try to preach after he had lost his vision and the sense of the presence of God! Can there be anything more terrific, as we look at things in this atmosphere, than a Church of Jesus Christ from which Jesus Christ is absent. That is what Moses meant. The glorious past, the watchfulness over all the long years of slavery, the mighty hand stretched out to work deliverance, the divided sea, and the march, all the glorious past; but if God is going, then let us die here! There lies the land of the future, the program of God, the crossing of the Jordan to the land flowing with milk and honey; but we cannot go if He is going to leave us: "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence."

That supreme conviction and resolution made Moses the man of power that he was, and led him in all the steps he immediately took. I watch the process. What is this strange thing he is doing now? He is striking his tent, the tent of meeting—not yet the tabernacle, that was not yet erected, but his own tent, which had served as a center for their whole life, to which they could come for judgment, the very place from which God had spoken to Moses, and pitching it outside the camp, going away from the people and pitching his tent outside the camp. What was this man doing? Excommunicating a whole nation in order that he might readmit it on true terms! If the people will go back, they must go back by way of confession, and by way of putting away sin. He will receive them in the name of the God with Whom he has been holding communion. That is the way back. Believe me, there are moments when a man can excommunicate a church as surely as a church can excommunicate a man. In this, Moses pitched his tent outside the camp; but the camp was reconstituted around that tent by the way of return and the way of confession.

It was because of his profound conviction of the necessity for God, if the program of God was to be carried out, that he had adopted this method. Notice, again, the argument between God and this man. God said to him: "Thy people, which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt," and, reverently yet definitely, Moses flung the burden back on God: "Thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt."

Such a meditation as this enshrines its own application. To-day we face life with its crowding and overwhelming opportunities of service, and, thank God, the past is full of glory and triumph. The present is difficult. Problems are confronting us. I am speaking, not of the larger outlook of the Christian Church, but of the narrower one of this church. We are all conscious that the hour is electric with difficulty and strain, and yet there lies a future before us, a future grand and glorious in

the purpose of God, for His Church is to march victoriously until the very gates of Hades surrender. The program is clear and plain and definite, but for the moment we are halted. What is the supreme need? Finances? No! Numbers? No, a thousand times no! What, then? God. He has been with us; we have known His presence, His power; the demonstration of it has been found in lives renewed, remade, desolate men comforted, hopeless souls made courageous, impure men and women rendered pure. I stand here to-night, ere I go away, saying this: "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." I am not suggesting that the presence is withdrawn, but I tremble sometimes lest it should be, lest we run for a time by the momentum of past victories while God is absent. If I could lay a charge on my own soul as I leave this pulpit for eight weeks, and if I could lay a charge on my people, it would be this: Discover whether the glory is passing away. Is it moving out from the threshold as Ezekiel saw it go? Is there a danger that God be withdrawn? I am not going to answer the question. I want to find out. I propose to do it. Will you join me? "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." Let us end there. Blessed be God, the past cannot be undone. The one thing you cannot take from me is yesterday, with its glorious revelations of power. The future can be undone, and it is well for us sometimes to pull ourselves up like this, and to deal with God. There I leave it.

Exodus 34:29. Shining Faces.

Exodus 34:29.

Shining Faces.

It came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the Mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him.

Exodus 34:29

This verse has often attracted the preacher, and naturally so. Almost invariably the attraction has been that of its declaration, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone. This also is natural and proper, for that is the main statement. The verse, from the purely literary standpoint, seems to blunder cumberously on its way to that main declaration. But these very apparently awkward repetitions are of great importance, and, in proportion as we grasp their significance, the main statement will become the more arresting and suggestive.

First and obviously, there is declared in this verse the fact of which Moses was unconscious—that his face shone as he came down from the Mount. Then there are the words in which the writer, undoubtedly Moses himself, accounted both for his ignorance and for the shining of his face, and the very repetitions constitute an emphasis which commands attention.

As to the actual shining of his face, he carefully explains the secret of it—"by reason of His speaking with him." He had been dealing with God, and the glory which consequently suffused his spirit shone from his face.

My purpose is to consider the story that is contained in the verse, in order that we may deduce from it some principles of permanent value, and apply them in the simplest and most commonplace realm.

In the story there are two phases. Of these the first is found last in order of statement. It is contained in these words: "The skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him." The second phase is contained in the earlier part of the text: "When he came down from the Mount with the two tables of the testimony in his hand, when he came down from the Mount, Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone."

We are all familiar with the traditional picture of Moses that represents him with two horns or beams of light, for beams of light constitute the significance of the horns. In all probability, that traditional picture of Moses was due to a confusion between two Hebrew words. There is a Hebrew word which signifies irradiation, a general illumination; another Hebrew word signifies to shed forth beams of light. The second of these words is used to describe a sunrise, from the view-point of the rays of light which shoot up the eastern sky. The other word describes rather a general irradiation and illumination. There is no question at all that this latter word is the true word

in our text, and not the one that suggests beams of light. The fact thus declared, then, is that Moses' whole face was irradiated in a strange and a wonderful way, in an unusual manner, in a way in which those familiar with him had never seen it irradiated before. His face was transfigured; it was metamorphosed. Just as on the Holy Mount the disciples saw the Face of Jesus transfigured, metamorphosed, made radiant as the shining of the sun in his strength; so in the case of Moses what men looked upon, and looked upon with wonder, was a strange new outshining of glory, through the very form and features of the face with which they had become familiar. The deep secret of that outshining was that the spirit of the man, strange and newly illuminated and suffused with light, mastered in a new way his physical countenance. The material passed under the mastery of the spiritual, and there shone and flashed from his face a new and strange and wonderful glow.

Such an experience is by no means uncommon on lower levels. We have all seen it, more or less often, in the course of our lives, and in hours of communion with our friends. The face of a mother is often transfigured as she looks upon her child. The face of that mother is very plain and commonplace usually; but I have never seen a picture of the Madonna so beautiful as the actual face of some mother brooding and crooning over her bairn. We have seen the same transfiguring of the human countenance in the case of true love, in the shining eyes and face of a man, in the loveliest eyes and face of a woman. It has been seen again and again in the history of the world on the face of the martyr. They looked upon the face of Stephen, and it was as the face of an angel, for the light of the spiritual joy transfigured the physical countenance. Over and over again high heroism in the place of difficulty transfigures the face of a man until it flames and flashes with the courage of a god. That is what men saw, in a superlative degree, as they looked at Moses on that particular day. He came down from the Mount and they looked, and saw his face shining with a mystic light.

Moses himself in this verse declares the reason of that shining; "The skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him." It is very important that at this point we should have these pronouns rightly allocated. The effect produced, this transfiguration of his face, this illumination, this irradiation, was not the result of Moses talking to God; it resulted from God talking to him.

Let us try to see the occasion. In those wonderful days Moses ascended the Mount of God six times, and this was the last descent.

He had first been called to the Mount, and God had uttered to him words of the great covenant which He proposed to establish between Himself and His people, that they should be to Him for a people of His possession. Descending from the Mount, Moses had declared the words of the covenant, and the people had consented, saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken unto us we will do."

On the occasion of the second ascent, God had spoken to him in other language: "Lo! I come unto thee in a thick cloud"; and had commanded him again to descend and to set a fence about the mountain, and to warn the people to sanctify themselves, to stand apart in awe, aloof from that mountain. Going down, Moses had carried out these injunctions, and separated the people.

Again he had ascended the mountain, for the third time, to receive a further command as to the necessity for the sanctification of the people and the separation of the Mount. The third descent

was to obey, and thus to make more sure the awful fact of separation between God and the people.

Then came the fourth ascent. Taking up with him Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders, they saw God, and were not consumed. Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and the seventy elders retired, and Moses was left alone with God for forty days, in the course of which he received the Law, and the pattern of the ceremonial worship and ritual. Then came the fourth descent. He came down from the Mountain bearing two tables, upon which the Law was written. The golden calf had been created; and Moses, hot with righteous wrath, dropped and broke the tables of the Law.

Then came the fifth ascent. Moses went back, bearing the sin of the people upon his heart, and prayed one of the greatest prayers recorded in the Bible. He prayed that God would spare the people, and, if in no other way, that He would blot his name out of His book that the people might be delivered. In that strange and mystic hour of communion, Moses dared to ask that God would reveal Himself to him in some new way. Then it was that God told him that no man could look upon Him and live, but that He would hide him in some cleft of the rock, making His glory pass by him. The fifth descent was a return to prepare two new tables in obedience to the Divine command.

Then he ascended for the sixth time. During the period of his last presence upon the Mount, God wrote again the Law upon the two new tables, and made Himself known to him in a way in which He had never made Himself known before.

We may cover all the ground that is necessary for our present understanding of that revelation by saying that Moses had revealed to him by these words of God, that mystery of the merging of mercy and judgment in the Divine character, and in the Divine being. In words that throb with tenderness, even as we read them, the character of God is revealed as to the compassion of His heart. In words that are still vibrant with the thunder of His holiness, His character is revealed as to His holiness; He could make no terms with sin. With the strange new sense of God upon his soul, Moses bowed his head and worshipped. In response to that worship, God repeated in that hour of communion the terms of the covenant between Himself and His people, and re-uttered the words of the Law which had already been given.

In proportion as we apprehend the mystic wonder of that wonderful hour upon the Mount, we begin to understand the experience of Moses. That new spiritual illumination was so mighty, so powerful, that it irradiated his countenance.

So we come to the second phase of the story, which, as I said, is first in order of statement:

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the Mount... Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.

He had no consciousness of the light which shone upon his face. His spirit had entered into a new fellowship with God. He had fathomed yet more deeply the unutterable abyss of the Being of Deity, and his whole spirit was mastered and held and captured and illuminated by the experience.

Now note the twice-repeated declaration: "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai"; "When he came down from the Mount." That which created his unconsciousness was the Mount, and the fact that he held in his hand those two tables of stone. The Mount was the place of Divine revealing, and that is always the place of self-concealing. The measure in which a soul passes into the

presence of God is the measure in which the soul becomes unconscious of itself, and rises to the full dignity of the meaning of its own experience. The deep secret of the human soul is capacity for God which is always forgetfulness of self. He had been on the Mount with God, and all his consciousness was effaced by the fulness of experience. There were no atrophied powers, there was no loss of personality; but personality rose into full spiritual health; and personality in full spiritual health becomes unconscious of itself in its grasp upon God, for the knowledge of Whom and communion with Whom personality is created.

The introduction of the words, "With the two tables of the testimony in his hand," is a remarkable one. The first two tables of the testimony upon which were inscribed the ten words of the Law had been broken; and when Moses realized that he had two new tables in his hands, a supreme consciousness of God filled his soul. Those tables were the symbols of the whole truth that had been revealed. God had declared Himself a God of compassion and of holiness, and the possession of the newly written tables ratified the declaration. That is the Biblical revelation of God from beginning to end, and here it emerges in an almost unexpected place. He is the God of the second opportunity. The Law is broken! Grace will write the words again, and send them back to men that they may try again. Moses coming down from the Mount was not thinking of himself; he was thinking of God; and the light and the glory that He had given to him changed the fashion of his countenance.

There is nothing that we need today in this land of ours more than faces that shine. We cannot walk our streets today, we cannot travel by railway train without seeing shadowed faces everywhere. The faces that we need are faces that shine, strong in confidence, in hope, in sympathy.

I hold in my hand a clipping from a recent issue of *The Bystander*.

I fear that we English are not religious at all. (A sombre black tie as evidence of belief does not convince me. A dull-dog-look in the face is no proof of Christian conduct.) If we were really religious, we should light-heartedly wear flannels on Sundays (when weather permitted), and be merry and bright instead of hanging about like ticket-of-leave men afraid of being pulled up to report at any minute. There is enough cant and personal cowardice in our Sunday solemnity to convict us all of hypocrisy in every hour of the day. We are afraid of our neighbours, and they are afraid of us. We believe that if we are only sufficiently miserable we shall pass muster as being respectable. I am hoping that when our boys come back this insipid "respectability" will go to blazes.

My only apology for reading so frivolous a paragraph is that there is one sentence in it of which I want to make use. Let me say that this is a clipping from two columns, the whole of which consists of the senseless patter of some writer who knows nothing of the agonies of the human soul or of the holy ecstasies of which the soul is capable. "Flannels on Sunday!" There we have the whole shallow and impertinent philosophy revealed! The one sentence I refer to is this: "A dull-dog-look in the face is no proof of Christian conduct." That is perfectly true. A dull and sombre face is a denial of Christianity. What we need today, I repeat, is that there should be multiplied everywhere faces that are strong, not brutal—there is a difference; faces that shine with confidence, and never are careless—there is a very clear distinction; faces that are radiant with hope, not frivolous or indifferent; faces that are sympathetic, not pitiful. The Christian face will always be a face that has

in it evidences of sorrow, but shining through will be a joy that transfigures the sack-cloth. It will be the face of Jesus reproduced in measure; the face concerning which a prophet long ere He came into time had foretold, which foretelling was fulfilled; His visage was more marred than that of any man; a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and yet the face of One Who could say to His disciples when the darkest clouds were gathering about Him, and the supremest sorrows were surging upon His soul, "These things have I spoken to you, that My joy may be in you."

It is now five-and-twenty years ago and more since a very simple thing came to my own personal knowledge which profoundly affected me at the time, and from the influence of which I have never escaped. A Yorkshire factory lass had given herself to Jesus Christ; the light and the joy of it was in her soul, and her face became transfigured. She was walking up and down the platform of York Station, waiting for a train. Sitting in a first-class railway carriage was a lady of title and culture. She saw the lassie pass her carriage two or three times, and at last called to her and said: "Excuse me, but what makes you look so happy?" The girl replied: "Was I looking happy? I did not know, but I can tell you why." And she told the woman the secret of her joy. She did not know that her face was shining, but the shining face of the factory lassie arrested the woman who was in agony. The end of the story is that this woman was led to the same Christ, and her face also became transfigured.

Such shining is always unconscious. The effort to look in any particular way is always a failure. All parents know this. There are times when for some reason or another in playfulness they try to look severely at their children, when they are not feeling so. It is never successful. We cannot cheat our children so. It is equally true that when, bowing to the empty conventionalities of a degenerate society, we try and look pleasant at our guests; when we are not feeling so, we always fail, and know perfectly well that we are failing. Perhaps one of the best illustrations may be found in the realm of photography. Is there any agony greater, or any effort more unsuccessful, than that of trying to look as one wishes to look when a picture is being taken? Yet listen to me. A few months ago I was looking at a picture of a beautiful woman, and on that face all the story of her love for her man was patent. She told me that it was taken for him, and that the negative had been destroyed. How had she succeeded? Do you imagine that when she sat for that picture she was thinking about her face? Never for a moment. She was thinking of him, and forgetting herself; and so the light of her love shone upon her face.

A shining face is always the expression of a shining soul; if there be no illumination of the soul, there can be no irradiation of the face. The ghastly smirk that imitates happiness is deplorable; it is tragic. The light within which makes us forgetful of ourselves is the light that transfigures the face. As the spirit is strong in God, the face expresses that strength. As the soul is confident in Him, confidence shines from the eyes. As the spirit is full of hope on the darkest day, hope is seen upon the countenance. As the soul is sensitive to human sorrow and joy, feels the pain and the bliss of others, all the sweet sympathy is manifested upon the face.

What, then, are the secrets of such shining? Let us go back to the story. I admit that times have altered, things are not as they were; but the deep philosophy of the story abides, and its principles are of immediate application.

First, there must be time on the Mount. Time on the Mount is time in which we separate ourselves from all the things of men; time which we give to the cultivation of our fellowship with God and the

things of God.

And let us not forget that time on the Mount must be spent in the interest of the very men and the very things from which for the time we have withdrawn ourselves. Moses on the Mount was carrying the burden of the people in the valley. His unconscious shining of face was the outcome of the unconsciousness of himself that made him willing to say, "Blot me out of Thy Book, if only these people can be spared."

Again, there must be silence for God; praise and prayer, but also silence! Is not keeping silence before God almost a lost art among Christian people? "His face shone by reason of His speaking with him." Not by reason of Moses' speaking with God, but by reason of Moses' silence while God spoke to him. To silence, deliberately sought, reverently guarded, God will for ever more speak; revealing to the waiting soul new phases of Himself; unveiling the mystery of His own character; telling of mercy and judgment; repeating the terms of the old covenant that we have broken that we may renew it again, the law of life that we have violated that we may obey it.

These are the secrets of unconsciousness also. We shall return presently to the valley of our appointed task, mastered by the memory of the Mount, carrying with us the things we have heard in secret, strengthened by the revelation in loneliness. All unconscious of ourselves, we shall go, faces shining with the light.

To the Mountains O my soul,

For fellowship with God;

To the valleys O my soul,

In company with God.

To the Mount of Light ascend,

For purity of soul;

To the valley dark descend,

To make the leper whole.

To the Mount of Life ascend,

For energy for toil;

To the Vale of Death descend,

The demon's power to foil.

To the Mount of Love ascend,

To suffer there for sin;

To the Vale of Hate descend,

To succour, and to win.

To the Mountains O my soul,

In company with God;

To the valleys O my soul,

In fellowship with God.

In the sequel of the story we find our application. Moses had to veil his face. And why? Not because the light was too bright for those people to look upon, but because he knew it was fading, it was passing away. Paul takes up the story, and says that there is no need for the veil now, because the light that shone in the face of Jesus Christ never fades and never passes away. He also says, "We all, with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory." In proportion as we know what it is to find our way to the Mount, and to see God in Christ, to hold fellowship with God in Christ, in that proportion the light that comes upon our faces shines with undimmed and growing splendour, and we have no need to wear the veil.

Does the light on our faces fade? Is the glory passing? Has all the brightness that shone from our eyes almost vanished away? Then we ought to veil our faces, or else cease to call ourselves Christians. There will be no need for the veil, if the mountain light of life and love is ever upon us, and, beholding, we reflect. So may we be men and women of shining faces.

Leviticus 10:1-3. False Fire.

Leviticus 10:1-3.

False Fire.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

Leviticus 10:1-3

To understand the story of Nadab and Abihu, so far as it has any value for us, it is necessary to recognize the situation in its widest aspect. While the preacher of olden times declared that the eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth, and thereby indicated the unutterable folly of gazing at the far distances while the near and the immediate is neglected, it is nevertheless true that the near things may be most woefully misinterpreted unless we take in the wider range of vision and see them in relation thereto.

That is particularly the case in such a story as that of Nadab and Abihu, intermixed as it is with the code of laws, and being a brief historical narrative telling how, when the people were coming to consciousness of their national existence, and at the very commencement of the observance of all the symbolic ritual which had been provided for them, two men ministering in the holy place were suddenly smitten with death.

We must begin at the Divine standpoint, and in order to understand this swift and fiery judgment we must see not merely Aaron and his sons, not merely the encamped tribes of the children of Israel, but the whole wide world, and we must see that world as loved by God. We must remind ourselves as we approach this Old Testament story that the declaration of the New Testament revelation was as true then as when the New Testament writer penned it, the declaration that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." All the peoples were loved by God, and of all of them He thought, and for all of them He wrought in all His dealings with the Hebrew people.

This nation had been created by God for the blessing of that world which He loved. Through strange and devious ways had the Hebrew people been brought to this hour. With the infinite majesty of perfect workmanship, which we sometimes count almost unutterable slowness, God had moved to that moment; from the hour in which He spoke in the soul of one man in Ur of the Chaldees and called him to the high venture of faith, to become a pilgrim seeking the establishment of the Divine order in the world and the building of the city of God; through those strange and troublous times of the history of his son, through the long sojourn in Egypt, and now in bringing the people unto Himself and so creating a nation, not in order to have some one people upon which to lavish His love, but in order to have a nation through which He might manifest His

love for all the nations of the world.

Thus we come to the third circle, an inner circle, the circle of the priesthood, the circle of those who in this wonderful economy had been set apart for specific work, the work of mediating between these people comprising the new-created nation and their God, the men whose work should be that of intercession, the men who were to be admitted to the holy place to stand in the presence of God and there to intercede on behalf of men, the men who were to move out from the holy place into the presence of the multitudes, and there intercede with men on behalf of God. Thus we see the mediating priesthood at the center of the national life, the national life at the center of all the world; the nation created for the world, the priesthood created for the nation.

The world needed one thing supremely, to live by the law of God. "All souls are Mine," said a later prophet of these people: His by creation and by preservation. All men are perfectly known to His heart; His heart is the heart of love; His law for men is the only perfect law of their lives; the world therefore needs, and waits for the law of God. Within that wider world there now existed the nation; its specific equipment for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose lay in the fact that the law of God had been given directly to them, that they might know it, that they might obey it, that they might be transformed by it into the very likeness of their God, and so reveal to the world the breath, beauty, and beneficence of the Divine Kingdom.

Yet, again, at the heart of the nation, associated with its symbolic ritual and worship, there existed this priesthood, having as its final responsibility the necessity for the strictest observance of the law of God, the most entire abandonment to the will of God, in order that it might mediate between God and His own nation, and that in order that the nation incarnating His will might be the means of blessing to the nations lying beyond.

What Nadab and Abihu did that day must be measured by these larger issues, for a disobedient priesthood means a corrupted nation, and a corrupted nation means a wronged world. This indeed is the story of the ultimate temporary failure of the Hebrew people: corrupted in its priesthood, therefore in its national life, therefore failing to fulfil its mission in the world. The final example of the failure is that of the refusal of the Messiah. The whole story of it is written in those brief, striking words of John, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." A corrupted priesthood, Sadducean, demoralized, departed from the place of loyalty to God; a corrupted nation under the influence of such a priesthood resulted in the refusal of the One toward Whom the whole economy had moved, and, therefore, so far as the Hebrew people were concerned, the world was wronged and robbed and degraded. The world triumph of Messiah will not result from Israel's realization, but from God's overruling grace, whereby Israel itself will presently be restored. The triumph will be the triumph of grace.

In view of these wider responsibilities we can understand the immediateness and severity of this swift judgment at the very commencement of the national life. As to the exact form of the strange fire which was offered speculation is unnecessary and valueless. The facts are sufficiently patent for our instruction. They "offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." Men appointed to the most sacred service, rendered the service, but rendered the service in disobedience, and were consumed.

We are far removed from the Hebrew ritual; the chapter which was read in our hearing was a little wearisome to some of us; it seemed almost meaningless—a chapter of offerings, goats and rams, ritual and ceremonial; and we sighed with relief that we had escaped these things, and in some senses quite properly so; but let us not forget the illuminative word of the New Testament concerning these things, for they were the "shadow of the good things to come." While it is perfectly true that they were only shadows, and that when that is come which is substance, the shadow is of no value; nevertheless, the shadow demonstrates the substance. There can be no shadow apart from substance. The photograph demonstrates the person of whom it is but a shadow; you will hold the photograph and look on it, and love to look on it, until he comes of whom it is the shadow, and then you are independent of the shadow; but the shadow demonstrates the substance, for there could have been no such picture apart from the person. We are living under the Covenant of the Substance. We have nothing to do with this ritual, these ceremonies, censers, fires, and this material incense.

We are unconsciously inclined, it may be, to boast our freedom from these things. Let our boasting be intelligent. We are set free from the shadows only because the substance has come; those who live in the presence of the Substance have a far greater responsibility than those who live in the shadow. All of which means, not that the teaching of this Old Testament story has no application to us, but that the service which we are called on to render is more sacred, and the responsibilities are more solemn, and, consequently, the impact of this story on the soul of an honest man will be a forceful one. As Christ is greater than Moses, so is the responsibility of the priests of the new covenant greater than that of Nadab and Abihu.

Let us, then, with all solemnity consider the teaching of this story in regard to two matters: first, the sin which was thus judged as the fire of the Lord came out and devoured Nadab and Abihu; and, second, the responsibility which that judgment reveals.

Let us consider what the sin of Nadab and Abihu was externally, actually; what it was inspirationally; and, finally, what it was influentially.

What was it externally? Let us at once admit that it is most difficult to answer that question. These men were in the holy place, arrayed in holy garments for actual service, for that is the meaning of the phrase, "they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp"—and they were rendering holy service. It was a great hour in the religious life of the nation, when the glory of the Lord was manifested; and the people were hushed and awed into the very solemnity of worship. It was then, in the holy place, arrayed in holy garments, occupied in holy service, that these men sinned the sin which was immediately punished by deaths. How are we to account for it? Let us glance on to a later chapter in this book of Leviticus.

In the sixteenth chapter we have an account of the ceremonial arrangements for the great Day of Atonement, and in the course of that account we find instructions given to the priests concerning their entering into the holy place and the burning of incense: "He shall take a censer full of coals of fire off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil." A remarkable fact is that the chapter thus giving instructions concerning the Day of Atonement and how the High Priest must enter in and offer incense is prefaced with these words, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord, and died." Here, then, perhaps we have some light on what happened that day. I

think it is not an inaccurate deduction that in that hour of religious enthusiasm these men placed on their censers fire that they obtained from somewhere other than the altar of God. They did a right thing in a wrong way. An amazing fact! So amazing that we are at first inclined to revolt against the judgment. Let us, however, ponder the matter more carefully. How came it that these men did a right thing in a wrong way? It is never the act that is the important thing, but rather the reason that lies behind the act. God is a God of justice, and He weighs actions by investigating motives. What lay behind this strange act that seems to be so harmless? The fact that in high enthusiasm these men rushed in their holy garments into the holy place and took fire other than that which came from the altar of God shows that they were yielding to wrong motives. I crave your very patient following or we shall miss the very core of this matter. Was it a wrong motive to desire to burn incense before the Lord? It depends on the reason for the desire. Perhaps it was excitement that made them careless of the moment of the Divine provision and the Divine requirement.

There is a dark hint in this story. I would not care to overemphasize it, but there is no escape from the suggestiveness of the fact that subsequently "the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, that ye die not: it shall be a statute for ever." It is at least significant that the solemn warning is placed in immediate relation with the story of the death of Nadab and Abihu. It at least suggests that when they went in they may have done so under the influence of some false stimulant; that they may not have been drunk but had been drinking wine, forgetting the necessity in the exercise of their holy office of having their spirits clear of everything that could influence them in any direction, save under the complete control of the God Whom they served. In the excitement of passionate desire to take part in the awful hour of Divine manifestation they snatched strange fire and offered it; and fire from God consumed them. It may be that it was merely carelessness, that they did not pay sufficient attention to the Divine requirements. Or, again, it may be that it was a matter of convenience, adaptation, that word which may tell the story of the ruin of the work of God in the world as well as the story of its victory. All seemed so harmless, whatever the motive, whether of excitement, carelessness, or adaptation and convenience. But these men were acting on their own initiative, and not under the control of God. God was dethroned, all unconsciously to themselves it may be; and self was enthroned, and that in the holy place. At the center of the religious life of the nation the priest himself had failed to believe and obey. It is not said that Nadab and Abihu were lost. In all probability they went straight into heaven. We have nothing to do with the matter of their individual salvation. At the heart of the national life it was necessary that the lesson should immediately be impressed on the priest and on the people, that men must do God's work in God's way; there must be no deflection from the Divine appointment and arrangement.

Sin in the priesthood must produce sin in the people. If the priesthood yield to the false authority of some excitement, some expediency, then they will exercise false authority and inspire false activity. All the subsequent history of these people is full of illustrations of that great principle, and we may tell the story of the Hebrew people by declaring that they sought the Divine goal in a wrong way and consequently never found the goal they sought.

The story speaks eloquently to us. It deals, first of all, with the question of the end and the means. It exposes and gives the lie to the whole heresy which is the heart and soul of Jesuitry, that the end justifies the means, that in order to reach the Divine goal we may travel any way, that in order

to accomplish the Divine purposes we are allowed to choose any method. The essential lie of that heresy is that the right end is ever reached by the wrong means. It never can be, it never has been, it never will be. For the moment it may seem that deflection from the strict path of the Divinely marked out economy may not matter much, because we are arriving; but wait the long issues, and we discover that there has been no arrival. We cannot build the temple of truth on a foundation of fraud. We cannot erect the palace of purity on a foundation of corruption. We cannot accomplish the building of the city of God save as we are true to the Divinely prepared plan. We cannot glorify God by incense whose smoke arises from false fire, from fire which has not been taken from the altar of sacrifice. Therefore, to adopt any method in worship or in work which is a departure by a hairbreadth from the Divine is to defeat the purpose of effort.

We learn from this story, therefore, that the test of means is motive. The motive of reaching God's goal is not enough. The motive which permits an action which in itself is born of thinking or planning or arranging which leaves God out of account is in itself untrue, and though it looks toward God's goal it never travels there. There are thousands of men today in England who actually desire the coming of the Kingdom of God, but they are doing nothing to bring it about. They pray for it. They would be willing to vote for it if we could have an election on the basis of its propositions. But in their own lives, in their own planning and arrangements of business, of dwelling places, of friendships, they forget God. Then no voting will help God, and no effort that they may make will bring the Kingdom of God any nearer. God refuses to be distanced to the ultimate from putting forth energy in the life of any man; He must be there at the moment, must be consulted immediately. It is not enough to join with the multitudes on the great day and offer any fire in order to glorify God; the fire must be fire God-appointed, it must be fire that comes from the altar.

To us in this age the will of God is being revealed, not by laws written on tables of stone, not by sign or symbol or ritual, not by an order of priests within the church, nor by an order of prophets. Within the sacred enclosure of the Church today there are those whom God has called to prophetic work, but it is ever that of interpretation of the last and final speech of God to men through His incarnate Son. Therefore, I say, to us the will of God is revealed, not even by the prophet, but by the ever-present Spirit Who takes of the things of Christ which are the things of God and interprets them to us. We are not to be bound by the hard and fast requirements of an ecclesiastical system; we are not to be bound to some particular form of ritual; we are to wait before every action, and before every enterprise, and to inquire in the very moment of our desire to serve God, What is the mind of the Lord? and we are to seek the answer from the ever-present Spirit of God. To us to cease to wait is to cease to go. To go without waiting before the Lord for instruction is never to go at all. Moreover, it is to fall under the displeasure of God and to be in danger of being consumed by fire from God, and that in the interest of the world for which Christ died, and which God loves.

To state the responsibility which that swift judgment reveals to us is to take the story and look at it from the standpoint which is revealed in the last words of my text. This is the lesson which the judgment teaches.

"Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified."

All I have been trying to say is there involved. Before all people He will be glorified; that is the ultimate purpose, and therefore He will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him. Those who stand in His presence for service must be those who have enthroned Him, those who inquire at His gates, those who obey His behests. He will be sanctified in them. They shall be the sanctuary in which He dwells. Within them He will be sanctified, enthroned, inquired of, obeyed. And for what purpose? "Before all the people I will be glorified." God must be glorified in the priests who represent Him. God must be glorified in the service which the priest is rendering. God must be glorified in His own work, which must be done in His way. God must be glorified through that work which He will most assuredly do when His laws are observed. The teaching of the story of responsibility is that in our worship and in our work, we are not merely to seek for the ultimate, far-distant realization of the Divine glory, we are to seek that glory in the methods we employ. We believe in the "far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves," but it is not enough to desire that event, and then proceed to attempt to realize it in our own way and by our own wit and wisdom. The one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves can be realized by God only in fellowship with men, by men in fellowship with God. The deflection of the servant of God by a single hairbreadth from the Divinely marked path becomes ultimately an infinite and abysmal distance between that worker and God. When the skilful engineer would drive his tunnel through the mountain, the deflection of half an inch at the commencement, what matters it? Everything! For the next half inch will conform to the first one, and the third to the second. So here, at the beginning, two sons of Aaron, in undue excitement of wine, or carelessly, or for convenience and greater speed, did enthrone their thinking above the Divine command, and fire from the Lord consumed them in order that the priests might know forever that they themselves must believe and obey if the work of God is to be completed work.

This teaching may be applied by all Christian workers. Suffer me the broadest of all applications. The Church of God must not only be true to the work of God in the world as to the general conception; she must also be true to the work of God in the world as to the particular methods which He did ordain. So surely as we imagine that we can improve on the Divine method in the instructions left us by our Lord Himself and by His holy apostles in these sacred writings of the Scriptures, so surely we shall find that while we are desiring the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, yet all the while we are preventing it. That is the solemn lesson concerning our responsibility.

This is without question a story full of solemnity. It gives pause to all who are called to service, as it reminds us of the necessity for a constant and sustained loyalty to God in our methods of service. It calls the Christian Church ever and anon to halt in her progress in order that she may readjust her relationships with her Lord. It calls us to examine every organization that is springing up, lest haply we find that they are not in accordance with the Divine method, even though they desire the realization of the Divine purpose. I am not at all sure that if the Church would give herself to such solemn consideration and readjustment, she would not find many organizations which are merely fungus growths, sapping her life, and contributing nothing to the work of God.

When we turn from the larger outlook to the more particular, with what awful solemnity does this word speak to us of our work for God, and of the sources of the inspiration of our work for God. The dark appalling hint of the story needs emphasizing in all its applications; the worker for God must never touch God's work in the strength of any false stimulant. To attempt God's work under

the stimulus of passion for fame, or desire for notoriety, is to burn false fire on the altar. To us, I repeat, prescribed forms are no more; but the living and ever-present Spirit of God is with us, and the greatest matter in all our Christian service is that we seek to know His will and submit ourselves to His direction.

Yet I cannot end at that point. There is one other word that must be uttered. So solemn is the story that not only is it calculated to give us pause, it is liable to make us so full of fear that we hardly dare touch our work. That is exactly how Ithamar and Eleazar felt, that they dared not continue their work. Moses instituted investigation, inquired why they had been disobedient and had failed to observe things of privilege within the holy place; and the answer was that the day had been so appalling that they were afraid; and in grace, on that explanation, they were excused for the failure. But I think the story of Ithamar and Eleazar is told that we may be warned that though it is a terrible thing in many senses to do God's work in the world we must not neglect it. We have no right to say that because the responsibility is terrific we dare not approach it. He has made us a kingdom of priests, and it is not merely the saving of our own souls that is in His view, but the need of the world beyond. Therefore, with all solemnity and with hushed spirits, we must take up our work, praying ever to be delivered from the sin of burning false fire in the presence of God.

Leviticus 14:1-2. Spiritual Leprosy.

Leviticus 14:1-2.

Spiritual Leprosy.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing.

Leviticus 14:1-2

Leprosy remains until this hour more or less a mystery to medical science. In the New Year's Honors List a name included was that of Dr. George Turner, now Sir George Turner, whose story is one of splendid heroism and of pathetic interest. In Pretoria he did arduous work among the lepers, and on reaching the age limit gave himself to bacteriological research in the laboratories of this country, inspired by the ambition to find some remedy for the disease. Suddenly he discovered that he had contracted the disease himself, and now for over two years has been working in seclusion toward the same end.

Dr. Gerhard H. A. Hansen, of Bergen, Norway, who died last year, discovered the bacillus of leprosy, which was previously unknown. The exact value of the discovery cannot yet be known, but it is recognized as an important contribution.

These preliminary references are made in order to emphasize the mystery of the disease. It is, to say the least, an interesting fact, to which attention was drawn in The Times in an article on Sir George Turner, that the problem of the remedy for leprosy is an exceedingly difficult one because of the fact that none of the lower animals has yet been found to be capable of contracting the disease.

The Hebrew word for leprosy is derived from a root which means to strike down. It was looked upon as a stroke of God. There was, however, nothing in the law itself to give any ground for the view that it was always such. In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus, which contain the law of the leper, leprosy is dealt with on the ground of health, simply as a disease; yet it is quite evident that its mysterious character—its unknown origin and its insidious and resistless progress—made it the fit type or symbol of sin.

Lange graphically describes it as "a speaking picture of sin, and of evil the punishment of sin—the plastic manifestation, the medical phantom, or representation of all the misery of sin."

Jewish expositors of these Scriptures were quite explicit as to their spiritual suggestiveness. In dealing with these particular laws, one of them said, "If a man considers this, he will be humbled and ashamed on account of his sin; since every sin is a leprosy; a spot upon his soul."

The study of the law of the leper has for us a twofold value. Its first teaching has to do with the actual fact of the Divine interest in the physical well-being of men. The general good of humanity was sought by the segregation of the leper. The individual interest was safeguarded in the extreme

caution observed in order that no person should thus be cut off from communion with the people unless he were actually leprous. I am not now dealing with that aspect of the teaching of these two chapters. I should, however, like to say so much as this in passing, that in each of these matters we have very much yet to learn. We are a long way behind the Hebrew economy in the recognition of God's interest in the affairs of man's physical well-being, and in the application of the principles to which I have referred—the necessity for the separation of all those in the grip of a disease which constitutes a danger to the community. We are slowly moving toward it, but very slowly. There are some who describe legislation along these lines as grandmotherly. If it be grandmotherly, then may God increase it! We need to learn a good deal also before we arrive at the full realization of the importance of the second of these principles, that there must be strict justice: no person must be cut off from fellowship unless he actually is a peril to society.

However, when we turn from these general principles to the actual disease of leprosy, the only application possible to us is the symbolic, and that is supreme. There can be no reading of these chapters, especially of the fourteenth, without realizing that while in these laws there was provision for the physical well-being of the community, there was also a remarkable recognition of the spiritual.

It is important, therefore, that we consider quite briefly, and yet most carefully, the relation between the two parts of this law of the leper as we find it in Leviticus, chapters thirteen and fourteen. The thirteenth chapter is diagnostic. There is nothing more in it than instructions by which the priest was to discover whether what appeared to be leprosy was actually leprosy. In the thirteenth chapter there is no gleam of hope for the leper. The symbolic value of the chapter, therefore, is that sin demands the separation of the sinner, and is incurable by human agency.

Chapter fourteen opens with the words of my text: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing." The careful reader will immediately be arrested by the assumption that the leper can be cleansed. The thirteenth chapter contains no gleam of hope for the leper; but the fourteenth opens in the full flood of the light of hope. In the thirteenth the priest is to distinguish and differentiate and separate, and make possible the return to the camp of the man who is not suffering from leprosy. The fourteenth says, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing." This is an admission of the possibility of what is not in the power of man to provide or produce. The chapter then contains instructions for that ceremonial procedure by which the cleansed man is to be restored to the privileges of the camp and of the tabernacle, the privileges of the economy of the theocracy, and fellowship with God in personal and direct worship. So far as the two chapters constitute a part of the Levitical code, we see that this code distinctly taught that leprosy is entirely incurable by human action; but it also recognized the fact that it may be cured by Divine action. As these chapters are viewed as symbolic, their suggestion concerning sin is the same: sin is incurable by any human process, but it is curable within the Divine economy.

We at once recognize a gap between the two chapters, and the gap is great. Between the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of this shadow of the old economy stands our great Christ, our great High Priest. In the thirteenth we have the unveiling of sin under the figure of leprosy, and in the fourteenth we have an unveiling of the way of salvation in the picturesque, and suggestive if vanishing, ritual of the old economy.

Let us, then, consider what these chapters suggest pictorially. Our line of consideration will be twofold: first, leprosy as the symbol of sin; and, second, the way of cleansing from sin as revealed in the symbolic ceremonial.

Leprosy stands as a symbol of sin in four distinct particulars: first, in the mystery of its origin; second, in the method of its manifestation; third, in the nature of its effects; and, finally, in its treatment in this Hebrew economy.

First, in the mystery of its origin. So far as leprosy is concerned, that may be dismissed by the simplest of statements already made, that even until this hour of scientific advancement, man has not been able to discover the origin of leprosy. There is nothing more appalling, shall I say, nothing more perplexing, nothing more certain, than the mystery of sin. I know we have our doctrine of original sin—in passing I should like to say that original sin is not a Scriptural phrase and therefore I hold no brief for it. But, granted the doctrine, believing in the doctrine in certain senses as I most certainly do, let it be remembered that it does not explain the nature of the persistent presence of sin in every human being; it states only the fact that sin is there, that in some form, sin is discovered in every human being. Moreover, it admits the fundamental truth that in human life sin is superinduced. The poetic declaration, "To err is human," is not true, though it is perfectly true if by human we mean humanity as we find it today. But if we think of humanity as in the purpose and economy of God, it is not human to err, not human to sin. Sin is a poison, sin is something within the soul that atrophies its powers and prevents the realization of all the deep and profound meaning of life. It is not part of essential humanity. Whatever terms we may employ in dealing with sin, we must remember that sin is superinduced.

Sin is a spiritual malady, the physical is but the expression of it; behind every physical act of sin is the spiritual attitude. There is no sin of the flesh which is not inspired by sin of the spirit. I cannot sin with my hand until I have sinned with my heart. I cannot sin physically, save as I have sinned spiritually.

Then is it inherited? If so, how? The Bible teaches that every man is offspring of God in his first creation, in his spirit life. Or is the spiritual malady of sin contracted in man? If so, when? I would have you clearly to understand that I am asking questions I do not propose to answer, for the simple reason that I cannot answer them. I ask them in order to affirm that there is no answer. Neither the theologian nor the philosopher has ever answered either of these questions. If sin is inherited, how is sin transmitted in the spirit realm? I am not spiritually the son of the man whose name I bear. "We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" Mark the clear distinction. If sin is of the spirit, and in the spirit, then some evil bacillus has been introduced poisoning the spirit.

The nature of that poison is discovered in Biblical definitions. Paul speaks of "the mystery of lawlessness"; John declares "sin is lawlessness." In the first we have the admission of the mystery. In the second we have a statement as to the true nature of sin. The sins which we denounce are but symptoms; sin lies deeper. Sin is "lawlessness," which does not mean being without law, but being in revolt against law. This evil germ within the spirit of man that affects all his mind and heart and soul is lawlessness; it has a thousand manifestations, but it is always the same in essence. It is indeed the mystery of lawlessness. How is it, why is it, that all men find this

principle at work within the soul? I recognize the mystery; but I face the fact. As leprosy is a mystery as to its origin, so also is sin; but it is an appalling fact.

Leprosy is a symbol of sin in the method of its manifestation. The first appearance is at times discoverable only by the trained eye. Dr. Turner was a specialist, having a trained eye, yet the disease was on him and manifesting itself before he knew it. One morning, while shaving, he caught sight of marks on his hands that arrested him; he was a leper! The first symptoms are discoverable only to the trained eye. In the little child there may be a thousand things that you count sin that are not proofs of sin at all; a child romancing up to a certain age is not sinning. It is exercising a faculty of mind which belongs to it.

The time comes when the first sign of sin is manifested in the child; it is lawlessness.

This leprosy of lawlessness is invariably progressive, never halting; it steals insidiously forward with varying degrees of speed, until, at last, the whole man is corrupt, mastered—strange paradox—by lawlessness; the whole life is in revolt against authority, against government.

Leprosy is the symbol of sin in the nature of its effects. It excludes from fellowship with our fellow men. It renders the victim loathsome even to his fellow men. Not always in the more vulgar forms of sensuality, but with cold, hard, cynical, devilish self-centeredness, infinitely more loathsome than vulgar forms of sensuality. Sin, like leprosy, ultimately renders its victim insensible to the pain of his own disease. We have in the Scriptures of Truth such arresting phrases as "hardened," "a conscience seared," "past feeling"! Leprosy ultimately completely destroys the physical frame; so also sin ultimately completely destroys the spirit life, and all its powers.

Once again, leprosy is the symbol of sin in its treatment in the Hebrew economy. Why was the leper separated not only from man but from God also as to outward worship? Surely because that in itself it was a symbol of sin, and there must be recognition of the fact that sin cuts a man off from fellowship with God, dims the vision, makes him insensible to the fact of God. That necessarily means separation from the camp, exclusion from the fellowship of those who see the City of God and strive for its building; and that without respect of persons.

Sin is an appalling mystery as to its origin in the individual soul and life; in itself it is lawlessness, revolt against the law of God; and it expresses itself in a thousand ways as revolt against the law of man. Our age is particularly characterized by the restless spirit of lawlessness. Everywhere there are signs of mental, moral, social, theological, lawlessness; the refusal to recognize authority, or to be bound even by contracts which men make between themselves. Lawlessness is of the very essence of sin, a poison at the heart of man, a virus at the center of human life, that which prevents the realization of high ideals in individuals and in humanity. It is that which ultimately destroys man and destroys nations. I have never yet heard of a person being asked to sign a pledge against it. This is a very significant fact, revealing, first of all, that men do not as a rule deal with sin, but with sins; not with the malady but with the symptoms; we are always in danger of dealing with the surface of things, instead of getting down to the central trouble. On the other hand, perhaps, no pledge has ever been asked against it because of the subconscious conviction of humanity that it is something with which humanity cannot deal.

Is there a way of cleansing for the leper? Is there a way of cleansing for the sinner? Here we turn to the New Testament. I referred to a gap between the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of

Leviticus, and I declared that Christ stands in that gap, in the spiritual realm. In the fourteenth chapter we have the poetic symbols of His work, quite simple figures intended for that kindergarten period in the history of the people of God, yet all eloquent.

Passing into the New Testament, I find lepers, but I also find Christ; and the first general remark I desire to make is that never under any circumstances do we read in the New Testament of Christ healing a leper; never under any circumstances do we read of any writer describing a leper as being healed. The one word uniformly used is cleansed. That there is a distinction is evident from the fact when John asked, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus said, Tell John the things you have seen, that "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." At the foot of the mountain of beatitudes, when the Lord had uttered the ethic that remains to this day startling and awful in its white holiness, He was immediately met by a leper, who said to Him, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The hand of Christ was immediately stretched out, and the leper who could not be touched, was touched, the word was spoken, "I will; be thou made clean," and the leper was cleansed of his leprosy. Exactly the same scene was repeated later in one of the cities to which Jesus went. Again a band of ten lepers came, and He cleansed them all. These stories of the cleansing of the lepers must be interpreted as all the stories of healing are interpreted. According to New Testament teaching, Jesus never wrought a physical miracle wholly within the realm of the physical; such wonders were always associated with a spiritual activity far more wonderful. "Son, thy sins are forgiven," said He to the man sick of the palsy; and the people complained, "Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but One, even God." Jesus replied to them, "Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins... I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." In the ministry of Jesus there was perpetual relationship between the physical and the spiritual; every physical miracle of healing or of cleansing was an outward sign of the spiritual marvel that He was able to work in the souls of men.

I glance back to Leviticus, to the fourteenth chapter, with which I am not proposing to deal in detail. Therein two great movements are revealed in the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing; they may thus be summarized. First, the priest meets the leper without the camp and leads him back into the camp. Second, the priest within the camp offers on behalf of the leper certain offerings, and anoints him with oil, and sets him at the door of the tent of meeting, the place of fellowship with God. The symbolism is perfect.

In the old economy the priest went without the camp where the leper had been driven on account of his leprosy, to certify the leper's cleansing, not to cleanse him; he could do no more than that. He then observed the ceremony which symbolized the way of his spiritual cleansing, and in doing so employed two birds, one to be sacrificed, the other to be set free, and cedarwood, scarlet, and hyssop. Do not be afraid of these pictures, they are very suggestive. The birds were for sacrifice, the cedarwood was the symbol of strength, for it was incorruptible wood; the scarlet, forevermore the color of earthly glory, spoke of life and health and beauty; the hyssop was the plant of fragrance and of healing. All these things in the old economy were brought by the leper; but none of them cleansed him, neither did the priest cleanse him; but the man, having been cleansed by some act of God, was now to celebrate the physical cleansing, and that by such ceremony as

suggested the method of spiritual cleansing. The disparity between all this and the method of Christ is more eloquent than the comparison. Our High Priest does not come without the camp to certify the leper cleansed; He comes without the camp to cleanse the leper. He comes to the place where the leper is cast out, the place where the leper is alone, excommunicated from the holy place, ostracized by all his familiar friends, shut out in his own loathsomeness for the sake of the health of those left behind. Coming to the leper there, in some infinite and amazing mystery, Christ takes into His own heart and nature the virus and poison of the leprosy, cancels it and by passion, by blood, the outward symbol of the profounder spiritual passion makes it not to be; and, lo, the leper is cleansed. His flesh comes again as the flesh of a little child, and the spirit that was lawless utters its first word, and it is a word of submission: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That is the death of lawlessness and the beginning of the law-abiding life. Our High Priest comes not to certify the leper cleansed, but to cleanse the leper, and to bring that leper back into the camp, into the theocratic economy, into right relationship with God, into the Kingdom of God.

The priest not only brings the cleansed man back into the camp, he sets him at the door of the tent of meeting. Again we have the pictorial suggestions. In the old economy the priest offered the guilt offering, speaking of the reparation the man was making to God; he anointed the man with oil on ear and hand and foot, indicating his new consecration, then presented the Sin Offering and the Burnt Offering and the Meal Offering for him. Mark again the disparity: in the old economy the leper himself had to provide the offerings and bring the oil. In the new economy the one and only Priest, provides against every aspect of human sin, all which aspects were suggested in these offerings of the old pictorial method. Sin is fraud; the man who is lawless is robbing God, defrauding God of His rights, rights that are always beneficent in purpose toward man himself, so that man robbing God of His rights is destroying himself in the infinite mystery of his being. For that the Guilt Offering or the Trespass Offering was provided. Sin is not only fraud, it is defilement finding its way into the life with its pollution and vileness. The Sin Offering provided for the removal of defilement. Sin is also failure in life, failure in the realization of the real meaning of life. The Burnt Offering suggests sacrifice that puts away the defilement, and issues in new dedication of the life. Sin is also failure in service. The Meal Offering covers it.

Let the shadows pass and summarize the whole suggestiveness by declaring that our High Priest in His one offering for sin meets every aspect of human sin and deals with it. In this strange and wonderful economy of grace the offerings and the oil are provided by the Priest, forfeited life for life forfeit, spiritual power for spiritual death. A man is not a Christian merely because Christ has stood between him and some ultimate punishment. A man is a Christian when he has received from Christ the gift of life whereby lawlessness is checked, halted, mastered, dealt with, and life is related anew to God.

There is another mystery, the mystery of godliness. The New Testament speaks of both. The mystery of lawlessness has many manifestations. It manifests itself in one man in reckless sensuality, in the plunge into the vulgar and bestial. It manifests itself in another man in cynical selfishness, selfishness which is so absolutely selfish that it dare not sin vulgarly, has not the courage to do it. Lawlessness expresses itself in one man in actual murder, and in another man in a cynical contempt for suffering and indifference to the agonies of men. As God is my witness I do not know which is the more terrible manifestation of lawlessness, but the latter I think. I can understand the rush of blood, the red passion that strikes a blow; that is lawlessness, and it is

terrible; but, oh, the terror of the form of lawlessness which has so little recognition of the throne of God, and so little recognition of the claims of humanity, that it is content to live for self and minister to self, shutting its doors that it may never see the objectionable things outside. There may be all the perfumes of Arabia, and all the upholstery of Damascus; but in the sight of heaven whose God is love, and Who is prepared to die for humanity, it is the very ultimate of hell, and the most terrible form of lawlessness. The self-centered cynical man will say hard things about the sensualist and the murderer. We still measure ourselves among ourselves, and compare ourselves as with ourselves; and we find satisfaction while thus we put the little measurements of dust on our lives; but all the while God sees the leprosy of lawlessness and the rottenness of our godless culture.

But there is another mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels [messengers], preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." This mystery of godliness is also spiritual. There has been one manifestation of it in human history. Jesus Christ lived and wrought and served, not independently, but dependently on God. He manifested in the midst of human history the glory and beauty of true life, law-abiding and submissive. But He did infinitely more, He went outside the camp to meet the leper, and in some wonderful mystery of infinite compassion to place His pure life at the disposal of the impure man, so that being communicated to him his leprosy may be cleansed, and the man made to live.

That mystery of godliness has been given to us as the norm of life, the type of what God would have other men to be; but more, blessed be God, or I am left a leper: not the norm alone but the germ also, and that communicated to my soul, so that the lawlessness is subdued, made not to be; and my feet are turned into the way of the Divine commandment, and my life at last conformed to the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.

Numbers 6:22-27. The Priestly Benediction.

Numbers 6:22-27.

The Priestly Benediction.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel; ye shall say unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.

Numbers 6:22-27

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

These words constituted the priestly benediction in the Hebrew economy. They were included in the Divinely appointed liturgy of worship, and, in common with the whole of that pictorial system, were richer and fuller than the men who used them knew. It is only in the "grace and truth" which "came by Jesus Christ" that we can discover the full meaning of "the law" which was "given by Moses." Nevertheless, as the component colors of light are seen in the spectrum, so we may often be helped to an understanding of grace and truth by the ritual and formulas of the law.

The priestly office is mediatorial. Its function is twofold, intercessory and benedictory. Each of these functions has a double operation. The priest in intercession stands first in the presence of God pleading the cause of men, and then in the presence of men pleading the cause of God. The priest in benediction stands first in the presence of men pronouncing blessings from God, and then in the presence of God offering the praises of men.

Our present meditation is concerned with the first aspect of the benedictory functions, the pronouncement of the Divine blessing on men by the lips of the mediating priest. This solemn act was a distinct part of the worship of the Hebrew people, and its place in the order of our worship is indicated quite clearly in the twenty-second verse of the ninth chapter of Leviticus, where we read these words: "And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them; and he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings." Thus it will be seen that in that liturgical service the pronouncement of the benediction followed the completion of the presentation of the offerings. The relation between the suggestiveness of these offerings and the pronouncement of the blessing is quite evident. Sin being dealt with, the priest may say: "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee." Dedication being now complete, he may say: "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Peace being thus established, he may say: "Jehovah lift up His face upon thee, and give thee peace."

Without any discussion of the mediatorial ministry of our one and only Priest—the Daysman Who stands between us and God, laying His hand on God with the awful, holy familiarity of unity, and laying His hand on us with the equally surprising beneficent familiarity of unity—the work that makes the blessing possible, let us quietly meditate on this ancient formula of benediction as it reveals to us the inestimable advantages of our relation to God in Christ Jesus. In doing so we desire to observe that the whole fact of the advantage is included in the suggestiveness of the Name, while its component parts are revealed in the threefold form of pronouncement.

When this commandment was given to Moses it ended with this injunction: "So shall they put My Name upon the children of Israel." It was an instruction how the priest was to pronounce the Name of God in the hearing of the people, so that they might understand the advantages that came to them from God through priesthood as they were inclusively suggested in the name itself.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

So shall they put My Name upon the children of Israel.

If I may fall back upon the figure already incidentally used, the Name is "light"; but, by the pronouncement of the Name in this fashion, light is analyzed and we see its component parts; and the colors that, merging into whiteness, become light are revealed for us in this ancient formula.

Thus let us consider first the revealing Name; and, second, the interpretative sentences.

Now may it be given to us by the guidance of the Spirit of God to approach this subject of the Name as here found, with all solemnity and with all reverence. We shall take time to remind ourselves of some things with which perhaps we are very familiar, but which are so vital to our subject that we must deal with them. We of the Christian age are at least in danger of losing something because of our holy familiarity with God through Christ Jesus. He has made it possible for us to talk with Him, all of us, as Moses did, face to face, as a man talks with his friend. By reason of this privilege I often feel that we use the holy Name somewhat carelessly. Reverence for that name characterized the Hebrew mental attitude. This reverence presently became pedantic obscurantism, and prevented these men from uttering it, and made them refuse to write it. At a later period, some translators substituted another title for the name in many passages, so that in our common reading of the Old Testament we are in danger of missing its revelations. To us the name is Jehovah, or, if some of you have been reading modern theological books, you have seen it spelt Yahweh, which is purely a piece of pedantry, because no one can prove that Yahweh is more correct than Jehovah. It never appeared on the Hebrew manuscript in one form or the other; but in the very appearance of the name was revealed that reverence to which I am making reference. To express it they used the tetragrammaton, YHWH. These four consonants stood on the page, the vowel points being omitted that the name might not be uttered, so great and sacred did it seem to be to these people. This particular name came to have greater sanctity to the Hebrew people than even the name Elohim, which is vaster and more wonderful than the former in its essential meaning.

It was used from patriarchal times without any clear apprehension of its meaning, but from the hour of the Exodus it was used with a new understanding of its meaning. Such I take to be the meaning of the word which I have already read to you in the book of Exodus, in which after communing with the great lawgiver, Jehovah is recorded as having said to him, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai, but by My name Jehovah I was not known to them." The Patriarchs had employed the Name, were familiar with it, but had not understood it. In the hour of ransom and redemption God began to explain the name by which they had named Him, but which they had never perfectly understood.

What, then, was the suggestiveness of the name? The name "Jehovah" does not stand as the symbol of essential being; the one name which stands as the symbol of essential being is that by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the presence of the burning bush. When fear and trembling possessed the soul of the man called to high enterprise, he inquired of God, Who shall I say has sent me? and the answer of God was this, "I AM THAT I AM." "I AM"—as though He were about to declare some truth concerning Himself, but suddenly limited Himself—"THAT I AM," in order that the listening man might understand that God was not giving him an interpretation of nature or character, but an affirmation of being. God is eternal "I AM." How often in the course of casual, necessary conversation I say, "I am," and yet, as a matter of fact, I have no sooner uttered the word than my tense has become a past. In some true sense, no finite being can say I am. It is the distinct word of essential life, abiding, timeless, dateless, infinite. That is essential being, but that is not the suggestion of the word Jehovah.

Neither does the word Jehovah declare all-completeness or sufficiency of essential being. That is found in the word "El Shaddai," God all-sufficient. In our versions it is translated God Almighty, but El Shaddai, God all-sufficient, is a word including not merely the thought of might, but the thought of wisdom, the thought of all resource; it describes God as the fount of all being and all manifestations, the last, final, ultimate fact out of which everything has proceeded, and of which everything in some form or fashion or sense, is an exhibition, a revelation. Jehovah does not mean that.

Jehovah is a part of the verb which is made use of when essential being is declared; but it suggests, not the being of God, but the adaptation of His being to some necessity, or—and I cannot find any better word, imperfect though it may be—the becoming of God, that He is One Who becomes; not the all-sufficiency of God, but that all-sufficiency is active on behalf of others; not that there is infinite fulness in the sea of Deity, but that the sea flows in and fills the gaps wherever they may be.

Already men had named the Name, already they had entered into the privilege of the fact, already the men of faith had found God becoming to them what they needed. Once the father of the faithful, in language of infinite suggestiveness, broke out into exposition of the word, perhaps hardly understanding the magnificence of his exclamation. In the supreme hour when he offered Isaac in sacrifice, the offering being complete in will, the ram was caught in the thicket, and Abraham said, "Jehovah Jireh," the Becoming One sees and provides, the Becoming One becomes that which necessity demands. But now, with ransom and redemption, the constitution of the nation, and the establishment of the prophetic and pictorial ritual, the name is to be interpreted, unveiled.

Then I take up my Bible, and my eye runs over the panoramic movement, and the story, through hours of faithfulness and hours of failure, is that of God becoming what His people need: fiery judgment in the hour of their unutterable folly, great compassion in the hour of repentance, a mighty fortress when the billows broke upon them; the land of magnificent distances when the heart was weary and tired; always becoming, until, at last, in the fulness of time the great truth sang itself out in the mystic wonder which can find no finer expression in human language than that of the seer of blue Galilee, who, when he would write the story of the central fact in human history, wrote it thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." That is, God becoming flesh, that through the veil of the flesh Divine might break forth the light that else were too bright for the feebleness of the sinner's sight. Not the I am of essential being, not El Shaddai of infinite, all-sufficient resource; but the I am that bends, bows, stoops and becomes, the infinite unapproachable glory as of a million suns, stooping as a sunbeam to kiss the face of a sick child, the becoming One, fulness of glory, fulness of grace.

We need no longer be afraid of the name. He took the infinite mystery of the name which Hebrew bards and prophets dared not write, and spelt it out in yet simpler speech, and the I am of God become flesh is Jesus. It was a commonplace name when He bore it. I have no hesitation in saying that even in Nazareth scores of boys were called Jesus, for it is but the Greek form of the familiar Hebrew Joshua. The great high priest in the day of restoration was named Joshua, the great successor of Moses, who led the people from the wilderness into the land, was named Joshua. For him the name was made. Hoshea was the name of the boy whose father's name was Nun; but when he entered on his work his name was changed to Joshua, the merging of the name of God with the fact of salvation, so that it means Jehovah, a Saviour. At last the angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

When I turn to the other writings in the New Testament I find that, with reverence, He is named "the Lord Jesus Christ;" "Jesus Christ the Lord." Beyond the gospel narratives He was hardly ever called Jesus, except in two great writings, the epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse of the seer of Patmos. The writer of the letter perpetually called Him Jesus, and John, when writing of those wondrous visions, spoke of Him as Jesus. In these two writings we find, in some senses, the most resplendent revelations of His personality. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews introduced Him by declaring Him to be the very effulgence of the Divine glory. John gave us a matchless vision of Him.

Thus the name, suggestive, full of glory, was at last sounded in human history in the simplest of all names, Jesus, and the whole meaning of the name is that God incomprehensible makes Himself comprehensible, the Eternal and All-sufficient, bends and bows Himself into such form and fashion and method that humanity may be touched without being crushed, may be touched so as to be healed and helped.

Salvation in His name there is;

Salvation from sin, death and hell,

Salvation into glorious bliss,

How great salvation, who can tell?

But all He hath for mine I claim,

I dare believe in Jesu's name.

Reverently, let us turn from the inclusive suggestiveness of the Name to these interpretative sentences of the benediction:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

It is one name, but pronounced in such a way as to suggest three aspects of the blessing for which it stands.

Take the first, "Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee." Here the thought is that of God as the Source of blessing; it is fixed, not so much on the blessing itself, which is not described, not so much on the keeping itself, which is not described, as on the fact that blessing and keeping alike are from God. The terms are general. "Bless thee," that is, quite literally, kneel to thee, in order to serve thee. The Lord kneel to thee, and kneel in the attitude of service! I know how daring the statement seems to be, how amazing it is. Once again, for illumination, the mind travels from the ancient mystery of the priestly formula of benediction to a simple picture of the New Testament. A group of men are gathered in an upper room, shadows are about them, darkness is already on them, and there is the One Who bears the name of Jesus, girding Himself with a towel as a servant and kneeling to wash the feet of these men. "Jehovah bless thee," kneel to thee in order to serve thee! "And keep thee," that is, hedge thee round about so as to protect thee.

If the terms are general, the ideas are of the fullest, suggesting the bestowment of all benefits, and the warding off of all opposing forces. When Paul came to writing the ultimate document of his system of teaching, the Ephesian letter, he opened it with a doxology, "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing." When he approached the culmination of the same letter he introduced us to the realm of conflict, and makes us conscious of the opposing forces: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness." What now will he say to us? Stand "in the strength of His might." Thus the essential idea of the Name is expressed in these statements in certain respects. The Becoming One becomes all that is needed in order to reach His people in blessing, to hedge them round about, and protect them from their foes.

In that first movement of the great benediction I find the reason of my faith, the ground of my hope, and the inspiration of my love; for therein I am reminded that the source of all benefit that my soul most needs is Jehovah Himself.

Let us pass to the second phase of benediction. "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Here the thought is still that of Jehovah Himself, not as the source of all blessing only, but also as the channel of blessing. The terms are now relative. "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee." This is not the same idea as that expressed in the words, "Jehovah lift up

His face upon thee." The Hebrew word translated "face" and "countenance" is exactly the same. The difference is not between "face" and "countenance," but between making the face shine, and lifting it up, upon. The thought here is of Jehovah as a channel of blessing. The terms, as we have said, are relative; the face luminous upon thee, Jehovah gracious unto thee. The ideas are the ideas of activity: Cause His face to be luminous; be gracious unto thee, that is, stoop in active kindness unto thee. "Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee" means that all benefit and protection come from God; but "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee" means that the blessing will come, not as a gift separated from Jehovah, but by and through the very coming of Jehovah. It is His face that is to be lifted; it is His grace that is to come to men in their need.

When I turn to the New Testament for the fulfilment of the suggestiveness I find it in another writing already referred to. How will He make His face shine upon men? The writer of the letter to the Hebrews declared that in Jesus was the effulgence of the Divine glory.

Then "Jehovah be gracious unto thee." How is this fulfilled? I turn to the close of the selfsame letter, and I find that the writer declared that the One Whose face was the effulgence of the Divine glory, that very One, passed beyond the camp to suffer and to die, in order to bring grace to men who are lepers, outcasts, failures. That is the supreme fact of Christianity. It is not merely that Jehovah is the source from Whom all benefits come, or that He keeps men who in themselves are what they ought to be, but who under some evil mastery would fail. It is also true that Jehovah lifts the light of His face upon men who have lost the sense of His nearness. Jehovah follows the man who has left communion and fellowship, and in some great mystery of suffering, cancels the leprosy and takes the man back to Himself. Thus Jehovah in His Son is revealed; His face became luminous through Jesus; and in the graciousness of His stoop He redeems. In Jehovah the Son we have the clear shining of the face of God, and eyesight for eyes that were blind.

If in the first aspect I find the reason of faith, the ground of hope, and the great inspiration of love; in this I have the argument for the reason of my faith. The reason is that God Himself is the source of all my help; the argument that demonstrates the reason is that God became flesh, and so the glory of His face was seen, and the wonder of His grace became operative. In the same way, this is the proof of the ground of my hope, and this the whisper of the word that becomes the inspiration of my love.

So we move one stage further to the final unveiling. "Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Here the thought is no longer that of Jehovah as the resource of blessing, or as a channel of blessing; it is rather that of Jehovah as the experience of blessing in the soul of a man, of Jehovah Himself creating a new experience.

Here the terms are final. The luminous face of God is not luminous merely, but it is lifted, so that it shines upon the soul; not merely is He gracious toward me, but this with a grace that fills my heart with peace which He gives, which He conveys, by His own immediate presence.

The ideas are supremely pictorial. The uplifted face suggests perpetual day. The peace is that of abiding quietness and unruffled calm possessing the soul. If I would find the New Testament fulfilment of the suggestiveness of the ancient Hebrew benediction, I turn to the words of Jesus, in His last discourses to His own disciples. I find Him saying, I am going from you, but I will send you

another Comforter, and then immediately explaining that statement as He adds, I come to you. God, by His Spirit, so comes as to create within the soul the experience of day. Yet again He says, I will send you the Comforter, and in connection with that declaration the gracious words pass His lips, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you," so that it becomes your peace, My peace is your peace. Our experience is that of perpetual day, for He, the Son of Effulgent Divine glory, is always with us; our experience is that of unruffled calm and peace, because His peace is ours. Thus Jehovah, by His Spirit, causes the shining of His face in Jesus, creating perfect day for man; and by His Spirit He causes His word, His revelation, His teaching, His message to become comfort to the soul so that it has abiding peace.

By the ministry of the Spirit blessing becomes more than a word spoken, more than argument in proof of the word spoken; it becomes experience, so that man living in the communion of the Holy Ghost lives in the daylight of the uplifted face of God, effulgent in the face of Jesus, and in the place of unruffled calm and perfect peace.

When these priestly words were committed to Aaron and his sons, they were to pronounce them in obedience, not understanding all their significance; yet within them, as the holy Name was thus placed on the separated people, there was the suggestiveness of the infinite mystery of the Trinity. Jehovah the Source of all blessing, bless thee and keep thee. That is the love of God. "Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." That is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee," so that the light becomes sunrise and day, and give thee peace. That is the communion of the Holy Ghost. These are the aspects of the one inclusive blessing that comes to humanity through the priesthood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This blessing and this keeping, this irradiating of the face of God and this gracious activity of God, this lifting of the face so that sunlight lights up the pathway, and this communication of peace, which makes panic impossible—these blessings come to men only through Jehovah, and the final test of priesthood is the ability to pronounce that benediction.

These blessings can be pronounced in their fulness and with authority and power only by the lips of Jesus. The ultimate wonder and amazement is that He has made us a kingdom of priests. Our business is to pronounce this benediction on men wherever we go. It is not the business of the preacher merely, but of all saints, so that from this hour of worship, if there be any value in it, we shall pass back to our homes, back to the city, back to the place of need and toil and sorrow and sin, saying as we go:

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

This is the function of the priesthood of the Church; and the words become dynamic in human history and human life when they are incarnate.

Let us, then, seek the holy shrine, let us worship at the altar, let us come to the place of mediation that He may speak to us the benediction, and that in order that we may pass out into the highways and the byways, amid the darkness and restlessness and bondage of humanity, fulfilling the

high-priestly function as we bring to men this sense of God, this power of God, this gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Deuteronomy 1:6. God-Governed Life.

Deuteronomy 1:6.

God-Governed Life.

The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain.

Deuteronomy 1:6

The sojourn of the people of God at Mount Horeb had been a most vital one. There they had received the law, an expression of the Divine grace. There the national constitution had been perfected, so that they were in very deed a theocracy, a people subject to the throne of God. There the system of worship had been given, a perpetual symbol of their distance from God by reason of their sin and of the possibility of their approach to Him by the way of sacrifice.

All this being accomplished, the word was spoken which called them to the practical realization of the fact that they were a people God-governed: "The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain." They heard the Divine message, obeyed the Divine command, and marched through the great and terrible wilderness to the margin of the land of promise. The sequel, as we know, was one of failure, and of consequent discipline, the story of which is told in the book of Numbers. After forty years they were brought again to Kadesh-barnea, and there Moses, the great leader, ere leaving them, uttered these farewell discourses which have been preserved for us in the book of Deuteronomy. The words of our text were the opening words of the first of these discourses. As he stood and confronted these people whom he had been privileged to lead for forty years through varied experiences, the first words that fell from his lips were those reminding them of that hour when there came to them, in their corporate national capacity, the first command of God, "The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain."

Spoken thus after the experience of forty years, while yet referring to the first command uttered to the nation in its corporate capacity, they introduce us to the subject of the Divine government of human life, help us to understand its method, purpose, and issue, and suggest to us what our relationship to that government should ever be.

My reference to the government of God is not now to that wider fact which embraces all creation. As we have often reminded ourselves, no man can escape from the government of God. No part of the universe is beyond the authority and power of God. That is a wider aspect of truth, with which at the moment we are not dealing. It is well, however, that we remind ourselves of this fact, for both our comfort and our warning. For our comfort let us remember that God has never vacated His throne, never handed over the affairs of the universe, or the smaller matters of this world of ours, to any other authority. It is perfectly true that men and nations may condition their experience of the Divine government by their attitude thereto, but escape it they cannot. A man can fling himself against the bosses of the shield of God and be broken in pieces, or he may nestle beneath

the panoply of God and know the rest of the heart of God; but he cannot escape God. Lucifer, son of the morning, may say, "It is better to reign in hell than serve in heaven"; but he cannot reign in hell. God reigns in hell. Nations may throw off restraint and laugh at God; but He will have them in derision, and will laugh when their day of calamity comes. That is the wider aspect of this truth of Divine government.

I want this evening to speak more particularly of the government of God in the case of those who recognize it, yield themselves to it. How does God govern in the case of such?

The first matter to be emphasized is that God does govern. I think I need not stay to argue it. I do, however, desire to remind you of it. Sometimes I think that even we as Christian people do need to be reminded of the actuality of the government of God. We are a little in danger of treating God as though He were some infinite, marvelous abstraction; or as though He were seated afar off in some distant heaven, unacquainted with the actual experience of these little human lives of ours; or as though He had formed and fashioned us in some mysterious creation, and one day, at the end of a period of loneliness, he would meet us again and call us to account. All such conceptions of God are unwarranted by the Biblical revelation, and are untrue to the profoundest things of our Bible.

Let us then remind ourselves that the Bible reveals the actual, immediate government by God, of the lives of His own people. Let us further remind ourselves that this government of God is autocratic. He never consults us as to what He will do with us. The government of God is absolute; He permits no compromise. The government of God is inclusive; He exempts no territory. All that produces no fear in the hearts of men and women who know the government of God; for if the government be autocratic, so that He never consults me; absolute, so that He permits no compromise; inclusive, so that He exempts no territory—it is the government of God, and God is love, and God is wisdom. It is the government of the One Who fashioned me in answer to the impulses of His own love. It is the government of One Who knows my thought afar off and understands the sobbing desire that underlies all the failure, and Who will be infinitely patient with me until He has perfected that which concerneth me. But it is government, direct, immediate, absolute, autocratic.

Let us consider the nature of this government. Falling back on the text, and using all the background of the story for the purpose of illustration, there are three things I desire to say concerning the nature of that government. First, the government of God is a disturbing element in human life. Second, the government of God is a progressive element in human life. Finally, the government of God is a methodical element in human life.

First, then, let us consider the fact that the government of God is a disturbing element in human life, for it always is so. Traveling back beyond the moment in which this word came, take the story to the beginning of the history of that wonderful people. How did the people who were that day disturbed come into being? The nation came into being as the result of one human life being disturbed by God. In Ur of the Chaldees a man saw a vision of God and a vision of the purpose of God, and in some mystic, wonderful communion was brought into the place of great familiarity with God. He was a man of substance and position in Ur of the Chaldees. To that man suddenly there came a voice, the voice of God: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." "And he went out, not knowing whither he

went." He was disturbed by God. The history of the people, from that first movement until this very hour when the voice of God came to them, was a history of perpetual, persistent disturbance. Disturbed in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham moved into the land. Presently there came an hour when his grandson Jacob and his sons were driven out of the land by the Divine command and sent down to Egypt. Centuries ran their course, and the seventy souls who went down to Egypt multiplied into a great host; and again the Divine disturbance came: they were moved from Goshen and Egypt and encamped at Pihahiroth, hemmed in by enemies and the sea; they were then led out of danger, and across the highway of the dried sea, into the wilderness; they encamped beneath Sinai, a ransomed people, freed from bondage, escaped from slavery, resting at last amid the quietness and peace of the magnificent solitudes of the mountain. For a year and a month, free from all oppression, they realized the peace and blessedness of the Divine government, and then came the voice, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain," and immediately all engagements had to be canceled, every tent had to be struck. The next picture we have is that of marching hosts moving forward, leaving the place of peace, tramping the dreary, desolate wilderness with faces set toward the goal of the Divine purpose. They were a disturbed people from beginning to end.

It is ever thus. To be governed by God is to be constantly disturbed, to have human arrangements interfered with. Here is a man whom God has called to some definite piece of work, and in the place of his service, he is conscious of the Divine presence, the Divine blessing. It may be that after a period of toil and travail everything is coming into adjustment and the golden radiance of harvest is on all the field. Then suddenly to the soul of the man comes the voice of God: "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain"; the work must be left, the location changed, and all the experience of the past apparently contradicted. The man is disturbed, and that by the Divine government. Or in other ways God disturbs us; crosses the threshold of the home of peace and quietness, and breaks it up, and we are no longer in the place of peace as we were, because God has disturbed our lives; some close earthly friendship in which comrade ministered to comrade in all things high and noble, sweet and strong, is suddenly broken in upon, and the friends are separated as far as the poles geographically. God is disturbing two lives; hopes and aspirations that gleamed and inspired, are suddenly put out, and all the movement of the years towards the goal seem to end in defeat. These are the common experiences of the saints. They are the problems of the saints. They are the problems of the men who observe the saints. Again and again they have been made the reason of ridicule of the saints. Along the avenue of these experiences Satan has ridden with all his host to assault the faith of the believer: If God loved you would He allow you thus to be disturbed? If God really loved you, would He not have left you that sacred, holy companionship? If God were really governing your life would He move you while your work seems to be successful? God is always doing it. Divinely governed souls are always sojourners in tents, pilgrims. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord," was the word of the Master Himself, indicating to the men who would follow Him that their true attitude should ever be that of expecting disturbance and change and alteration. Beneath the height of God's mount we are encamped, impressed by its majesty and its glory, comforted by the great words of law which proceed from the heart of grace for the conditioning of our lives, seeing the mosaic of the Divine arrangement manifest itself in constitution and ritual, in beauty and in order. Surely now at last, the long bondage over, we are finding a place of peace and quietness. When, lo, suddenly the word is spoken: Let the tents be

struck, the baggage packed, "ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain."

If the Divine government of human lives be a disturbing element, it is a progressive element. Why were these people disturbed? I go back to the actual text, and I will now read a little more than the text:

The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland, and in the south, and by the sea shore, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

That reading of the context seems to make a defense of the disturbing almost unnecessary so far as this story is concerned, for thereby the light of the Divine purpose flashes on the fact of the Divine disturbance, and we see that the purpose of the disturbance was the possession of the land. The place of silent solitude is to be left, and the way of the wilderness is to be trodden; but why? That the land which lies beyond may be possessed. Progress is not necessarily pleasant. When Moses described the journey a little later in this same discourse, he speaks of it thus—the first journey, remember, not the subsequent journey of discipline—"We... went through all that great and terrible wilderness."

Here again the picture is a parable and the teaching is patent. God's dealings with a man today are always in the interest of his perfecting tomorrow. God's disturbance of human life is always in order that the life may climb to a higher height and come to fuller realization.

Now let all my exposition end as I take you to another of these discourses, yet hardly a discourse, the great song Moses was commanded to write. Listen to this:

The Lord's portion is His people;

Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.

He found him in a desert land,

And in the waste howling wilderness;

He compassed him about, He cared for him,

He kept him as the apple of His eye:

As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,

That fluttereth over her young,

He spread abroad His wings, He took them,

He bare them on His pinions.

In that exquisite figure we have the merging of the elements of disturbance and progress. May I take it for granted that all the adults in my congregation understand that figure? Well, for the boys and girls here I want to explain it; the others can take a rest. It is a very Eastern picture. We in

England can hardly understand this picture of the eagle. Even in Scotland it can hardly be appreciated. We must get right away to the East if we would interpret its suggestiveness. Let us go and see what is happening. Yonder is an eagle's eyrie on the rocky ledge far up the heights. There the eagle has built her nest; there she has brought her young into being by her maternal brooding, and there she feeds them and guards them. The eaglets are in their nest on that rocky ledge, to which none can climb and to which none can descend in perfect safety; and the eagle watches over her young, and broods over them. Living somewhere in the neighborhood, let us imagine, we have watched this process from day to day, until there comes a day when something happens that is full of surprise. The mother bird that has seemed to be so tender and careful is doing the strangest of things. She is flinging those eaglets out of the nest, herself turning them out, beating them out. As I watch, I see the eaglets in the air, struggling, falling in the element which is strange to them. All the peace and safety and the restfulness of the nest is gone. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest."

Yes, but let us carefully watch. What next? The eagle spreads her broad pinions over the birds as they fall, and then suddenly, with the swiftness of the lightning, swoops beneath them and catches them on her broad wings. It seemed as though they must be destroyed. They are not destroyed. She bears them back on her wings to the ledge, and with a great sense of relief the eaglets struggle back into the nest. They are so glad to be back! To-morrow she will do it again, and the next day she will do it again; until one day as I watch I notice that one of the eaglets, perhaps a little stronger than the rest, when flung out of the nest and beginning to fall, puts out its wings and tries to use them. Then the purpose of the disturbance is seen. That will go on from day to day, until one day those eaglets will not struggle in the air, will not fall, but will spread their wings and fly with the mother bird sunward.

As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,

That fluttereth over her young,

so the Lord disturbs with progressive disturbance in order to realize life in all its fulfilment. Leave the eaglet undisturbed in the nest on the rocky height and it will fail of the very powers that are resident within it. Fling it out into the unaccustomed air, show it how to use its wings, catch it in its falling, bear it back again, give it a rest, disturb it again, and it will fulfil the meaning of its own life.

"Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain." Leave that sphere of work which you love so well; be severed from that comrade without whom you feel you cannot live; know the breakup of home. What is God doing with you? Developing the powers of your own life, enabling you to discover the things in you which are of Himself, bearing you on His pinions in the moment of your utterest weakness, until presently He teaches you to use the wings He has given you. A disturbing element, but a progressive element.

Finally, this government of God is a methodical element in human life. The provision is made. "Behold, I have set the land before you." The course is marked out. Notice how particular are the instructions. Take your map of Palestine and mark the country out, and you will discover that these people never reached their destination; nor have they yet. God's limit was beyond anything they ever arrived at. Never did they stretch the bounds of their habitation as far as the great river Euphrates. I have read that to show that God had a plan for them which was possible for Him to

express in terms of geography.

But there is something else in this Chapter I want you to notice:

Thy God bare thee, as a man doth bare his son, on all the way that ye went, until ye came unto this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God, Who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in the cloud by day.

There are things in this Bible I would to God I knew how to read as they ought to be read. Oh, the poetry there is in that! There is no poetry in the way I read it. Read it for yourselves and find the poetry. God went before you in the way to seek you out a place in which to pitch your tents. We sing today, and the sentiment is true and beautiful, "We nightly pitch our moving tent a day's march nearer home." Then let us remember that the pitching of the tent at night is not accidental, for God has been before us. Think of it. I arrive nowhere but that God has been ahead of me. It may be that for the moment most of this congregation will be only reverently patient; but there is some man here, some woman, some youth, or some maiden, buffeted, broken, perplexed, lonely, almost mad with the agony of life. Just where you are, God was ahead of you. Out of the terror of the hour He is creating forces of triumph in your life which would always have been missing had you not pitched your tent right there where He has appointed the place. God is not making any experiments with you. There are some texts that we of a weaker generation hardly dare preach about. I will tell you one; you will find it in Samuel, in the last psalm that David wrote ere he died: "An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Yes, you say, that is all very well for David. But read more, and you will find that David was describing what God's king ought to be, and he said:

Verily my house is not so with God;

Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,

Ordered in all things, and sure.

For it is all my salvation, and all my desire

Although He maketh it not to grow.

When David sang of the "covenant ordered in all things, and sure," he sang out of his disappointment, out of his sense that he had failed. He saw even his failure as within the Divine government. In his great letter to the Ephesians Paul reminds us in infinite music that "we are His workmanship," and not merely that we are His workmanship, but that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." To the man who is truly God-governed the morning breaks and there is in his heart the consciousness that nothing can merely happen, in the infidel sense of the word. There can be no accident. Yes, I may suffer, I may suffer some physical evil, some mental trouble, some assault on the soul; I may pass through the great and terrible wilderness; but the covenant is ordered in all things, and sure. God cannot be surprised. Exigency, contingency, are very useful words for you and for me; but God has no need of them. No exigency surprises Him. No contingency baffles Him. He sees the end from the beginning, and all the affairs of the universe are under His control. The man God-governed is a man who lives at the very heart of method and order.

What, then, is our true relationship to this government? The answer is the simplest of all answers. Our true relation to the government of God is that of obedience, immediate and unconditional. What are the conditions of such obedience? Confidence in the method because it is the method of God, even when I cannot see its value; keeping forever in view the ultimate purpose in me and through me, and being forever ready to be disturbed. I love the paradoxes of faith. Here is one: the only man who is never disturbed is the man who is always ready to be disturbed. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning," ready to be disturbed; then when the call comes you will not be disturbed. It is when I allow my life to be anchored to friend, home, church, that if God wants me to do without this friend, break up this home, leave this church, I am disturbed. When my life is anchored in God, then no disturbance can disturb. That is the philosophy of life of the men who really live in the Divine government.

Oh, the unutterable folly of doing what these people did! They started well, they struck their tents, they came to the borderland; then they appointed a commission to find out about the land God told them to possess. That commission published two reports, the majority and minority reports; and then, as ever since, the minority was right. The people halted with fear, they went back; then they presumed and tried to go in without God, and fought the Amalekites and were defeated. Then followed forty years of discipline. "Forty years was I grieved with this generation." Consider in the light of this history what God does with people with whom He is grieved. He bare them as a man bears his son, with infinite patience and tender compassion, waiting for them.

Someone has heard the disturbing call of God, it may be within the last four and twenty hours. If so, I think this sermon is for you. What are you going to do? Go forward, counting no cost in your obedience? There are giants there. Yes, for you to slay. There are walled cities there. Yes, for you to take. There are rough ways ahead. Tramp them, they lead to peace. But there is awful loneliness. Welcome it, it admits you to the comradeship of God. The only thing we must not do, if God says we have tarried long enough, is to tarry. Some of you heard that voice long ago, and you disobeyed, and you have had a long weary wilderness; but tonight you are once again on the margin of the land. I pray you remember that all the wilderness has been in His government. This is the method of our God. He ever gives men a second time. The second time on the margin of the land. The word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time. If the vessel be marred in the hand of the Potter He will make it again a second time. All the years that the cankerworm hath eaten, He will restore them. He is plenteous in mercy and compassion,

For the love of God is broader

Than the measures of man's mind,

And the heart of the Eternal

Is most wonderfully kind.

Some man listening to me quite reverently says, I do not understand all this. I never hear a voice like that disturbing me. No, my brother, you are living in Egypt, in bondage: garlicks, leeks, fleshpots! God-forsaken men are not disturbed. Yet listen. God is calling even you, and at this moment some of you have heard Him asking you to readjust your lives from this moment to make them kingdoms of God. You have tarried long enough in Egypt! At God's call arise and follow, and He will perfect that which concerneth you.

Deuteronomy 4:29. Backsliding.

Deuteronomy 4:29.

Backsliding.

If from thence ye shall seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

This book of Deuteronomy is a singularly beautiful one. It is not a history. Historically, it covers a period of a very few days, for in all probability these final discourses of Moses occupied only a brief time in delivery. The book is more than a code of laws. All it says had been said already by this selfsame man. It consists of the last messages of Moses to the people of his heart. It is prophecy in the deepest and fullest meaning of that great word. It is the forthtelling of the word of God to listening men. It is a poem full of light and full of fire. Here again the words of law are uttered, but in reading one is conscious rather of the driving power of love's great reason than of the binding nature of law's requirement, not that the requirement of law is lowered in one single particular, but that love speaks with wooing winsomeness and tender constraint. It utters the same thunder, but always in the tone of infinite pity. One would be inclined to say that in Deuteronomy we hear the law from the lips of a man who after long years has found his way into intimate communion with the heart of God. It is the Evangel of law. In the pleading tones of the great leader of the people one discovers that the reason of law is love, and if I ever ventured to choose a motto from some uninspired writer to preface so great a book as that of Deuteronomy, I would write Browning's words:

I report as a man may of God's work,

All's love but all's law.

Law is here, but it is the law of love. The text on which I have chosen to speak to you is a supreme illustration of the consciousness of Moses of the tenderness of the heart of God. He had been supposing the possibility of backsliding on the part of the listening people. In the light of subsequent history his words are seen to have been prophetic.

After describing in detail the process of backsliding until the issue of it is revealed, he suddenly breaks out into these words: "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

My message tonight is to those who are conscious in their own lives of any measure of backsliding. To such persons as the Apostle would address in the words he used when writing to the churches of Galatia, "Ye were running well; who did hinder you?" to those persons to whom Jesus is saying tonight, through the language he used to the Church at Ephesus, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love"; to men and women who, looking back on their

past days, remember the thrill and passion of discipleship as the supreme consciousness of life, but who now are sighing, "Where is the blessedness I had when first I found the Lord?" to men and women who are conscious of backsliding from their loyalty to Christ and relationship to God.

I beseech you to remember that the distance between yourself and your Lord matters nothing. The first cooling of passion is the tragedy. The final corruption is but a sequence to be expected, and which cannot be avoided save as the first love is restored.

I am speaking tonight to some who have traveled a long distance from the Father's house, to some who seem as though they had lost track of the way that leads them home; or I may be speaking to many others who have just lost their first love, who are maintaining all the externalities of Christian relationship, but have lost the thrill, the fire, the passion, the devotion. Whether to those or to others upon the trackless burning desert of degradation my message is exactly the same.

What is my message? It is in my text. Would God I knew how to say it. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

First, let us put our emphasis upon the word "thence," for to do so will be to be driven to inquire as to the process and issue of backsliding. "Thence." Whence? And we shall answer the question by reverting to Moses' description, which occupies the earlier verses. Secondly, we will lay our emphasis upon another word in the text, "if," for by so doing we shall see the conditions upon which a man may return. "If... ye shall seek the Lord thy God... if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Finally, we will hear, as God shall help us, the great central song of the text, "Thou shalt find Him."

"If from thence." The ancient message contains striking illustration of the matters concerning which we desire to speak. We may forget all the local coloring and look through to the underlying principles, and in doing so we shall find that a master hand has sketched for us the whole story of backsliding in every successive age of the world's history. There is no man or woman, young man or young woman, away from the Master whom they once loved and served, be the distance great or small, but that the process described by Moses of old is the process through which they have passed to the place of degradation. The issues he describes are identical with those which always follow the path of backsliding.

What is this process? Mark three things: First, "When ye... shall corrupt yourselves." Second, "When ye... shall make a graven image." Third, "When ye... shall do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord."

The first is purely personal, perhaps hidden from men, corruption of self. The second is the sequel to self-corruption, the making of a graven image. Finally, the overt act of evil.

What is self-corruption? It is the devotion of the life to something lower than the highest. The first movement of backsliding may be accomplished without committing any sin which the age names vulgar. In the moment in which a man takes his eye from the highest and sets it upon something lower, be the distance apparently never so small, he has set himself upon the decline which ends in the desert and in the agony of rejection. Self-corruption is the first step in the backslider's pathway, the choice of something lower than the highest. What is the highest? The thing you have seen that is highest. That is the highest for you. To you it was the fair and radiant vision of the

loveliness of the Christ in those days when you knew He was fairer than all the sons of men, more perfect in loveliness. You saw that, and you turned your eyes from it to something a little lower, to some ideal you built for yourself out of your own imagining. You corrupted yourself when you allowed the false ideal to intrude into the realm of your own thinking, your own desire, your own choosing. That was the beginning of the whole story. Following that is what always follows, the setting up of a graven image. You say, "Here your message breaks down. I have set up no graven image." Remember, the graven image is always the figure of that which lies behind it. When a man has corrupted himself, the issue is always that he thinks falsely of God. Man is so linked to deity in the very essential of his being that he will form his conception of God upon what he is in himself. There is a sense in which, try as he will, he cannot escape this. He is forevermore projecting his own personality into immensity, and calling that God. That is the whole history of idolatry through all the centuries. Man has flung the lines of his own personality into immensity, and called the result God. In proportion as his own personality has become corrupt and evil, he has projected corruption and evil into immensity, and made that his god. When a man corrupts himself, he corrupts the idea of God by putting something false in the place of God. In the old days it was a graven image, so that, as the prophet said, man took to himself a tree or a piece of stone, and carved out of it a semblance, a grotesque imitation of himself, and called it a god. So when a man has corrupted himself by accepting some ideal lower than the highest he immediately makes a god after the pattern of his own ideal, and descends a little lower on this course of backsliding, until swiftly and surely he descends to a course of evil which a little while ago he would have declared to have been impossible to himself. He does the evil thing who never intended to do it. He started by choosing the lower ideal. He proceeded, in the next place, to corrupt deity, by projecting into immensity the false lines of his own corrupt nature, and worshiping that. Suddenly the light that seemed to lure him fades, and the very ideal which he worshiped fails, and he finds himself doing things he never dreamed he could do.

I am trying, as God shall help me, to set the story of your backsliding in relationship to the spiritual and infinite. Shall I put that story in slightly different language? You corrupted yourself in that hour when you ceased your devotion to the God of your mother, and ceased to hand over your life wholly and absolutely to Christ. Your backsliding proceeded when you put into the place of Christ something else. It may have been your business. It may have been your very passion for knowledge. It may have been a far more mean and paltry thing than either of these, your pursuit of pleasure. You put something where Christ used to be. You who once took of your talents, and time, and strength, and poured them out in sacrificial service in the cause of Christ have been worshiping with all the soul, with all the heart, and with all the mind, wealth, fame, pleasure, I know not what. You know. There is your graven image. The result has been that this week, in the prosecution of your business, in the pursuit of your pleasure, you have done things which, if you thought I could proclaim them in your name from this pulpit, would cause you to blush and hurry from the building. You did not begin here. You began with the lowered ideal. You continued with the false deity, and the hour has come in which your hands in the sanctuary are unclean with deeds of evil, and you know your very heart has become polluted. That is the process of backsliding.

I pray you mark the issue of backsliding as Moses describes it here: "I call heaven and earth to witness... ye shall soon perish utterly from off the land." That is the first thing. "The Lord shall

scatter you among the peoples, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations, whither the Lord shall lead you away." It follows, finally, that "ye shall serve gods... wood and stone." I think there is a sacred, and holy, and tender, and burning satire in those words of Moses. "You," he says, "men of highest vision and noblest passion and fair ideals, men who have seen, but have turned your back upon the vision, you shall serve gods of wood and stone, which see not, hear not, smell not, eat not." That is the issue of backsliding. First, lack of possession. In the case of these people, possession of the land; in your case, possession of everything which you ought to possess. The man who turns his back upon Jesus Christ to possess anything inevitably loses it. Take one of the most burning and tragic illustrations in the whole of history, that of Judas. Judas let Jesus Christ go for thirty pieces of silver. Did you ever notice that he never spent one of them? Presently I see him hurrying back to the men who had bargained with him, and in a great intensity of agony I hear him say, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." And the cruel mockery of hell is here in the answer of the men who say, "What is that to us? See thou to it," as though they had said, "You made your bargain, abide by it." And he flung down the thirty pieces of silver. They bought with them the potter's field. He never spent one of them. You turn your back upon the God of the land, and you lose the land when you lose the God of the land. You turn your back upon the God Who made you and put you with all the capacities of your personality into this world, and you lose the world into which He put you. I know that is a thing which can be said only by experimental knowledge. I pray that God's Holy Spirit may carry conviction to some man here tonight. You cannot see the flowers if your back is toward God. You can botanize, but you cannot see the flowers. The man who has turned his back upon God has lost his land. He may own it under the laws of his country. He may even shoot over it for two weeks in the year, but he has lost it. The man who has turned his back upon the highest ideal has lost every real thing that comes within his reach. There will be many a weary march, many a hot and eager rush over the desert to reach the blossom, the bloom, and the fruit, but when the hand touches it, it is an apple of Sodom. The man who turns his back upon God loses also his influence and his power. May I say a thing that may sound strange and startling, and ask you to think of it. I can imagine that a man who has never been a Christian can exert some kind of pure moral influence upon his fellow men, but the man who has been a Christian and has turned his back upon God cannot do it any longer. The world holds in supreme contempt the man who has turned his back on Jesus. You have cut the nerve of your influence, backsliding soul. You have become lonely and scattered, without power to help in the world, because you have turned your back upon your God. There is nothing more tragic in the whole wide world than the man who once ran well but has been hindered, and has gone back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. Oh, the tragedy of it! Think of it. You serve the god you have made for yourself. Worship and service are linked. Service is the expression of worship. Worship is the method of service. There is no escape from this. You are serving your God. You turned your back upon the living God, and set up a god of wood or stone, a god of mist, of vapor, of your own imagination, a cloud that rose like smoke from the fires of your own evil doing. You serve it. The tragedy of this worship, of this false service, is here. Your god cannot see, cannot hear. It is an insensate deity. There is no answer from the thing you worship when you cry to it in the time of fear. There is no sympathy, no heart in idolatry. The god of wood or stone gives no answer to the agonized cry of man, and all the false deities of your rationalism never help you in the tragedy of your pain, never soothe or solace you in the agony of your loneliness. You serve a god that cannot see, cannot hear, cannot taste, cannot smell.

There is nothing so tragic in all London as the backsliding soul. Moreover, if that tragedy is more terrible in one place than another it is in the case of the man who is a backslider, and is attempting to go on with work for God. The backslider in the pulpit is the supreme agony and tragedy in human life. The backslider in the Sabbath school class, in office in the church, in the church membership, the man or woman who keeps up the external semblance when there is no fire burning upon the inner altar, who compels himself or herself to the deadly drudgery of worship when there is no voice of the Spirit in the soul—that man is more to be pitied than the man who has cut himself adrift from the church and gone out into the darkness. There is far more agony in the heart backsliding that lacks the courage to be out and open than in the heart of the backslider that passes outside. I sometimes am afraid that our churches today are crowded with backsliders. I remember Thomas Cook saying to me years ago, "It is almost refreshing to have to go in the inquiry room with a man who has never professed belief on Jesus Christ before." Oh, the tragedy of the men and women who keep up the external semblance of Christianity with no virtue, no dynamic, no passion, no fire!

Is not this the story of backsliding? Did not the agony and tragedy begin when you took that ideal lower than the highest, when in your folly you made your own god because you thought the God of your childhood was unnecessary? Is it not true today that, like Samson of old in his agony, you grind for the amusement of mocking Philistines? The god you have made has no heart, no power, no pity.

My message tonight is to be found in these words, "If from thence." Mark this "if," and see the conditions. "If thou shalt seek." Seek what? "The Lord thy God." The search to which a man is called if he would return from the desert of his backsliding agony is not geographical; it is not circumstantial. He is not called upon to search for lost conditions. Moses did not say, "If you will seek with all your heart the land you have lost you shall find it." That would be a hopeless thing. He did not say, "If you will seek to set up again for yourselves the conditions from which you have departed you will be able to do it." That would not be true in human experience. What, then, is man to seek for? The Lord. Seek for your God. Get back to the conditions by getting back to God. If you are at a distance from Him tonight, at a distance from the light and song and glory of bygone days, do not attempt to regain the light and the song and the glory. Do not waste your time dealing with effects which you cannot correct; deal with the cause. Seek the Lord your God. It was when you turned your back upon Him that you lost your land. It was when you turned your back upon Him that you lost your power. It was when you turned your back upon Him that you became the bond-slave of the things which have no heart, no tears, no pity, no sympathy. Therefore, turn not back to the land. Turn not back to the hope of new influence. Turn back to God. "If from thence," from the lonely and distant place of disappointed hope and agony of spirit. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God." How am I to seek? "If," says the servant of God, repeating his "if," and emphasizing its true meaning—"If thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." That is, into this search after God, which is to be the way of restoration, man is to put his whole heart and soul. The man who has wandered far away is promised that he will find God, but the conditions are that he shall gather himself up for the business of finding, that he shall put into this search both passion and principle. My brother, are you waiting until some emotion created in a service or a mission, or by some preaching, shall surge upon you? You will wait long and hopelessly, and wait in vain. When you have done with your playing God is to be found. When you

have done with your emotional fooling—and I am not proposing to alter that phrase, I am not proposing to take back either the adjective or the noun—when you have done with your emotional fooling, and will put the fiber of your being into the business of seeking God, He will break upon you in light and glory, but never till then. I am not here tonight to tell you that, having wandered away from God, the pathway back home is flowery, easy, or simple. I am not here to tell you that you must be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. If you are a man you would not thank me for lying to you, even in the name of hope. You must seek God with all your heart and all your soul.

Let us pass to the promise. "Thou shalt find Him." Hear me, and God help me to speak these last few words as I ought to speak them. He is as near to you as He was in the old bright days. It is you who have changed, not He. You turned your back upon Him. He never turned His back upon you. It has often been pointed out that the Scriptures never speak about God being reconciled to men, but always of men being reconciled to God, and the method of the statement is of absolute importance. The moment in which you with all your heart and soul set yourself to seek, you will find God close at hand.

What is this that Moses promises? "Thou shalt find Him!" To find Him is everything. As Philip said long ago, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Find God, and you have found all that your heart wants. You are crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." You are quite right. If you can find Him there is nothing else. If you seek Him with all your heart and soul you will find Him. Find Him where? Just where you are. Will He come with flaming and flashing glory? In all probability, no. Will He come with some new sense of His coming, making you thrill in every fiber of your being? In all probability, no. It is far more likely that He will come with a still small voice. But you will find Him if you seek Him. To find Him is to find all that has been lost by the process of backsliding. Backsliding began with the corruption of self. The finding of God is the redemption of self. I find myself when I lose myself. There was infinite meaning in the word of Jesus when He said, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life... shall find it." It is in that moment when I set myself to seek God as the first matter in my life, when I crucify myself with my affection and my desire, and will no longer ask whether this thing is for my pleasing, but will give myself to seeking God, that I find Him. To the man who finds the true God, God is enough. Dagon falls to be broken in pieces. The lost ideal and the lost joys are found. Instead of outward and external act of evil, the outward and external act of good becomes the habit of the life, but never until God is found.

The issues are changed. If you will find God you will find the flowers and the land, and the possibilities of your own being. All the gray sky will flash with the purple of morning if you will but find God. To find God is to find everything. Instead of serving insensate deities you will reign in life in fellowship with the living and eternal God.

Let me lay my final emphasis upon these words. "From thence." Are you away from God? And, of course, I take it for granted that every Christian in this house who is not away from God is in sympathy with me, and is praying for the man who is away from God. Are you away, just at the beginning of the backsliding process? Have you within the last few weeks or months turned your eyes from the highest to something a little lower, or are you far away from Him tonight, almost in despair? I want to crave the patience of this whole congregation while I speak to one man. I mean that very really. I do not know where he sits, but here is his letter. I do not know his name, and I do

not ask to know it. I am perfectly willing to respect his expressed desire that I will not try to find him. Let me say to this man that this sermon was prepared before I got his letter. I say this for his comfort, for if ever God sent a message to one man by a messenger who did not know the man, it is so in this case. I am going to respect this man's confidence by not reading all his letter, but I am going to read a sentence or two, and I am sure he will let me do it, because, as he says in his closing words, there may be numbers here tonight like him. He is a young man, and tells me that he came to London thinking that religion was a prop for weak people, having his own ideal, which he attempted to follow. Then he tells the story of the loss of the land, the story of the loss of influence and power, the story of actual sin. Then he tells me how, not knowing why, he wandered into this building last Sunday morning, and heard me read about the risen Jesus, and he tells me how, in the light of that vision of Christ, he was conscious of his own degradation. Then he says: "I crept home, broken down, broken-hearted. This is my tale. Surrounded by people yet utterly alone. There is no one to whom I can go, though my heart is aching and my mind is sick. Can you give me one word of sympathy, one word of hope, or, better still, one word of guidance? I shall be present at your service tomorrow night and all I ask is that you will say something which I can recognize and seize upon for myself. I do not want to be sought out in any way. Let me remain, as probably I am, the type of scores of unhappy men similarly situated." Can I give you one word of hope, my brother? Yes. If I could not, I would never preach again. What is my word of hope to you? This is it. "If from thence." God gave it to me before He gave me your letter. He knew you were going to write that letter. He led you here last Sunday morning, and brought you face to face with your lost Lord. He gave me that message for you: "If from thence." Just where you are tonight. How I know what it means, alone in the crowd! "If from thence ye shall seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." Are you saying that?

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet—Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Man, I am your fellow man, a sinner like yourself. I cannot show you these things. See the vision of my text. Never mind my sermon. Seek Him, seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. Trample your pride beneath your feet. Crucify your prejudice. Put the whole business of your life into this minute. Trust Him, and for you also, or I could never preach again if it were not true, the day will break, and "He will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." He will restore to you the land. He will put about you the arms of His love, and lift upon you the light of His face, and make you His own. But you must seek Him with all your heart and with all your strength. My brother, I will not attempt to drag you from your place of hiding until you want to come, but though my hand never rest in yours and my eye never look into yours, right there the Christ Whose purity your sin has insulted is waiting to take you back to His heart. Let Him do it. May God bless and help you.

Deuteronomy 4:29. The Possibility Of Restoration.

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If from thence ye shall seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

The Book of Deuteronomy is a singularly beautiful one. It is not a history. It is more than a code of morals. It consists of the last messages Moses gave to the people of his heart. It is a prophecy in the fullest sense of the word. It is a book full of light and full of fire. Here the words of law are indeed uttered and the importance of law insisted upon, but as we read it we are not so much conscious of the binding nature of law's requirements as of the driving power of love's great reason. Not that in this book the moral standards are lowered, but that there seem to be wonderful revelations of the secrets by which men may realize these standards.

Sometimes I have been inclined to call this book an evangel of the law. It is evidently that, as this man spoke for the last time to these people whom he had led through forty years his heart was full of tenderness. These are the words of a man who had come into close association with God Himself, a man who had stood in the awful light in which there is no darkness at all, but who in that light had found that infinite love which goes far beyond our dreams.

In this text we have a beautiful illustration of this consciousness of the man of law of the tenderness of the heart of God. He had been supposing the possibility of the backsliding of these people in spite of the revelation they had received. In the light of subsequent history that supposition proved to be prophecy, for, just as he suggested, they forgot God and wandered from Him, and the very calamities which he described fell on them. After describing in detail the process of such possible backsliding until the ultimate issue of it was revealed, suddenly, and apparently with a sense of relief and gladness, he turned from the fierce denunciations and said: "If from thence"—the uttermost and ultimate place of backsliding—"if from thence ye shall seek the Lord, ye shall find Him, if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

My message has to do with this possibility of backsliding, this possibility of turning from the higher to the lower, until, perchance, at last the lowest is reached. I am especially anxious to speak to those who may be addressed in the words of the great Apostle: "Ye did run well. What did hinder you?" Or perhaps to those of whom Christ would say in the language of His message to the church at Ephesus: "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

I want to speak to men and women who, in the consciousness of their own secret hearts, know full well that the running is not what it was, who have lost the joy of first love, the love of their espousals to the Lord Christ, and who are lamenting the loss. I am going to ask you, first of all, as you follow me reverently and patiently, as I am sure you will, to let, not what I say about my text,

but the text itself, the living Word of God, appeal to you. I am going to ask you resolutely to submit yourselves to its light and its suggestion and its teaching, remembering your splendid isolation, that you are quite alone in the crowd, that no man, not even the preacher, can know what transpires between your soul and God. If you find that the running has slackened, or the love has grown cool, or that there is something of distance between you and the Master, I ask that you will listen to the word of hope. Or if, perchance, by the grace of God, you pass uncondemned from the process of examination, I appeal to you to pray for the man who may be sitting next to you who has fallen somewhat from the high estate. It may be that some man in this crowd is in the depths of degradation because he has turned his back on his Lord and Master. The message is especially for him.

The measure of backsliding matters nothing. The tragedy is not in the ultimate corruption, but in the first cooling of passion. It is the loss of first love that is fatal. Everything else is a necessary sequence, and sometimes the latter stages are almost more full of hope than the earlier ones. I pray that as we come to the consideration of so solemn and important a theme we may be kept by the brooding Spirit of God face to face with the unseen and the eternal things.

The text itself suggests the lines of our consideration. First, the process and issue of backsliding: "From thence," the word "thence" illuminated by the context; in the second place, the conditions on which there may be restoration: "If—if thou shalt seek the Lord thy God; if thou shalt search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul"; and, finally, the great word of the text, "Thou shalt find Him."

First, for a few moments let us quietly and earnestly consider this matter of backsliding. This ancient message contains a very living revelation of it, and although the local setting is not this setting, and the coloring of the details has faded from the canvas, the outline stands clear and plain, a revelation for all time of how men, in backsliding, turn away from high things and descend to low things. Hear these words again from the context: "When ye shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image in the form of anything, and shall do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord..." In them we have a revelation of the whole process by which men backslide. When they shall corrupt themselves, when they shall make a graven image, when they shall do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord...

The first step in backsliding is self-corruption; the second is always making a graven image; the ultimate is the habitual and persistent doing of evil in the sight of the Lord. The first is inward, and consequently unknown to friend or neighbor: the corruption of self. The second is more manifest, and yet not always clearly so to other people: making a graven image, the substitution of the false for the true in worship. The last is the stage in which the inner corruption of self becomes manifest, not only in the sight of God, but in the sight of men.

Self-corruption is devotion of life to any thing lower than the highest. What is the highest? That depends entirely on you. The highest to you is what you have seen to be the highest. I shall presuppose in this presence, and speaking to such a congregation as this, that you have seen the highest in the Lord Christ. That which appealed to you may not have been that which appealed to your neighbor, but you saw in Him something that spoke to the depths within your life; some vision of His loveliness broke on you, you came to some conception of Him that appealed to you, that lured you. You knew perfectly well when the vision came that it was a vision of something high and

noble and pure and good. It may have been that in His severe and noble ethic, His strong ideal of life, His fine conception of morality, you saw the height and set your face toward it. That was the highest for you. It may have been that the highest to you was the revelation of His supreme and matchless tenderness, that greatness of heart wherewith He ever traveled forth across the desert to find the lost, that superb compassion that ever made Him willing to sit by the side of sinful men, despising the shame of the Pharisee, while in comradeship with the defiled He communicated first compassion and then purity.

There came a moment when you changed your life to something a little lower than the highest, under swift, sudden, subtle temptation, it may be. You lowered the ethical standard that He had revealed, and for the sake of some advantage offered to you on the plane of the material you denied His call to your soul. In that moment you began the corruption of your life.

It may be that you refused to answer the cry of His compassion to your soul. You did not break your bread with the hungry. You declined to bear the scorn of men while you served the cause of such as were defiled. Remember, this happens to preachers as well as to others! In that moment, when we descended from the highest and refused to answer His call, we began the corruption of self, we were already on a declined plane. In the moment in which a man lowers himself he begins spoiling himself. It is the first stage.

Backsliding always begins there. Take up your newspaper, and you read of some man who held high position in the Christian Church, who is now in the depths. He did not begin with that outward act. There was first a hidden refusal to answer the call of the highest. Almost unknown, perchance, to himself at the moment, he began the descent.

So backsliding begins, begins over and over again in the midst of the Holiness Convention, at the center of a Bible Conference, because there the call comes to the highest; and if we refuse to obey we corrupt ourselves.

What is the next step? Someone will say that my figure of speech will now break down. Men do not now make graven images. I beseech you not to take refuge in subterfuges of that kind. A graven image is a thing that a man creates for himself when he has lost close fellowship with the one true and only God. All idolatry is the revelation of man's capacity for God. In these days men are not making to themselves graven images, as did these men of the olden time; but the moment a man turns from allegiance to God as revealed in Christ he puts something else in the place of God. It may be knowledge, it may be wealth, it may be that which is infinitely more mean and trivial, pleasure; but something steps in so insidiously that a man hardly knows, and it takes the place of God.

How may I know that anything has taken the place of God in my life? To whatever I am devoting my real thinking, my real energy. Whatever is the supreme and most important thing in my life, that is God to me. I may sing the songs of the sanctuary, the liturgy of the Church may still pass my lips, I may recite with intellectual conviction the creeds; but the God I worship is that to which I am giving the force and energy of my life. Ere a man knows it, when he has turned, be it ever so little, from the highest, he puts something else in the place of that from which he has turned and makes a god to suit the level on which he chooses to live.

Presently—mark the tragedy of it—he will turn even from that to something a little lower, and so, slowly but surely, corrupt the life, until the last step of backsliding is the habitually doing evil things in the sight of men. Then the man laughs at faith, sneers at the very things of religion which once were the supreme things, and mocks at high ideals. This is the ultimate in corruption; this is the stage of definite and open and avowed sin.

And what is the issue of it all? The issue of it all is clearly stated: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that ye shall utterly perish from off the land where-unto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the peoples, and ye shall be left few in number among the nations. Ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell."

These are the issues of backsliding; loss of possession, loss of power and influence, servitude which is in itself degradation.

When a man loses fellowship with God he loses power to possess anything that God gives him. I suppose the most flaming illustration of the thing in all the Bible is the story of Judas, the story of Judas in those last and awful hours. He turned from the highest, and he sold the Highest for thirty pieces of silver. There was no purchasing power in that silver. Judas had it, but he never possessed it, he never changed a single coin. Through the centuries I hear the clamor and the clangor of the silver flung on the halls of the sacred place, teaching this awful lesson, that the money a man gets when he sells the highest will never purchase him anything.

Do not lose this. You own broad acres. You cannot possess them without God. Oh, you may shoot over them two weeks in the year, but you do not possess them! I will come to something far simpler. You cannot possess a flower if you have turned your back on God. You can botanize, but you have no dealing with the flowers if you are away from the God of the flowers. To turn your back on God, Who gives you land, is to lose that land; and to fail to have dealings with God Who has revealed Himself to you and lured you to the highest is to lose the very earth for the possession of which you have sacrificed the highest and the noblest. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that the very things into which you have come, all of them by the goodness of God, you cannot possess if you turn your back on the highest, which, at least, you saw, and toward which you set your affection.

Moses went on to tell the people that they would be scattered through the nations, be held in contempt by the world. I am one of those who never feel that they have any right to speak disrespectfully of the Jew. I believe the Jew is still God's man. But I cannot escape from this tremendous truth, and I had better express it in the language of one of the prophets, Jeremiah, who said: "Refuse silver shall men call them, because Jehovah hath rejected them." Never forget this: deeper than the Nonconformist conscience, deeper than the Christian conscience, is a human conscience which is in perfect accord with God, Who is the unwarped Conscience of the universe. When a man turns his back on God men despise him. The most worldly man holds in supreme contempt the Christian man who once set his face toward the highest and then turned back to the beggarly elements in which the worldly man is always living. Do you not know that there is something profound and searching in the thing the man of the world says to Christian men in surprise: "I did not expect to see you here"? When a man turns from God he loses not only his

power of possession, but also his influence. He is despised, held in contempt.

The last descriptive word concerning the issue is the most terrible. The people of Jehovah, the people of the eternities, the people of vision, the people delivered by the high hand and outstretched arm of God, the people who came through the sea, and have been fed in the wilderness, and in all material things have had traffic with the spiritual; the people whom God has been teaching that man cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, they are to serve gods without eyes, or ears, or hands, or smell, insensate deities, gods having no answer in the hour when the heart is wrung with anguish and cries out for succor; gods, the supreme helplessness of whom is revealed in one prophetic word: "There is no breath in them."

If we turn from the high to the low, then also will come the hour when we shall serve as slaves the god to whom we have given ourselves; and when our hearts are lonely and we cry for help, there will be no answer. No eye will pity, no ear will hear; we shall stretch out lame hands, and our gods will not be able to put underneath us the everlasting arms. It is not when the sun is shining that humanity becomes most conscious of itself. It is out of the bruising of life that men utter their supreme cries. The last stage of turning from God is the appalling loneliness of the darkling void in which God is not, and from which no answer comes back to the soul in its agony. Is there someone listening to me in that ultimate place of loneliness? I beseech you to remember that you are not alone. "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." He and you meet in the depths! Listen! "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him." That is the message of the text.

On what conditions? Notice most carefully these words. The search is not geographical, it is not circumstantial. A man is to seek for God, and not for the lost condition. Moses did not say to these people, If in that day of ultimate backsliding you shall seek for the land you will find it. Nay, verily! Nor, If ye seek for the lost influence you will recover it. He said, If ye seek for God you will find Him. The search must be for God. Let us solemnly consider this. If, indeed, you have descended from the heights and given yourself to the lower things, and have reached the ultimate, or if you are on the way to the ultimate, it is useless to making up your mind that you are going back to the heights. You won't do it that way. It is useless to determine that you will get back your lost influence. You will never get it that way. What, then, is the soul to do? Search for God, turn back again to God.

Moses repeated his "if" in order that there might be no misunderstanding of his meaning. He not only said, "If thou shalt seek for Him"; he added, "If thou search with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."

I am not going to suggest that if you are at a distance from God the pathway back is necessarily an easy one. I am going rather to say to you: In the Name of God and your own humanity, be done with your fooling, and put blood and passion into the business of getting back. With all your heart, and with all your soul, means bringing resolutely yourself together in your endeavor to seek after God. That is the condition of getting back. It is of no use to sigh for the lost heights, it is of no use to resolve that you will so live as to win back the lost influence and the lost power. Never, never, never! You had better become for a little while—do not misunderstand me when I say it—you had better become for a little while careless about the heights, you had better come down into an

appalling loneliness in which you say, O God, if there never be a height again for me, if there never again be influence for me, let me find Thee, let me get into real, living, vital, first-hand relationship with Thyself. That is the true attitude of a seeking soul.

Now, let it be granted that somewhere in this crowd that cry has gone up to God. No human ear has heard it. No human eye has been keen enough to detect a soul's turning back to God; but God has seen it. Now, then, I may come to the last word of the text, "Thou shalt find Him." This is certain, because it is you who changed, and not He; it is you who wandered, and not He; it is you who turned your back on Him, and not He His back on you. The Bible never speaks of God being reconciled to man; it speaks of man being reconciled to God. Oh, if you are going into dialectics, you can prove that one involves the other; but I am going to stand by the language of Scripture, for there is supreme value in it. I affirm to you, and I say it for the comfort of my soul—for I also have known backsliding—God never turned His face from man. Thou shalt find him. Where? Right there, where you are. Oh, but I am out of the land, I am in a foreign country, I am far away from the center of things! Nay, for thou art not far away from God, and He is the center of all things. But I am in the desert! And God is in the desert, and when your face turns back to Him resolutely, He will make the desert blossom as the rose. I have wandered far from the fountain of living waters, and I am on the sandy wastes, dying of thirst! God is there, and in the desert He shall make the springs of water to flow. He has never turned His back on you. I wish I could reach that man to-night who feels he is far off, and that nobody cares, and that even the Christian Church is prepared to give him another push downward in order to be rid of him. Man, God is with you where you are. Turn thy face toward His face, and He will lift on you the light of His countenance!

Thou shalt find Him, and to find God is to find everything. Suppose, for the sake of argument—I shall not end there—but suppose, for the sake of argument, you never win back your influence, you never reach the old heights of experience and ecstatic joy, to have found Him is to find everything. Ah, but that was only a supposition. To find Him is to find all in another sense. Go back over the process of your backsliding. How did it begin? You corrupted yourself. To find Him is to find yourself redeemed in all the full, vital sense of the word; to find Him is to find the One Who heals the life. Old Jacob coming back from Jabbok said a great thing: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is healed"—in our modern sense of the word, infinitely more than "preserved." "Preserved," in our modern sense, suggests to us that Jacob meant, Behold the wonder! I have seen God, and I have not been destroyed! It means infinitely more. I have seen Him, and I am healed. When he finds God, the man who has corrupted himself knows that he is redeemed.

To find God is to be able to use the language of Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" What, indeed, have I to do any more with idols after I have found God? Dagon falls and is broken into a thousand fragments when the soul has found God.

Evil ceases to be dominant in the life, the outward habits and activities of evil end; and goodness becomes dominant. There will yet be conflict. That will never end until we pass into the life that lies beyond. But the victorious element will be goodness, and the fall and blunder by the way will be the accident and not the habit of the life. To find God is to find not merely the ideal goodness, but the dynamic for goodness. The paralyzed, powerless, beaten soul that has been for years the sport of lusts and passions and evil things will be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The issues of backsliding also will be changed. The land will be repossessed. To find God is to find the flowers, and to find the birds; to find the things which you thought were yours, but from which you were excluded by sin.

My mind travels back over forty years. I am a boy again in my father's garden. There comes into that garden a young man who has been brought to Christ in some services that my father has been conducting. I was only a boy. In that garden that young man walked round with me, and his arm was round me, and suddenly he stooped—I see him now—to pluck a nasturtium leaf. He showed it to me, and said, Look at it, look at it! I looked at it. He said, Is it not wonderful? Look at the glory of it. And to think I have lived thirty years and never saw one till recently. I have never forgotten that. I know now what he meant. To get back to God is to get the key of everything, to enter into the land and to possess.

It is also to find a restoration of power and influence. You need not trouble about the Pharisee who will not receive you. Live your life with God and your influence is going to tell.

And, yet again, instead of being the bond slave of gods having no eyes or ears or hands or feet, insensate deities, the bond slave of dead things, after restoration to God you will find yourself reigning in life, realizing all the meaning that was in the heart of God when He gave you your first breath and your original being.

Are you away from God? Was it only yesterday that you turned from the highest? Oh, back to Him, back to Him! You traveled further than you knew when you said, "No," to the high and the noble thing. Back to Him to-night! Where are you? In the far country? You have lost your reputation, nobody really wants you? Back to God, back to Him now! See Him in the face of Jesus, find Him by answering the call that comes to you when the very Name of Christ is named. Answer Him! After Him! And do it now! Put into the business all your heart and all your soul. Gather yourself up, and now, with all the passion and principle of your life, in the silence, in the quietness, without sign or signal, without human eyes or ear detecting, resolutely break with the past and turn your face to God. In the sight of heaven and of hell act, and act now.

"Thou shalt find Him." Will He come in a flaming glory? Oh, perchance not. Will He come with some trumpet tone that I cannot mistake, a supernatural voice? Almost assuredly no. How, then, shall I find Him? Perhaps your first consciousness of nearness will be the new passion for the high, reborn within you, and the first thrill of power by which you begin to move on toward Him. It may be that your first consciousness of the answer of God will be the sense that you are not alone in the darkness.

So we will end, not with words of exposition, but with this great word of Holy Scripture—and let the "thence" apply to the place where we are if we are at any distance from God: "If from thence ye shall seek the Lord, thou shalt find Him, if thou search after Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

Deuteronomy 8:2 Thou Shalt Remember

Deuteronomy 8:2

Thou Shalt Remember

And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee.

Deuteronomy 8:2

When these words were uttered, Israel was at the parting of the ways. A change was imminent, both of leaders and of circumstances. Moses well knew that very soon he would lay down the burden which he had borne so long and so bravely, and that another would be commissioned to lead the people. He knew also that they would very soon change the circumstances of the wilderness for those of the land flowing with milk and honey.

In this book of Deuteronomy we have his final charges to the people, charges resulting from experience and expectation. Standing among the people whom he loved so well; with whom he had so patiently borne; with whom he had been so righteously angry; he looked back over the years, and on into all that he knew lay before them, because God "made known His ways unto Moses"; and spoke to them out of the fulness of his heart.

In reading these closing messages of the great leader, one of the most impressive notes is that of his anxiety that the people should remember. He recognized the influence of memory. He knew perfectly well that, properly stored, it is a perpetual inspiration to present endeavour; and consequently one of the great forces that makes the future. He also recognized the subservience of memory to will. He knew that it can be trained in certain directions, and to the retention of certain definite facts. Consequently, he was careful to charge his people with that which they were to remember.

Evidently, there is not only the historic setting, and the philosophic basis, but the religious purpose of this text. Moses was desirous of directing the memory of the people to supreme matters, urging them to look back, but to look back from the right standpoint, and to see things in the right relationship; to see, moreover, the real things, and the abiding things; the things therefore worth remembering.

The word here translated "remember" means quite literally to mark. "Thou shalt mark all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee." The pictorial suggestiveness of it is that of the chart, the map, or the way, on which certain facts were to be marked, and thus fixed upon the memory.

The true backward look is that which sets the past in relation to God; that which lays to heart the lessons God has intended to teach by the experiences of the past; and is that which always has the future in mind. Let us attempt thus to remember all the way along which the Lord our God has led us.

First, then, let us remember the past in its relation to God.

When Moses did this, he was careful to note three things about it. They were: to remember God's deliverance, that He brought them out of Egypt; God's leading, that He led them through the great and terrible wilderness; God's resources, which were placed at their disposal.

These people had been brought out of Egypt and its bondage to God, and to that freedom which was perfectly conditioned within government and within law. This was fundamental, and this they were charged never to forget. Take the Old Testament and read right through it, listening to its teachings; and whether you are reading its devotional literature, or that which is distinctly prophetic in the sense of the forthtelling of the Divine will, you will discover how constantly these prophets, seers, and psalmists, took the people back to Egypt, and the fact of their deliverance therefrom. That was absolutely fundamental.

The history of this people began when they were brought out of Egypt.

And so Moses, charging them to remember, put that as the first fact, "the Lord thy God... brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." They were a special people on the ground of deliverance, and they were to place all the past, the immediate past, the past forty years, in relation to that beginning of deliverance when God broke the power of the oppressor, and led them out into the place where it was possible for them to live the life of faith, the life of direct and immediate obedience to Himself.

In all our backward looking, we are to remember that the life of faith begins in that hour in which He looses us from our sins, and makes it possible for us to obey His Kingship and His government. When we look back, we must put everything in relation to that initial deliverance by which God freed us from sin and its bondage, and brought us into relationship with Himself. That is what we fail to do very often. We look at the incidents of our life, and the happenings of the days, and we fail to set them in relation to that fundamental fact of our redemption by blood, and our relationship to Christ upon the basis of sin forgiven and peace with heaven.

If the Old Testament writers constantly referred the people to their coming out from Egypt, the New Testament writers as constantly refer us to redemption, and to our oneness with Christ by the mystery of His Cross. I can only quote the old and familiar illustrations, and surely no other are needed. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." "Exhort servants to be in subjection to their own masters... that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour"; that they may in the obedience of their everyday life show that fundamental fact of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

So we are to remember back far enough, and by so doing, begin to realize the fact that all the details of life are related in the purpose and economy of God to that first deliverance by which He brought us to Himself by putting away our sins.

How often we forget that first thing. God never forgets it; and no day dawns but that the affairs of home, and the affairs of the office, and the affairs of business are, in His economy, being overruled to the working out into perfection that fundamental relationship to Himself that commenced in the hour when He loosed us from our sins, and brought us into relationship with Himself.

Second, he charged them to remember all the way along which God had led them. There is nothing more beautiful in the book of Deuteronomy than the different passages in which Moses

insisted upon that guidance of God. "God... went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in." I can never read that without feeling how wonderful a declaration it is. I see that moving camp in the wilderness, for forty years hither and thither, backward and forward; and the movement seems such a haphazard business. It was not so. God always went before them, and chose the place of their camping; and when the sun went westering, and the cloud halted, and they paused and erected their tents, it was always on ground which God had chosen. Moreover, He accompanied them upon the march. They came to no rough and rugged desert but that He was there too. They came to no long stretch of level country which wearied them, but that He was with them. They came to no hour of difficulty and perplexity but that He was there; and He granted them the shining of the fiery pillar at night, and the mysterious mist of the cloud by day, as signs and symbols of His abiding presence.

Through all the way, there was movement toward the purpose that He might "do thee good at thy latter end." They had come forty years before to the same margin of the land, and the book of Numbers is the story of retrogression, and backward marches. Yes, but that is not all the story. God led them back that they might go forward. He led them circuitously that they might go straight. He led them through the terrible wilderness that they might come to the ultimate triumph.

Let us look back. Think of any day you please, the darkest or the brightest, the saddest or the gladdest, and whether it be shadow or sunshine, the rough or the smooth pathway, these same things are true. First, in every day we walked in works which He had before ordained that we should walk. And we found grace to help in every time of need. All things have been working together for good to those who love Him. Delay has been in order to speed. Denial has often been His choicest gift. Or, to borrow that quaint and yet true statement with which you are all familiar, the disappointment over and over again has proved to be His appointment. Look back over the way, and see if these things be not so. If for the moment there may be some who are in the midst of darkness and difficulty, and cannot see the ultimate, then hear the testimony of those who have passed through long and weary marches, and they will tell you that they would not have missed Marah with its bitterness for all they possessed; that they would not have missed if they could the darkest day, because they have now come to see how God led them that way, and that it was a way of purpose which was beneficent, and out of the darkness has come the light.

Look once again. Moses reminded these people that they had been supplied with necessities. I like the fine discrimination of his method. What are the things he told them that God had given them? Raiment, and bread, and water. They had received a great deal more than these. But what he laid upon their memory was the fact that things absolutely necessary for life God had been providing for them. For forty years, in spite of all their murmuring and unbelief, and difficulty and suffering, there had never been a day when they had lacked necessary things.

May we not look back and say the same. What good things have we lacked? A great many things we have desired that we have not had; but did we need them? There may have been hours in which we felt sure that the supply would fail; but did it fail? There may have been days when we felt perfectly sure that the cause was lost and hopeless, and there could come no succour, not even the bare necessities of the occasion, but did things turn out so? If this congregation could but become vocal with its own experiences, what tales we should hear of wonderful deliverances, of hours out of which we have been brought, in which, as we entered them, it seemed as though we

must die; of days when it seemed as though the last prop had been knocked from under us, and all chance of our accomplishing the desire of our heart had gone for very lack of strength. But we are here this morning, remembering the way along which the Lord our God has led us.

And yet there is, I think, a deeper note in the text and in the injunction. Moses attempted to teach these people the necessity for learning the lessons God had to teach them. And these lessons are threefold. Three things he distinctly tells us lay in the purpose of God, as He delivered and led His people, and supplied their need.

The first is this, "That He might humble thee"; and the second is, "That He might... prove thee, to know what was in thine heart"; and the third is, "That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

That He should humble us. How we shrink from that word. Answer my inquiry in your own heart, quite honestly. Do you ever read the passage without feeling some little resentment at the word? "The Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble thee." Do we not feel a little at war with the idea that the purpose of God is to humble us? And yet, my brethren, if we do, it is because we are interpreting the meaning of the word and suggestion by what we know of man's method for humbling other men. Let us interpret the word by the whole economy of God. I ask you to remember this fact, that pride is the most ghastly of all human failures. It demonstrates ignorance. It is not necessary that I stay to illustrate it. You know perfectly well that among your own acquaintances the proud man is an ignorant man, and pride foreshadows ruin. The old Book is still true,

Pride goeth before destruction,

And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride is hated alike by God and man. Then, let us read once again. "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna." God's purpose is to produce the character which is the opposite of pride. All God's methods tend toward humbling. His deliverance only comes to a man in extremis. It is when the strong and self-contained swimmer is about to sink for the third time that the mightier swimmer has the chance to save him. God only begins His great deliverance when a man says, I can do nothing of myself. "He humbled thee." God's leading of His people is always leading through the pathless wilderness. God's supplies for His people always come out of the unknown. We say that today this is not so. Think again. That story of water out of a flint, and manna raining upon people is of yesterday. Today we know where we get our supplies from. Are we quite sure? Oh this age that thinks upon the surface of things. Get back behind your loaf of bread, and back behind your flour, and you have golden harvest. Where did that come from? Oh, we ploughed and sowed. And then what happened? There is always the touch of God if you will wait long enough to feel it. God is forevermore bringing to His people supplies out of the unknown. If a man is to be delivered, he will be delivered when he feels he cannot help himself. If a man is to be led, he must be flung into the wilderness where there is neither map nor guide post. If a man is to depend on God, and lose his arrogance and his pride, he must receive his supplies from One Who brings them from the unknown resources.

Then remember the beauty of humility. Humility always veils its face and worships. Humility makes friendship. Oh, you can have acquaintances who are not characterized by humility, but that thing in

your nearest and dearest friend that makes him or her your friend is humility. Humility serves forevermore. God has been leading you through the wilderness to humble you; not to break your spirit; not to make slaves of you; but to free your character from all the things that He hates, at the root of which is pride; and to make you meek and humble and lovable. That is the first lesson, and God is still doing that same thing; and if we can only see these things in their larger outlook, we shall look back and thank Him for every day when we were at the end of self and compelled to depend upon Him.

The second lesson is that God delivers, and leads, and supplies in order that he may prove. This does not at all mean that God needs to find out what is in us; but that He wants us to find out what we are in ourselves. Therein is revealed a perpetual method of God. God brings us into circumstances which will reveal the hidden facts of our nature to ourselves. Those who know most of the Divine government, will know what I am trying to say. There are incipient forces of evil in our lives. We do not know that they are there, but God knows that they are there. Rebellion lurks in the nature even while I sing the song of loyalty on a sunshiny day. God will put me into a day with no sunshine, and bring the rebellion out, that I may know it. Blasphemy may lie in the depths of my nature, even while I offer praise. Then God will lead me by some pathway where that inner thing shall come out to the light. Cowardice may be in my heart even while I sing, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the Cross." Then, before many days have gone, I shall be in a place where that cowardice will be manifested. Hatred may be in my spirit while I preach on "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Then He will place me in some circumstance that will manifest it. Dishonesty, impurity, greed; all these may be hidden beneath the surface. Then He will lead me into places where they will be revealed.

If that were all I had to say, it would be too awful a thing to say. But, there is something else to say, and I hasten to it.

The third lesson is that we may "know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every thing that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." "That" is a great word quoted by Jesus in the wilderness, a word constantly spoiled by imperfect interpretation. Do not be alarmed if I say that it does not refer to the Bible only. It includes the Bible, but it is something greater, profounder than the Bible. Let us take the illustration. These people were in the wilderness where there was no bread. How was He going to feed them? They knew how to get bread. They had seen the process in Egypt. They had gone out and flung their corn upon the land when the Nile had left its rich deposit. So they had gotten their bread. But there was no Nile running through the wilderness. They could not fling seed corn there. Or, if these men knew something of the methods of the land to which they were going; there was no yoke and no plough in the desert. God wanted them to know that they never got bread from the Nile, and as the result of their own toil. They obtained it from Him. "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Let a man live in the Divine ordinance, in the Divine government, in the Divine will, and the desert will blossom as the rose, and out of the nothing will come: the everything, and out of the is not will come the is.

Thus, He not only put His people into circumstances to develop their own inner evil and bring it to the light, but into circumstances to bring these men into such knowledge of Himself as would drive them to Him, that He might correct the evil, and put it away, and redeem them, and perfect them.

We have often said that man's extremity is God's opportunity. But I would like to put that in another way, for the purpose of this meditation, a more striking way. Man's extremity is man's opportunity for finding himself, and finding his God, and so finding life. I charge you remember, and if you will do so solemnly, you will come, I am perfectly sure, to agreement with me when I say that the richest hours of the past were the hours of extremity, and the hours of darkness, the hours when we were at the end of ourselves; the hours when we discovered something in us that appalled us, because these were the hours when God came into visibility. No bread, but it rained from heaven. No water, but out of the flinty rock it gushed. No way in the dreary wilderness, but He chose the places where we pitched our tents.

Then God help me, I will put my head on the pillow, and go to sleep. He is always appearing in the hour of man's extremity. I remember the day of desolation, darkness, despair; I was done, I was beaten, I was at the end of everything; and then there came a light, and a glory, and a supply, and a deliverance, and God. Those are the great days in life. It is by these things that men live, not by rose gardens, and not by the hills and valleys to which they are going. There is danger in them, and that is what Moses is going to tell them.

Let us come briefly to the last of these things. The true backward look is the look that looks on. The forward look to these people was one of hope. Better times were coming, better circumstances were coming. They were coming to a garden, and Moses is a poet of no mean order, as he describes the wonderful garden, "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth into valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of oil olives and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness." A good time coming? No. "Beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God." Oh there is great suggestiveness in this, heart of mine, listen to it. There is graver peril in prosperity than in adversity. The peril of self-satisfaction, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." The peril of self-righteousness. Lest you shall say in the land, "God has put us into the land because we are such good people." No! Neither by the might of your hand, neither by the goodness of your heart are you the people of privilege.

"Beware." It is when the sun shines that most souls are shipwrecked. In the day of storm we are driven to God and find Him. In the day of calm we trust in ourselves, and lose God. Therefore, remember, if the future has rosy tints upon it, beware. Now do not let anyone misunderstand me. If we remember God we may go into the sunshine, and succeed; and get out of the sunshine its honey and its sweetness and its strength. But, because of the grave peril of prosperity, it is well to remember, and so to remember as to put all the immediate past into relation with the fundamental deliverance; to remember in such a way as to discover the goings of God in all the past, leading, and guiding, and choosing, and directing, and making us hungry as well as making us full; and to remember the past with the eye upon the future.

So, to remember is first of all to repent. I, this day, do remember my sins. Well, do not shirk the business. Look at the devilish thing, look it in the face. Do not let the devil persuade you it did not matter very much. Oh, it was damnable, it hurt God, it harmed your brother! Look your sin in the face until your heart is broken! It is out of such remembrance that deliverance comes.

But to remember is not only to repent, it is to believe.

His love in time past

Forbids me to think

He'll leave me at last

In trouble to sink.

And I sing the song of deliverance for today and tomorrow whenever I remember.

Therefore, so to remember is to praise, to hope, and to dare.

So let the backward look be one that in its final value is an onward look. Then God will lead us into the land, and He is able to keep us there as well as in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 29:29. Secret And Revealed Things.

Deuteronomy 29:29.

Secret And Revealed Things.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29

These words contain one of the most important principles for the conditioning of all life, and one which constitutes a final anchorage for faith in the midst of perplexities and problems and difficulties which constantly confront the children of faith.

Man naturally resents the unknowable, and one of the chief characteristics of human history has been that of man's determination to unlock mystery, and fathom secrets. This is not wrong. It is right. I do not use the word "natural" in the sense in which we so often use it theologically, as describing the condition of fallen nature, but as proper to essential human nature. Quite apart from the fact of sin, it is a part of human nature as God created it that man everywhere rebels against mystery, and from childhood to the grave in every successive century sets himself to the business of attempting to unlock closed doors and to fathom hidden things. As soon as your child has begun to speak so that anyone can understand, he is making use of these words, I venture to say, almost more often than any other: Why? How? What? In the economy of God every child comes into the world a note of perpetual interrogation. Fathers and mothers, I charge you most solemnly never say to your child, "Don't bother me." You are there to be bothered, and the whole system of Divine education is based upon the curiosity of a little child and answering its questions. I must not follow that line, interesting as it is. But it serves as an illustration at this point. The child is knocking at the closed door, is attempting to fathom the secret. Curiosity is part and parcel of human nature, and apart from it the world would have made no discoveries, would have made no advancement. It is a natural principle in all human nature, and is God-implemented.

This rebellion against the unknowable on the part of man being, within certain bounds, perfectly correct, a part of a Divine purpose, where are the bounds and the limitations to be set? The bounds and the limits are fixed by man's ability to unlock doors and fathom secrets. Anything that a man can discover he has a right to discover, and everything that man discovers is in the last analysis God's revelation to him as he persistently knocks and seeks and works. Every human discovery is a Divine revelation also. When men discovered the uses of electricity they did not create electricity; at the fit time in human history God answered their persistent and patient search by revealing the great secret. The limits are set at the point where man can go no farther, and there are such limits. Every man who has given himself to thought and investigation along any line possible to the human mind has discovered a point of limitation.

A mistake man has made too often, and too constantly, and is making still, when he reaches the limit, is that of rebelling against the mystery that lies beyond it; or the more vital and deadly mistake of denying that there is anything beyond that which he is able to investigate and discover. It is against that twofold danger of man, in his asking of questions and making investigation, that man needs to guard. The words of this wonderful declaration of the Old Testament are fundamental and all-comprehensive. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Shall we first of all, then, examine the principle as declared, and, in the second place, make some illustrative application thereof which I trust and pray may be for the strengthening of our faith. Take out the two descriptive phrases of the text and look at them carefully, "The secret things," "The things that are revealed." They are not named in the order of our consciousness. We begin with the revealed thing, and discover that there lies behind it the secret thing. The writer here is beginning from the origin, from the cause, and working out to the effect. "The secret thing," "The revealed thing." For the purposes of following his argument we will reverse the order of consideration, and dwell first upon that which is second but which is first in our consciousness, "revealed things."

The Hebrew word here literally translated means things that are denuded, things that are made visible, things that can be seen, things that can be touched and felt, and appreciated by the senses, denuded things. If you keep that in mind for a moment you will see its bearing on that which follows.

Now I need not stay to argue that there are material things, which are obvious. There are mental things we are equally sure of. Poetry, music, philosophy are such. Moral things also we know perfectly well. There are revealed things in the moral and mental and material realms.

Then "secret things." That phrase is exactly the opposite of the other. These words might be translated clothed things, hidden things, things which are, but before which a covering is, so that we cannot see them, or touch them, or handle them, or weigh them. There is no doubt of their existence; but they are hidden. They exist, using the word in its deepest sense, but they are hidden, secret things.

Now let us take the declaration in the order in which it is made here. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God." The thing secret to you is not secret to God. The thing that is so clothed that I cannot see it is "naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do." The revealed thing in the mental realm is the poem or the song, the philosophy or the book. The hidden thing is the process of thought that produces it. I have the poem, the song, the book; but listen to the old Psalmist, "Thou understandest my thought afar off," which does not mean that God is far away and understands my thought at that distant place. God is not far away; for "in Him we live and move and have our being." I cannot lift my hand save in God's energy. I may prostitute God's energy to sin; but I am atmosphered, homed, centred in God, and I cannot escape from Him. What, then, does the Psalmist mean? "Thou understandest my thought afar off," before it is a thought formed in my mind or expressed in my words. Before it becomes a poem or a philosophy, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." He knows the mystery of its genesis and watches the process of its exodus. Thou understandest thought in the making. The revealed thing is the book, the poem, the song. The hidden thing is the working of the mystery of the mind. The book, the

poem, the song are mine. The mystery of the mental working is God's. The secret things are known to God. That is the fundamental rock. What an anchorage for faith when you and I once fasten on it for life! The problem that confronts me, and baffles me, does not baffle Him. The mystery that I am attempting to solve, and cannot yet, He knows. The secret things belong unto Him. This confidence keeps the heart firm and steady in the midst of tumult. Some of our fathers used to sing a hymn. One line comes to me,

Calm on tumult's wheel I sit.

The man who wrote that believed in God. Nobody else could write a line like that. The man who sits calm on tumult's wheel is the man who has the consciousness that over the tumult, around the tumult, knowing it, is the God of infinite peace. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God."

But now, I pray you, take the next declaration in order: "The revealed things belong unto us." The revealed things and the secret things are closely united. Every revealed thing is united to some secret thing that is hidden. The revealed things are one with secret and hidden forces, and the revealed things express so much of the hidden forces as we are able to know at the time. You may lay your hand where you will upon the commonplaces of life, and I tell you the commonplace thing you touch and see is but the outward and sacramental seal of something that will never be commonplace which you cannot touch and see. Christian Scientists are telling us that there is no matter: that everything is mind, that matter is but an expression of mind. And there is an element of truth in it. The absurdity of it I need not argue before an intelligent audience. Christian Science takes hold only where people have nothing else to do. It does not appeal to the average hard-headed Englishman. He has no room for it. Christian Science is characterized by ignorance of science and deficiency of Christianity; but it has elements of truth as has every heresy. When a Christian Scientist tells me that matter is not, it is all mind, what I say to him is this: No, this book is real matter, so are the signs of the music and the letters of the songs, but there is mind behind. This is dust and ashes until mind collects it, and binds, and prints upon it the music. Here is a revealed thing, and a secret thing, and every revealed thing is united to a secret thing. The greater is not the revealed thing but the secret thing that lies behind it.

Have you ever noticed that in our Lord's teaching He made use of figures and symbols, but never hinted that the figure was the fact. He always gives us to understand that, after all, the things seen are only symbols of something else. Let me give you an illustration. He says, "I am the true Vine." Now, we make a mistake if we say that Jesus borrowed the figure of the vine to teach us what He is. The deeper truth is this. God planted the vine in the world and let it grow through the centuries on the pattern of the infinite Christ. Man says, God has taken hold of my name, Father; He has borrowed the human name of Father in order that I may learn how loving He is. Nothing of the kind. God has lent you His name of Father that you may know how loving you ought to be. Do not let us begin at the wrong end of things. Do not let us treat these things as though when we say bread we had said the real thing. Jesus said, "Bread that perisheth; I am the Bread of life." Every loaf of bread is a sacramental symbol. Learn this great truth, and every trailing vine of glory and beauty of vintage is an unveiling of the Son of God and His Church. You tell me the Cross is wooden. I tell you it is spiritual. You bring me to a Roman gibbet, and some of you have the rough, bloody, brutal Cross made out of gold to wear as an ornament—from which thing may God deliver us everywhere—and you say, This is the Cross of Salvation. No, no; it is not that. What is it? Sin

lying across the heart of God and wounding Him. That is the Cross. The revealed Roman gibbet of nineteen hundred years ago is something more than men see and understand. Back of it is the secret thing, the infinite and unfathomable mystery. So that, according to this text, all revealed things are united to secret things, and every blade of grass is child of the infinite, and every painted flower by Divinity's fingers is the blossoming out of the essential beauty of God. Revealed things, secret things! The revealed things are ours. What for? To make us possessors of the secret things, to bring us into living touch with the secret things, with the God to whom the secret things belong.

Such is the principle declared. But there is a purpose in all this. What is the purpose? "That we may do all the words of this law." Leaving the local coloring and setting, and taking the principal thought, you find this great truth enunciated, that everything revealed is, if the man will think deeply enough and consider carefully enough, a revelation of law; and the moment a man discovers the law in the revealed thing, and obeys it, he touches and enters into communion with the secret thing behind it. How better can I illustrate at this point than by referring again to that to which I have already referred? Electricity. How is this building lighted tonight? We say by electric light. But how did we get it? It has been developed. But do you know how you developed it? Are you quite sure that in ten years electricians will not laugh at the word developed? That is only a passing word; but it shows us our ignorance. But what do we know? There were revealed things to men who were watching, results accidentally at first, flashing out upon the imagination of the watcher. What did the watcher do? He set himself to discover the law that operated behind the revelation, discovering and obeying which, he found himself in the midst of forces of which man had never dreamed. If I were to say casually to a boy, as though I were trying to catch him, "My boy, tell me, where is there more electricity, in London or in the heart of Africa?" he might be inclined to say, "Oh, in London." But it is not so, and you know it is not so. There is no more electricity here in London than there is in the heart of Africa; but here in London we light our buildings, drive our machinery, flash our messages. In Africa they do none of these things. Why not? Here we have discovered the law, and, obeying it, harness the force, though we cannot understand it. In Africa they have never discovered the law, and the force wraps them about, and they make no use of it. The revealed thing has a law. Obey the law of the revealed thing, and immediately you touch the infinite force behind it.

That is the philosophy of prayer. You tell me today that I cannot pray, that God is too much a slave of the universe He made, that He cannot hear me. God is revealing Himself in bird, in storm, in sky, in man, and in movements. Watch, and you will discover a law in everything. Obey it, and you will come immediately into touch with the Infinite Force behind, and you will work miracles; not the miracle of the juggler who amuses a crowd. You must discover the law in the revealed thing; obey it, and you can harness the forces that are infinite to the chariot wheels of your own progress.

Now let us pass to some illustrative applications, beginning among the minor matters and proceeding to the highest. I will begin with the flowers. I take a flower in my hand, and I look at it. There are revealed things. What are they? Form, and color, and fragrance. Are there no secret things here? I need not argue. No scientist, and no botanist, nor any of us has ever yet been able to tell me why the petals of yon chrysanthemum are of that particular tint, or by what strange alchemy things there yellow are here red; why the carbon is but jellyfish there and diamond yonder. Did you think of leaving the Church because of mystery? There is as much mystery in that

hymn-book as in all theology, and you had better find your way out of the world as quickly as possible, and even then you will find yourself in the home of mystery. Secret things in the flower! It is impossible to take the illustration without recalling that exquisite little fragment of Tennyson's:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

That is poetic and beautiful in the language of the dead century; but the great flaming principle Moses wrote long before Tennyson wrote it. How did he write it? "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, the revealed things are for us and our children." Discover the law that lies within the flower, and obey it, and what will happen? The secret will reach you through your obedience, and you will be able presently to work with God in making the old-fashioned garden chrysanthemum into the gorgeous beauty of the flower of today. A secret thing, a revelation of a law; a man obeys it, and he is a fellow worker with God in the cultivation of flowers.

Let me move to another realm, and here borrow the words of my Lord Himself in another connection. "The wind bloweth," the revealed thing. "Thou hearest the sound," the revealed thing. The revealed thing in the wind belongs to me. What is it? Sound, strength. The secret thing belongs to God. What is it? "Whence, whither?" Find the law that lies within the wind. What then? Then, that law discovered and obeyed, the wind becomes the messenger of health and of motion; and men will now draw you charts and maps showing you the directions and currents, which are all true; but never forget this, that God still holds in love and wisdom the hidden secret of the wind.

The mind of man. What do you know about the mind of man? Capacity, the necessity for training, the great possibilities of mind when properly trained. What do we not know about the mind? Now hear me and be patient if you do not agree with me. We do not know its nature. We do not know its seat. The whole trend of scientific investigation is along that line at this moment. The age of the physical scientist has given way to the age of the psychological scientist, and as yet they have told us nothing about the seat of the mind. You tell me about brain cells and gray matter. Perhaps! Do you think I am very ignorant? It is because I am not sure. I am a great agnostic in some things. Even if you speak of gray matter and brain cells you do not really think that is all there is of mind. I know men who still have brain cells but no mind! I am still inclined to believe that mind continues when brain cells become dust and ashes. The brain cells may be a medium for today, but there is nothing final about them. Let us say we do not know. Let us say the secret things belong to God. Yet discover the law in the revealed thing, and obey it, and you are coming near to the secret thing. And I for one welcome the psychological movement. It is infinitely broader and sweeter and healthier than the dust of thirty years ago; and men obeying law are emerging into new light.

And now, very reverently let me lift this to the highest plane of all. The Christ Himself. Revealed things. Yes. The historic Person, the Actual Presence in every successive century. Do you

question it? I cannot stay to argue it; but I do say that it admits of no questioning. I say to you that the direct presence of Jesus of Nazareth in the world is established without possibility of doubt; and even those questioning the accuracy of our New Testament records at least have to make acknowledgment that there has been a Man named Jesus Who did some things, and said some things which affect this hour. That is all I want. That is the fact. No brilliant Frenchman, or lucid German, or hard-thinking Englishman, has been able to take from us the fact of the historicity of Christ. That is the smallest revealed thing. What is the greater revealed thing? The living Christ, the living message through the centuries, the living Christ in England, doing what none other can do, accomplishing what no philosophy was ever able to do, and no system of education can do. The living Christ, Who passes into the slum, and takes hold of your unfit man, and makes him fit. And while you deny His existence, I show you His miracles; and if you are as honest as the Sadducees you will hold your peace. The revealed things. Thank God I am not speaking of a dead and worn-out Christ. Men and women here who a month ago had not seen the vision have seen it. Men and women who a month ago were in the grip of sin have on their faces tonight the very radiance of heaven's own light and the reflection of the Christ beauty. Revealed things. But there are secret things. What are they? These are some: the method of Incarnation, the mystery of Atonement, the method of Resurrection. Doubt, and doubt very earnestly, any man who tells you these things are not secret things, any man who attempts to formulate, or tabulate, who attempts to tell you of the humanity and Deity of Christ where the one ends and the other begins. He was very God and very Man. Very Man, weeping, tired, weary, tempted. Very God, hushing tempests, casting demons out, healing disease, remaking moral failures. Do I understand Him? I do not. I worship Him, and I say in His presence, "My Lord, and my God." I cannot touch the secret things of the infinite Christ save through the revealed things; but if I will obey the law revealed in Christ I shall come into living touch with the infinite mysteries that lie behind, and Incarnation will bring me into relationship with God; and Atonement will cancel my sin and break its power, and Resurrection will be to me the new enablement for which my weary soul has waited.

And reverently, from this great height, let us descend the mountain again, and let me say to you that God's government of human affairs also has within it these two elements. What are the revealed things? The fact that God is governing. Do we ever see this quite clearly at the moment? I am not sure; I think some do, but I think it is always by faith granted to us. Look back over human history, and if you and I are wise, in the day of densest darkness in history, we shall see God is on the field when He is most invisible. Illustrations crowd upon me. Look out for yourselves at the coincidence of the invention of the printing machine and the Reformation of religion. But you say, Where is God now? God is governing, and the secret things in His government belong to Him.

Let me get from these wide reaches of vision, and take my own life. How do I know God is governing in my life? I look back—and my friends will forgive me—I am not looking back as far as some of you; but I look back and I pick out things tonight, things I cannot speak of, days of my life, dark days; for, as God is my witness, He has given me my share of sorrow's sacrament, days of awful heartbreak, when all the lights along the shore seemed to go out. I would not undo one such day for worlds. I have come at last to see the meaning of them. There seems to be a jumble, when a man is laying the pavement with little bits of blue, and gray, and black, and sand and mortar. But when the building is finished, behold the mosaic. There would have been no mosaic if there had been no apparent jumble in the construction. Already some of the mosaic is shining out for me,

and when I have done and passed home, then I shall sing of all the pathway.

Right was the pathway leading to this.

Though it was through blood and tears and suffering.

And so I might go on. Is your experience just now one of sorrow? I am talking to some sorrowing heart, some broken heart. Let me leave everybody else, and talk to you. Is the day very dark, and the way very rough? I cannot understand it. Secret things belong to God. Discover the law that lies within the revealed thing; if it be pain it will be the law of lying plastic even though the hand of the Potter press to pain the clay; and presently out of the process and the ordeal shall come the vessel finished to His glory—a thing of use to God, and of beauty for the infinite ages. May God help us if we forget all the attempts to illustrate, to fasten our faith upon, the great declaration, The secret things are God's as the revealed things are ours.

Deuteronomy 33:27. The Faith That Cancels Fear.

Deuteronomy 33:27.

The Faith That Cancels Fear.

The eternal God is thy dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33:27

There are two realms of mystery which persistently assault the soul of man and produce in it a sense of fear. They are the unknown future, and the unfathomable present. It is a little difficult to know which of these is more provocative of fear. We look ahead; we think of tomorrow with fear. We look on to the inevitable days which will multiply into years. Sometimes, when we dare, we think of the persistent years which are running relentlessly on and completing the period of our earthly sojourn. For all of these we have our hopes, we have our ideals; but we see the perils, and the question that perpetually comes to us concerns what will happen tomorrow, in the coming years, and how life will end and how it will be rounded out; whether at eventide there shall be light, or whether the end shall be darkness.

Or at other times we stand still and think, attempting to grasp the present, the present of life itself, of suffering, of weakness, and of that which is always present with us, death. In all these things, life and suffering and weakness and death, there are profound and unfathomable mysteries. We have grappled with the surface of them all; but ever and anon we have become sensible of the deeps, the deeps of life itself at its highest and its best. We are related to these things, and cannot escape them. We lift our eyes and look to tomorrow and say, What will happen? We look within, and attempt to fathom the infinite mystery of the moment, and cry out, What shall we do?

Now, the answer to both these inquiries is found in the text. Of the first, the fear of the future, the text declares, "The eternal God is thy dwelling place." Of the present, with its sense of depth and profundity and unfathomable mystery, the declaration of the text is, "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Let us, then, consider the declaration, and then take counsel with our fears in the light of our faith.

First, then, as to the declaration in itself. It occurs in the blessing which Moses pronounced ere he left the people whom he had led for forty years. This was almost the last thing he said:

The eternal God is thy dwelling place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

Here we have that great name of God by which He is introduced to us in the Biblical revelation, and which we so constantly find: this name Elohim, standing, as it does, for the unfathomable and

immeasurable might of the Most High. That is the one thought suggested by the word. In this particular name of God there is really no revelation of His character, nothing that tells us of the motive that inspires Him in His activity, nothing that reveals to us the purpose of all His doings. It is the intensive Hebrew plural, Elohim, speaking of might, and consequently of majesty.

The arresting word in the text is not the name of God, though, of course, that is necessary to our understanding of the declaration. The arresting word is the word which we have translated eternal. It does not mean, for instance, what the word "everlasting" means: "Underneath are the everlasting arms." That word "everlasting" is the greatest of all the words that attempt to express for us what is beyond our calendars and our almanacs—the timelessness of Deity. But the word here translated eternal has another meaning and another thought. Let me say quite simply that the word really has no reference to tomorrow. It has to do with yesterday. It is a word that bids us look on. It is a word that compels us to look back.

Now, immediately we may say, What comfort, then, can there be in that declaration in the presence of the fear of tomorrow? That is the very genius of the text. The word means literally the front, whether of place or of time. Absolutely, it means the forepart. Relatively, it means the east, the place of the sunrise, the place where the day began. The great thought concerning God which this particular word suggests is that He is the God of the beginning. We would do no violence to the Hebrew if we translated the passage, The God of old is thy dwelling place. That would lack the poetry of the word eternal, but it would come nearer to the thought of the singer. The God of old, the God of the beginning, is thy dwelling place. All that was involved in the beginning is persistent through processes to the consummation. The eternal God, the God of the morning, the God of the morning when the stars sang together over the initiation of a new mystery in the universe on which they had never looked before—that God of the beginning is thy dwelling place.

Out of that interpretation arise suggestions, which, in some senses, are paradoxical and startling. We are ever prone in our thinking of tomorrow to think of it as being in front of us. Tomorrow is not in front of us. Tomorrow is behind us. These are the later days. The earlier days are gone. Tomorrow is still later. In other words, the whole underlying suggestion is that of a great procession. Fasten your attention for a moment on some great procession you have seen pass along the highway. The beginning of the procession is always in front; the end of it is always behind. Yesterday is in front; tomorrow is behind. The whole history of humanity is a procession, and in the beginning is God, leading the procession. We are not moving away from those who went before us, as though we dropped them somewhere behind, and left them. We are moving after them, we are following them. The generation that shall be born will not be in advance of us. They will be behind us. God leads, and accompanies; He is the God of the morning, of the beginning, and He is thy dwelling place.

The description of God, the eternal God, thus interpreted may seem to suggest that every succeeding generation is further away from Him than the first. We may gather the comfort of the fact that He leads, that all those early movements were closely associated with His power and His wisdom and His love, as the Biblical revelation declares to us; but they are far away from us; and even though we follow in their train, we are far distant. But the text answers the inquiry at once. The God Who was at the beginning is our refuge, our dwelling place. God is no further removed from me than He was from the first man in the procession. God is no further distant from His

creation after the long ages of its development and continuation than He was from the first propulsion from the night. The eternal God, the God of the beginning, the God of old time, the God of the morning is our dwelling place.

Then immediately the deduction is patent. The future which is behind us is not our care. We have nothing to do with that which follows. We have two things about which we must forever be concerned; those, namely, of yesterdays which are in front of us, and of the today in which we set our faces toward the things that have gone before. We follow God, in company with God. "The eternal God is thy dwelling place."

All that prepares for, and leads to, the second part of the declaration, "And underneath are the everlasting arms," which really is a large interpretation of the truth declared in the first. The great suggestion is made to us that God is the God of the beginning. It is declared that He is our dwelling place on all the march, and then we are told what that really means: "Underneath are the everlasting arms." That is the only place in the English Bible where we find that word underneath. The Hebrew word is found in other places. If we would understand it, we cannot be too absolute in our simplicity. The Hebrew word means the bottom. The root idea is that of depressing, and humbling, and beating down. Underneath is the uttermost limit of the depressing and the humbling and the beating down. How far down can your imagination or your experience carry you? Those depths, those profundities of life are suffering and weakness and death—how far do you know them? How deep have you been into life? How profound has been your experience of sorrow? How far have you sunk in some hour of weakness? How nigh have you come unto death? When you have reminded yourselves of that lowest level—and some soul may say, I was never deeper down than now—then listen, "Underneath," lower than that, "are the everlasting arms."

"Everlasting arms." Arms in the Bible always constitute the figure of strength, and the idea is always qualified by the root meaning of sowing, fructifying, bearing. Motherhood lies in the figurative use of this word in the Bible, as well as Fatherhood. "Everlasting" is the word to which I have already made reference. The Hebrew word is full of poetic suggestion. It means the vanishing point, the ultimate reach of imagination and thought, and that which lies beyond the ultimate reach of imagination and thought, the concealed. There is no exact equivalent in the Bible really for all we mean when we say eternal or everlasting. We are attempting to grasp the infinite, and to express it in a word. The Bible never makes that attempt. The Hebrew and the Greek, by figures of speech, pile suggestion upon suggestion, and leave us with a sense of mystery, of the unfathomable and un-reachable, and of the fact that we have not said the last thing. So it is with this great word "everlasting." The everlasting is the vanishing point, the concealed, that which lies behind and beyond the uttermost effort of imagination and thinking. The everlasting arms are arms that reach to, and exist in, that realm of darkling mystery that baffles the soul and assaults it with fear. All the mysteries of the deeps have beneath them the strength, the enclosing power, the infinite tenderness of God. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Whatever the abyss, however much it seems to be a darkling void, dare it, dive into it deeply enough, and you will find you are falling on the arms of God. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Now, let us consult our fears in the presence of this declaration of our faith, fears for the future, and fears in the presence of present mysteries. What fears for the future we have today! Am I not rightly interpreting the mood of all our minds today, when I say that they are ever with us, fears

about the future, fears for the world at large, fears for the Church of God, fears for the very Christ of God, and fears for our own souls?

Fears about the future. When we look out on the world, one word tells the story just now, and that word is the word "chaos." The apparent hopelessness of it all is patent. We cheer our hearts ever and anon because we think we see some gleam of light in the sky, and it goes out again, and storms sweep up, and the darkness is deeper than ever. We are wondering about the future of the world. Is all the history of the running centuries and the world to end in cruelty, and the victory of wrong, and the destruction of ideals, and the plunge back of a race into a barbarism more devilish than has been known, or the world has ever seen, because wrong is better equipped?

Fears for the future of the Church are with us every day. The hopeless confusion of the Church at the present moment, her inability to realize herself, or the unity of her life, and the catholicity of that life; her inability to deal with the present situation, her poverty as an organized institution on the field of battle and among our soldiers—all these things oppress us, and we wonder what is going to happen presently when the war is over.

And right in the heart of all this, fight against it as we will, protest against it as we may in our higher and nobler moments, there is a haunting fear about our Christ. Not that we doubt Him, but we see Him refused, we see Him put to open shame; and the question comes to us again and again, What next?

Then, to narrow the circle, and we cannot omit this, how perpetually, as we look on to tomorrow, fear assaults us about our own souls; our failures yesterday and in the past, in spite of all our highest aspirations and our most ardent desires after the things that are of God, we know too well. There is the dark way we have come, with its failure, its paralysis, and its folly, and there is the growing sense of weakness, and we are afraid. The future is always fearful, and never more so than today.

In the presence of all these fears, I go back to this old song, and I read: "The God of the beginning is thy dwelling place," and in that declaration I find the one and only answer that silences our fears, our fears for the world. That answer is the God of the beginning. He created this world in its present state of order out of chaos. The earth was waste and void. God did not so create it at the beginning, in that remote beginning which is merely named, and of which we have no detail. Catastrophe had somehow overtaken it. It was waste and void, a turmoil; darkness was everywhere. Then the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters, and the voice of God spake, and there came up out of the darkness, light; and out of the chaos, order; and from the desert, roses. The God of the beginning is thy dwelling place. That cannot end worst which began best, though a wide compass first be fetched. The eternal God, the God of the morning, is the God of the advancing hours; the God Who led is accompanying all pilgrims on the march. If there be a repetition of chaos, a recrudescence of evil that threatens to devastate all order, then He is the God of a new beginning. The very last words of prophetic utterance which I find in my Bible are these: "Behold, I make all things new."

And what of the Church? God created it, and He created it a new order and pattern of life out of the old. Make that perfectly simple by thinking of the material with which He dealt at the beginning to constitute His Church. Think of those twelve men, men of like passions with ourselves in very

deed; and yet those men constituted the beginning of His Church. Read with great care the book of the Acts of the Apostles, read with great care this little handful of letters that were sent out to the early churches, and mark, not merely the brightness of the glory shining, but the darkness of the shadows gathering. See how right away, at the beginning of the history of the Church, the heresies that are called new were powerfully operating, the schisms that we mourn today rending the body asunder. All the things that fill our hearts with foreboding were there then. Then remember that He Who created that Church has led that Church through all the centuries and the millenniums; and in spite of her failure, in spite of her recurring powerlessness, in spite of the fact that over and over again she has seemed to miss the moment of opportunity, she has been God's witness through the ages, and her testimony has never failed. Again, I go to the end of my New Testament, and I read a prophetic word concerning the Church, and it is this, He, the Son of God, the Christ of God, God manifest, He shall present her faultless "before the presence of His glory."

When I turn to that third realm of fear that I hardly like to mention, our fears concerning the Christ, it is well that we let Him speak to us again, for His own words are the only words we need to hear, the only words that can be powerful: "I am... the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Does He seem to be dead again? Does it seem as though this age, with all its vaunted progress, has nailed Him to the Cross anew? Does it seem as though we have wrapped Him in grave clothes, and placed Him in a tomb, and rolled a stone to the door? He is saying, I am alive, I am alive forevermore.... So surely as He came forth from the Syrian tomb in Joseph of Arimathea's garden He will emerge in new light and glory from the hour when we think Him dead.

And what about my soul? The God of the beginning is thy dwelling place, Oh, soul of mine. He Who began a good work in thee will complete it. He is the God of Jacob. He will perfect that which concerneth me. So my fears are silenced. Let us hear Paul once again, and perhaps with an entirely new sense: "Forgetting the things which are behind" (that is, the future), "and stretching forward to the things which are before" (that is, God and all He has done), "let us press toward the goal." I am to forget my yesterday, and remember tomorrow; but that yesterday is in front, and my back should be on tomorrow.

E'en let the unknown morrow

Bring with it what it may.

Turn your back on tomorrow, face the yesterday, look to the glory of the sunrise, and have no thought for that which is following on, no fear about tomorrow. That is in God's keeping. March, my soul, with strength today, thy face toward the beginning where the glory of God was manifested, knowing that the God of the beginning is with thee now on the pathway.

So we turn to the second realm of fear, fears of the deeps. I said at the beginning that I sometimes wonder which realm of mystery is more provocative of fear, the mystery of the future, or the mystery of the present. I am inclined to think that the present life itself is more terrible, when a man dare face it. And here for the moment I do not mean its weakness, suffering, and death. I mean life, the mystic elements of being, the surprises that come up from within, good and bad and mixed; the sudden breaking out as from within of high aspirations, and sense of ability that I had never dreamed I had, the sudden upspringing from some deep, low level of being of that which is

slimy and devilish and hateful. Of these mysteries we become more and more conscious as the years run on. In the dawning, in youth, golden, glorious, beautiful, glad, we are not conscious of life at all. Youth touches only the surface of things.

In later years we are faced also with the mystery of sorrow and of suffering, its reason, and its value; our own suffering, and, principally, the suffering of others. The problem of suffering is created in the human mind in the presence of suffering other than that which is personal. It is not your own pain that causes you so much conflict as the pain of others.

Or, again, there are the depths of weakness, physical, spiritual, moral. So far as I may speak experimentally, I say that there is no experience more poignant in its agony than weakness. In the physical realm I can conceive of nothing more truly hopeless and helpless than the last extremity of utter weakness. As in the spiritual, so in the moral—these deep, deep things of weakness, how they fill the soul with fear!

Finally, there are the depths of death, death which we have observed, but never known. We have watched death, we have seen it, but we have not known it. Death is the admitted enemy. Christianity never calls it a friend. That is Sadducean paganism which affects to call death a friend. Christianity says the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The answer to all these fears is found in the words: "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Oh for some master of music who shall set that one word underneath to melodies and harmonies that swell and grow, vibrant with tenderness, and mighty with thunder! Underneath life, this mystery of my own life that baffles me, and fills me with fear, and drives me hopelessly along the pathway—underneath it all are the everlasting arms. There is nothing in my life unknown to God. There is nothing in my life outside the compass of that embrace of eternal strength and tenderness. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Underneath all suffering. He encircles our sorrows with His own; but in His sorrows there is nothing of despair, there is nothing of weakness. They are greater than mine by virtue of the strength of God, but there is nothing in them of despair, and nothing of weakness. In the depth of suffering I presently find the arms of God underneath.

Weakness? Oh, yes, that is where some of us found the arms as we had never known them before. In the last reach of the descent we found the arms of God, we fall, and fall, all supports giving way; we sink, sink, sink, until, when no finger can be lifted and no glance of the eye tell the agony of our weakness, we suddenly find we are cradled in the arms of God. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

By these signs and tokens, by these experiences of the soul, we know how it shall be in death. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Death will be the gate of life. Through it we shall find God.

Here, then, is the answer to our fears. We still admit the mystery of tomorrow and of today; but we find our rest in God. He is the beginning. He is always the beginning. He began this day, this very day. This is the day that the Lord hath made. He will begin every tomorrow that shall come, until the cycle of the running days has completed the story of humanity, and it finds itself at the goal, at the destination. He is the God of the everlasting arms. It is impossible to sink beneath them, for they are always underneath. "The God of the morning is thy dwelling place, and underneath are

the everlasting arms."

Deuteronomy 32:11-12a. "As An Eagle... The Lord... Did Lead."

Deuteronomy 32:11-12a.

"As An Eagle... The Lord... Did Lead."

As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,

That fluttereth over her young,

He spread abroad his wings, he took them,

He bare them on his pinions:

The Lord alone did lead him.

Deuteronomy 32:11-12 a

These words are taken from the swan song of Moses. In that song there is a remarkable alternation between praise and blame. It celebrates the goodness and faithfulness of God; it chronicles the wickedness and unfaithfulness of His people.

Calling to mind how God had found the people in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness, and given them among the nations the place of prosperity and privilege, the singer employed this pictorial method of setting forth the way of the Divine government. It is peculiarly a figure of the wilderness, where for forty years Moses had kept his flocks. Probably he had often watched the eagles with their brood on some rocky height or sweeping over the broad and silent expanses. It was a daring figure, but he was warranted in using it, for forty years before he sang this song God Himself had employed it in speaking to him: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself."

The Bible is full of fine figures of speech and parabolic illustrations of the various aspects of the Divine government; but in all that it is intended to teach, none is more simple and sublime than this. It thrills with tenderness and with strength. It makes us conscious of the passion and power and purpose of God in all His dealings with those whom He loves.

First, let us observe the comparison broadly. In the eleventh verse we have a picture of the eagles in their activities, the mother stirring up her young, fluttering over them, the father spreading abroad his wings, taking the young and bearing them on his pinions. These words reveal to us the activities of the eagles, but they do not suggest their purpose. In the first phrase of the next verse we have a revelation of God's purpose—"The Lord... did lead him"—but there is no suggestion as to His activities, as to His methods. In the figure we discover the activities of the eagles: in the declaration we find the purpose of God. When we allow the first part of the text to be illuminated by the second, and the second by the first, we have the figure in its completeness. The purpose of the eagles is revealed by what is said concerning the purpose of the Lord. Why is this eagle stirring up her nest, fluttering over her young? Why is this eagle spreading abroad his wings, taking them,

bearing them on his pinions? In order that they may lead the eaglets, in order that they may guide them. The activities of the Lord are revealed by what is said concerning the activities of the eagles. How does He lead His people? He stirs up their nests, He broods over them, He spreads His wings before them, He catches them on His wings, and carries them.

In the text, then, in its entirety, we have a revelation of God, a revelation of His activities in government, and a revelation of His purpose through those activities.

First, let us consider the revelation of God. There is a touch of genuine Eastern color about this. In the Bible, the eagle is more than once employed as the symbol of Deity. When Ezekiel was in captivity on the banks of the river Chebar he had a vision of God, and in the midst of the flashing glory of the light, and amid the turning of the mystic wheels, he saw faces: the face of the lion, the face of the ox, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle, all being manifestations of life proceeding from God, having its origin in God. Authority was suggested by the face of the lion; service, by that of the ox; the highest form of creation, by that of the man; while the eagle, with unflinching eyes, and wings spread for flight into the abysmal depths of mysteries that are beyond human ken, was the symbol of Deity. When, long after, the seer of the Galilean lake was imprisoned in Patmos, washed by the waters of the sea, he saw a door open in heaven, and round about the throne four living ones having the same faces that Ezekiel saw, the faces of the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle. The Fathers of the Church interpreted the Gospel narratives by this symbolism, not always agreeing in their placing of the signs, but all making the eagle the symbol of John. For myself, I find in Matthew the face of the lion of the tribe of Judah, the King; in Mark, the face of the ox, pointing to service, priesthood, sacrifice; in Luke, the face of a man, the highest glory in God's creation; and in John, the face of the eagle, the symbol of Deity.

In our text, all the mystic wonder of the symbolism is brought down to simplest terms. Let us watch the scene as therein described. First, the mother eagle is seen doing a strange thing, stirring up the nest, the nest in which the eaglets, having been fed, are sleeping, and will sleep on until they are hungry again. The word "stirreth" is, undoubtedly, an accurate one here, but its root meaning is suggestive: the mother is awakening the birds, disturbing them in their slumber. Next, she is seen fluttering over her young, and the word "fluttering" means—and I prefer to use it—brooding. She is brooding over the birds she has disturbed. Then the father bird is seen spreading his wings in the air. The mother has wakened the eaglets, she has made them conscious of her mother heart as she brooded over them; and now the father spreads his wings, and the eaglets try to do the same thing—they flutter and stumble, and fall. Now the last phase is seen, the father is beneath them, has caught them on his wings, and is bearing them back.

That is God, said the singer of the olden time, and that is how God deals with His people. What, then, does this figure reveal to us of God? It is, first of all, a revelation of His Parenthood, that is, of the Motherhood of God and of the Fatherhood of God. The personal pronoun "He" is capitalized at the beginning of the third and fourth lines of this eleventh verse simply to conform to the rules of poetry, and not to suggest that the figure merges into a direct description of the activity of God at that point. The masculine pronoun is undoubtedly accurate, and thus we see the mother and father, the mother bird disturbing the eaglets and brooding over them, while the father bird spreads his wings, and presently bears them on his pinions. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, the feminine; fluttereth over her young, the feminine; he, the masculine, spread abroad his wings, and he, the

masculine, bare them on his pinions. Thus we have a revelation of that supreme and glorious fact, that in God fatherhood and motherhood merge. We have never grasped the fullest fact concerning God until we have recognized the double truth.

Look at the eagles again as they are seen with their young, and mark them well. The eaglets are of the very being and nature of the eagles, and therefore are the supreme objects of the love of the mother bird as she broods over them, and of the father bird as he spreads his great wings before them. Here also the figure holds good. Man is of the very being and nature of God, and therefore he is the supreme object of God's love. This is the poetic and beautiful suggestion of this picture of the eagles with the eaglets. As the eagles love the eaglets because they are of their very nature and being, so God loves man because he is of God's very nature, of His very Being. This is fundamental. It is only in proportion as we grasp this underlying truth that all the beauty of that which follows will be apprehended. All that we see in the picture, the disturbing of the young birds, the brooding over them, the spreading of the wings, and the carrying on the pinions, all must be interpreted by motherhood and fatherhood.

But, again, as I watch the eagles at their work I am impressed with their strength and the consequent security of the eaglets. Watch the eagles' wings in the storm. They seem to beat back the rushing of the wind and master it, or travel with it in excellency of strength. Watch the eagles' wings in the hour of conflict, and see with what skill they beat down the foe that would harm the eaglets. Watch the wings as they brood over the eaglets, and mark their gentleness. Gentleness is not weakness; gentleness is strength held in restraint. We talk, said George Matheson, of the gentleness of the brook. The brook has no gentleness. It rushes and roars down its way over the pebbles. If we would speak of gentleness let us stand on the beach and see the mighty ocean with silver foam kiss the feet of the little child that plays on the shore. That is gentleness.

That is the true picture of God. Listen to some of the ancient singers:

Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.

The children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings.

I will take refuge under the covert of Thy wings.

Under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.

Or listen to another, who employs the same figure, but in another way. Singing of God, he said:

He flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.

The wings of the eagle seem stronger than the wind, but when this singer used the figure he magnificently modified it, and made the wind itself the wings of God:

He flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.

When, then, did He fly swiftly on the wings of the wind? This is what the singer said:

In my distress I called upon the Lord.

That was when "He flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind."

The glorious strength of God is such that the figure breaks down, and the metaphor fails, and we are left face to face with the naked fact, and of the consequent security of all those who are underneath His wings as they brood, or over His wings as He carries them.

In the figure there is, at least, a suggestion of the nature of God. What is the nature of the eagle? It dwells on high, and it takes its flight sunward, with eyes that never flinch as they are fixed on the light. But here supremely the figure suggests, and then breaks down; and whenever a figure thus breaks down it is fulfilling its highest function, for it is leading us beyond itself to the fact which it is intended to suggest. The eagle is the mystic sign of Deity because of its flight to the heights; but there the figure halts, for God is the ultimate height. The eagle is the symbol of Deity, because with unflinching gaze it beholds the light of the sun and soars into it, until human eyes can no longer follow it; but there the figure breaks down, for God is the light.

But now let us consider the activities of the eagles as representing the activities of God in His government. The first activity is suggested by the words: "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest"; that is disturbance. The next, by the words: "That broodeth over her young"; that is love assuring the disturbed ones that it is still active. The next, by the words: "He spread abroad his wings"; that is inspiration and illustration in order that those disturbed should be taught to fly. The last, by the words: "He took them, he bare them on his pinions"; that is protection that comes when, essaying to obey inspiration and illustration, the eaglets flutter and fall.

These are the elements of the Divine government of human lives. The first is ever that of disturbance. The life that is never disturbed by God is dying and withering and falling. God is forever more stirring up the nest, rousing us from our lethargy, lest, perchance, we also should become like Jeshurun, who waxed fat and kicked in his sleekness, forgetting not God only, but his own manhood. God disturbs the place of our abode; the home is stricken, and we are flung out. Our plans, so carefully and so prayerfully made, are broken down. Our very conceptions, the highest and the best, have to be reconsidered, and we discover that somewhere in our highest thinking we were wrong. God plunges us into a maelstrom in order that we may know how wrong we were. Our very service, the highest service we can render, service which He has appointed, is suddenly interfered with by the changing of our strength to weakness, or by a command that we relinquish it for another that seems less important. God is always disturbing us.

There is nothing more perilous than forming a false estimate of the meaning of disturbed life, that we should say of some soul who, through long years has always been tempest-tossed, buffeted, hurled hither and thither by storms, that there must be something wrong with him. It may be that God is preparing that soul for larger vision, clearer seeing of the light, and upward movement toward heights to which we have never mounted. As the eagle stirs up the nest, and will not allow the eaglets to settle into the lethargy of a sleep that follows feeding, so God stirs up the nest, takes away the loved one, brings into the midst of life the pain and shadow of suffering, contradicts our highest plans, hurls us out from the place where we love to be, makes us feel the sweeping of the storm, and so prevents the fatal lethargies that destroy.

But that is not all. The eagle also "broodeth over her young." The figure is the more striking in that it so closely follows the other. Probably, if I had been writing this, I should have put it the other way: first, the brooding, and then the disturbing, and this because I know neither the eagle nor God as perfectly as did Moses. He knew both. He had watched the eagle, and he knew God. The

first thing is disturbance, and then the brooding over the young. Here we cannot be too realistic in our imagination. Look carefully at that eyrie on the rocky height. There are the eaglets and the mother bird, and she disturbs them who fain would sleep in the quietness that follows feeding; she will not have it so, she wakes them, she pushes them with her wings to the very edge of the nest, and presently will push them out. Then, as they are puzzled and fearful, she flutters over them, she broods over them, she says to them, in effect: Yes, I have disturbed you, but I am your mother! She broodeth over her young. That, also, is a picture of God. He disturbs, but He gives; to the soul an immediate qualification of the disturbance, not by explaining its meaning, but by assuring the heart concerning Himself. Nothing is more wonderful than this. Souls that are struggling, but who, nevertheless, believe in God, are constantly made conscious of this brooding love, of God. Again and again, during these months of desolation and disturbance, when some loved one has been taken away, plans have been broken up, and all that looked so fair has become desolate, have we heard it said: "I cannot understand it; but I am perfectly sure of His love. It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good!" What has inspired the word? God—God brooding over the heart, giving the heart that knowledge of Himself, offering no explanation of the meaning of the disturbance, but assuring the troubled soul that there is a meaning in it, that there is wisdom in it. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Why has He taken away? I do not know, I cannot tell, I cannot see the meaning of it; it seems to have no meaning! But "blessed be the name of the Lord." When the soul says that, it is because God, like a mother, broods over the heart, and whispers the sweet secret into the soul: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

But the figure moves on in its revelation of the Divine activity. The mother eagle who has disturbed, and who has fluttered broodingly over the young, now watches; and the father spreads abroad his wings. By this act he is insisting on the fulfilment of the purpose of the disturbance and the brooding of the mother. He spreads his wings in front of them, they being now fully awake, and fully comforted. She waked them when she disturbed them, comforted them when she brooded over them. Now, in effect, he says: This is what we mean. He spreads his wings, and by inherent instinct, the eaglets begin to spread their wings. As in imagination, we watch them, we cannot help laughing at them, their movements are so grotesque. I am sure the mother and the father laugh at them with that tender sympathetic laughter that is always in the heart of parents for the follies of child life.

All that also is a true picture of God, Who is always going before us, and yet is ever near enough to show us how to do the things He demands if we are but looking at Him. Too often the trouble with us is that we are not watching our God. If we were doing so we should find that when He has disturbed us, comforted us, He will show us what He means, and so help us to spread our wings.

I watch the eaglets doing it, fearful as they find themselves flung out of the nest; in the element of the air, so strange to them, they begin to beat with their wings, but they are going down, they are falling. Now comes the last phase of the revelation. The father swoops beneath them, catches them on his broad pinions. They try and fail, but they never fall! In their trying and their failing he is nigh, and when they fail and would fall, he is beneath them, bearing them on his pinions. That process is repeated until the day comes when the eaglets will not want the father underneath; their own wings will find their strength, and they will fly. So with us. We shall fail, but we shall not fall. Our attempts will seem grotesque to us, and to others who watch us, but our Father will always

catch us on His wings, and bear us up.

Finally, let us consider the purpose revealed by the figure. What are the eagles doing with the eaglets? The eagles are developing the eaglets' natural powers. They are eagles too. What is God doing in His government of our lives? He is developing our natural powers. Man is made for God; he is in the Divine image and likeness. By all God's government, by His disturbing of us, by His brooding over us, by His guidance of us, when on His wings He is catching us when we fail and flutter and fall; by all these things He is bringing us to the fulfilment of our own destiny, to the realization of our own manhood. The supreme tragedy of human life is that man thinks so much less of himself than God thinks of him.

Man is not flesh, man is not flesh, but fire!

His senses cheat him, and his vision lies.

Swifter and keener than his soul's desire,

The flame that mothers him eludes his eyes.

That is why God disturbs him. God wakes man from the lethargy which oftentimes comes from overfeeding, from the attempt to satisfy the life with the things of dust. The purpose of the Divine government is to end weakness. Only by flight can eagles fly, only by struggle can strength be gained. That is an illuminative story of the boy who came to his mother with the chrysalis of a glorious butterfly. He knew something of the beauty that was hidden there; he had been told about it. He watched the chrysalis until he saw it beginning to burst; he observed the struggle, and a mistaken pity in his heart said, Oh, let me help it! Then with scissors he snipped the chrysalis, and made it easy! With what result? Those gorgeous wings were never spread! You cannot help the butterfly; from the chrysalis it must struggle to the glory of its final beauty.

So also man can come to the final dignity of his own being and the fulness of the meaning of his own life only as God disturbs him, rouses him from the lethargy which means death. By all the processes of strain and stress and disturbance, by His brooding love, by the inspiration of His outspread wings as He lures us toward flight, by the great strength with which He swoops beneath us and catches us on His pinions, by all this He is perfecting our strength and leading us to the heights as He develops within us His own thought for us.

In its first application, the word of the singer is national. It was to a nation that this thing was said. Oh the peril, the ghastly peril of failing to fulfil national destiny by reason of prosperity! No nation ever failed to fulfil its destiny because of adversity. It is prosperity that blasts a nation. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. He became sleek and forgot God. That was the trouble threatening our own nation, and therefore I say it with great solemnity, we thank God when He disturbs us. He is waking us from our lethargy that we may find our wings and reach the heights.

But if the first application is to the nation, the application of the song is also personal. Let it sing to us the sacred story of our own dignity. Let it argue His meaning as He disturbs us, and broods over us. Let us trust and obey, knowing that if we fail and fall, His pinions will be underneath; and if we wake with the horror of the disturbance His wings will be over us. The day will come when we shall spread our wings and find the meaning of God and the meaning of our own lives.

Joshua 3:4. The Untrodden Pathway.

Joshua 3:4.

The Untrodden Pathway.

Ye have not passed this way heretofore.

Joshua 3:4

Last Sunday morning we looked back. This morning we look on. The Children of Israel are still seen at the parting of the ways. There is some change of circumstances from those at which we looked before, but it is a slight one so far as the hosts are concerned. They are still on the margin of the land. We spoke then of the fact that change was imminent, the leaders were about to change, the circumstances were about to change, the wilderness was passed, and the land was immediately before them.

When we turn to this book of Joshua, we find that Moses, the servant of God, has entered into rest, and Joshua has taken his place as leader of the nation. Behind the people there is the history, and the great lessons learned through that history.

Among the last words of Moses to them had been those which formed our text last Sunday morning, "Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God hath led thee." Standing upon the margin of the land, behind them lay the deliverance from Egypt; the guidance of God for forty years in the great and terrible wilderness, and the daily supply of daily need. They possessed, moreover, the lessons learned through the experience of the past; that first of humility, for He led them and suffered them to hunger, and fed them, that He might humble them; that secondly of the discovery of themselves—for I think you will agree when I say that the people who stood on the margin of the land for the second time after forty years had learned a great deal about themselves that they did not know before; and finally that of the discovery of God in many an hour of extremity and many a place of difficulty.

Now before them lay the great unknown. Joshua said to them, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." There were certain things about the future which they thought they knew, but of none of them were they absolutely certain. There were things about the land which had been reported to them as a people forty years before, which, doubtless, many who were then but children would nevertheless remember; facts concerning its mountains and valleys, its rivers and rills, its cities and its people, but nothing was certain, nothing was definite. The future was all unknown.

So this morning we stand at the parting of the ways. We attempted a week ago, as the Old Year was passing from us, to consider the responsibilities of memory. We attempted to emphasize the teaching of that last word of Moses, and to show that in remembering we must put the past into relation with God; must attempt to learn the lessons He has intended to teach, and must recognize that the true look back is a look on.

I propose to continue that subject this morning, by asking you to consider the responsibilities of anticipation. Here again I shall seek the contextual light of the story, for while we live in other times, and our manners are different, and in many things we have changed radically and completely from these men of a bygone age; yet in all the essentials of our human nature, and in the master principles that govern human life, we are the same as they; and, therefore, from the picture on the old page we may gather light for the new history.

There are two things of which I want you to think with me. First, of the uncertain future; and second, of the certainties of the future.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore." The future is all uncertain. That is a fact which needs no argument in the case of sane men and women. It is only insanity that gazes into crystals, and examines palms, and seeks to listen to wizards and witches that peep and mutter. If my words in this connection are few, I do not think they are unnecessary, especially in this quarter of London. I pray you remember that it is only insanity which imagines that anybody can discover the secrets of the future. Therefore, with this congregation I will not argue it. The future is unknown, is utterly uncertain.

If the fact of its uncertainty is thus recognized, let me speak of the fascination of that uncertainty. There is to every healthy mind a fascination about the unknown. That explains the perennial interest which is attached to the passing of one year and the beginning of another. As a matter of fact, there is no new year and there is no old year. These are things of human almanacs, human calendars and human calculations. I believe, and I say this quite frankly and of growing conviction, that the nearer we live to God the less we care about times and seasons of any kind. We come to a recognition of the fact that time is eternity. Suns rise and set, and seasons pass; and these are the only marks of time in the Divine economy. Those of our Januaries and Februaries, and Sundays and Mondays, are pagan. When presently the great Kingdom of God comes, we shall never talk of January or Sunday. Our friends, the Friends, are ahead of us when they speak of first day, and second day. Yet there is a fascination in passing from one year to another, and there is a value in our marking of the passing of time in this particular way. We have halted and looked back. Now we are halting to look on. Who of us here this Sunday morning has not been dreaming dreams about the New Year; wondering, with healthy wonder, what it is bringing to us, what the ever receding curtain of mystery will leave revealed in the foreground of experience? There is a great fascination about the uncertainty of the future.

This fascination is born of two things, one lower, the other higher. Let me speak of the lower first. It is born of the passion for the new that ever burns in the heart of humanity. If I speak of that as the lower, it is only by comparison with the other, for it is not essentially wrong. It is one of those master instincts of human nature that we do well to recognize, and attempt to direct along true lines. The passion for the new, for discovery, is in every healthy human heart. What do you mean by a newspaper? What is the fascination of the newspaper? The finding out of things not known, the entering into the discovery of the larger whole. Do you remember Kipling's lines about the explorer? In those lines there lies a philosophy applicable not only to the geographical explorer, but to all human life:

There's no sense in going further—it's the edge of cultivation,

So they said, and I believed it—

Till a voice, as bad as conscience, rang interminable changes

On one everlasting whisper day and night repeated—so

Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges—

Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go.

That is the passion of exploration, and it creates the fascination of the unknown in the New Year.

The higher motive, or the higher reason of that fascination, is the desire for the better. The passion for the new is true and right, but it is the lower. The higher is the desire for the better. Oh, those vows and resolutions of the New Year. They are so multiplied that even the newspapers gain some amount of humor out of them. Yet they are tragic and pathetic and human. Promises made with the dawn of the dead year, broken, scattered all along the line, until one is ashamed to look back upon them. Yet they were fine, true, noble; they meant well. Today we are making them all over again. If there is any gladness in our heart about the New Year, it is that we see in the future a chance of being better. The glamour of it, the fascination of it is in all our hearts. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." We pause and listen to the voice that comes singing out of the unknown, and it is the voice of hope.

But think not only of the fascination of the unknown, think also of the fear of it. This is as certain, as positive a quantity in our outlook as is the other. We know not what the future has hidden in the way of opposition; what forces are hiding behind the mountains, or lurking in the mists that lie along the valleys. We cannot tell how deep is the river, how tortuous the path through the mountains, how many robbers lie ambushed, suddenly to swoop down upon us. We are ignorant of the forces that are against us in the coming year. Their number, their nature, their methods are all unknown. So it was with these people upon the margin of the land. They had become accustomed to the perils of the wilderness, but those ahead were unknown. Consequently, there was fear as to their ability to cope with the difficulties that lay ahead.

And so it is with me. If I do not know the foes, how can I be sure whether my own strength is equal to them. Here I halt upon the margin of the New Year, feeling its lure, its fascination, its appeal; and yet, in an almost greater degree, fearing it, dreading it. If I do not stay for illustration, it is because your minds will act more rapidly than my speech can. In your business, in your home, perhaps in the weakness of your physical frame, or in the trembling mental unrest of which you are conscious, are unknown possibilities of opposition. Are we equal to them? So felt these men on the margin of the land, and so feel we. We have not passed this way heretofore. It is all strange, all new, and while it fascinates us it fills us with fear.

Yet once again. In thinking of the uncertain future, while we admit the fact, recognize the fascination, and know the fear; let us ever remember the force of it, the value of it, the strength of it.

What is the force of uncertainty? It is a force in the life because it is the inspiration of effort; and a call to preparation. If I knew all the facts of the coming year, I might be careless. I do not know them; and out of the mystery and fog and silence there breaks one voice, "Watch!"

Said Joshua to the men encamped near the river, with the land before them and the wilderness behind them, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Tomorrow for God: today for you. Today for you because you do not know tomorrow. Consequently, the force and value of uncertainty is that it compels me to seek to put my life into right relation with the forces that are equal to tomorrow. It compels me to make preparation for effort, to quit myself like a man that I may be strong; for if I am to march one step at a time, one day at a time, in the midst of forces that I do not know, over territory that I have never traversed, and if I have to deal with new unfoldings of mystery, it behoves me to be equipped, and to be ready. Herein lie the values of uncertainty.

But now turn to the second consideration, the certainties of the future. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." If this does suggest indeed, the uncertainty of the future, and remind me that the pathway is an unknown one, I am constrained to inquire whether there are any certainties with which I may take my way into the unknown tomorrow. I want to answer that inquiry in the very simplest way by saying that there are three certainties with which I may face the uncertain future. I will name them. The first is the past. The second is the present. Though it appear a paradox, the third and the most certain is the uncertain future.

The past. Let us get back to this borderland, to this place by the Jordan. Look at these people. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore," but Moses had already said, remember all the way you have passed. Their first certainty was the past.

As you face the new, never forget the old, for the most absolute certainty that we possess as we face the uncertain is that of the things of the past. Deliverance prophesies deliverance. Guidance predicts guidance. Supply promises supply. Let me make this a little more geographical. There is a river in front of us. Then measure the river by the sea. He divided that, He can divide this. There is an unknown land before us. Measure the unknown land by the unknown wilderness. But passing into a new country, we shall need to be fed with bread and water. Measure your hunger in the new land by the manna in the old.

The one thing no man can take away from me as I face tomorrow is yesterday. You may confuse me about the problems of next year, but you cannot confuse me about the solutions of last year. You may tell me of all the perils and difficulties and dangers that are ahead, but on the pathway o'er which I have passed lie dead my foes. I have sung a song on the deliverance side of the Red Sea; Jehovah hath triumphed, His people are free, and I do not think you can frighten me with a running river when I have seen the sea divided. Therefore, I look into the future and it is all uncertain, and I come to it with the certainties of the past, with the deliverances wrought, the prayers actually answered, with the supplies that have come out of the nowhere into the here. That is the first certainty, and it is a great one. Doubt very much the man or the philosophy that asks you to doubt your own experience. There are moments when we are inclined to do it. It is quite a commonplace thing for men to say to me, and to each other, I doubt not when speaking of these things, I am sometimes tempted to doubt whether there was ever anything in it all. Do not be tempted to doubt your past triumphs. Lay hold upon the things that you have in the actuality of your experience. Make them new by remembering them perpetually. Make them forceful by allowing them to become the inspiration of all your endeavour. There are men and women in this house who come to the New Year full of dread. Look back one moment. Yes, it is good to do it in

silence, when the preacher has no word to say. I cannot tell you what to look at, but you know. That day when the bitter waters were sweetened, when after the long desert tramp you sat down at Elim. Oh, we have had the experience. That is our one certainty as we look on. You cannot take that away from us. You can mystify us about our theory, but you cannot mystify us about the things we have been brought through.

Then we also have as certainties the lessons learned. These we dwelt upon last Sunday. Let us reckon on them as certainties. We have learned the lesson of humility, learned it through crushing and breaking, sorrow and difficulty, but let us be glad if we have learned it.

Then again, there was the discovery in ourselves of some things that we did not know, and would rather not have known, or so we think; the startling surprise of the evil thing in us, which some hour of trying circumstance brought to light; that hour, when we who had cursed Peter for his cowardice were cowardly; when we who had denounced Judas for his treachery were traitors. Thank God, as I face the New Year I know it. I have found it out. I am not in half so much danger from that discovered evil as I was before it was revealed. You failed, my brother, in some dire disastrous moment you fell into some gross, venal sin. If you will only live in the light of that warning, you can climb on your dead self to better things. You have learned your weakness, and you will avoid the very street in which you fell! You will be careful to have no business transactions with the man who persuaded you to do the mean thing! You have found out that you could do a mean thing. You did not think you could, but you are safer for having found out. It is a great thing when a man has found out where his weakness is. Where I am weak I become strong, through the knowledge of the fact.

And finally, in the past we have discovered God. Now we are going to abbreviate our dictionaries by cancelling the word extremity, for we have found out that it is when we are at our extremity that the door of opportunity is opened for our discovery of God, and our entering into all the possibilities of His power. These are the things of the past, which are our certainties as we face the New Year.

Then there are the certainties of the present. To these people they were the sacramental symbols, and the living leader.

When Moses passed, Joshua remained, and what Moses could not do Joshua could, and that because Moses was dead. If you question that statement, remember what we read in the second verse of the first chapter, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan." The death of Moses was necessary to progress into the land.

These then were the things of the living present, the sacramental symbols and the living leader. Why dwell upon the sacramental symbols? Because here was a change. These people possessed the Ark before. Yes, but they had not followed the Ark, but the cloud; and they would never see it again; the cloud of fire by night, and the mist and mystery by day had ceased. They had a new pathway to tread, with a different method of guidance. They who had waited for the moving of the cloud were now to wait for the moving of the Ark and the priests. The cloud was the provision for the wilderness. God was changing His method with them. They were to live not by a particular sign, but by the word of the Lord. They would never forget that the Ark came out of the cloud. It was in the mystery of the cloud that enveloped the mountain that Moses had the pattern of the Ark given to him. But henceforth the cloud was withdrawn, and the Ark remained. It was not for them to

question, or to desire to retain the past; but to be thankful for the present provision, and to obey.

What application has this to us? We have the present as well as the past as we come to the New Year. And in the economy of God there remains for His people one visible, tangible, sacramental symbol, and it is the Bible. That is not a subject which I am going to discuss or deal with fully. I make the assertion and leave it for you to think over. The only sacramental symbol God has left in this world is not bread, or wine, or water, but the Word written. We have that still.

To us remains also a living Leader. If we want to understand all that is included in this face, we shall not stay in the book of Joshua. In the letter to the Hebrews the writer says, in effect, Moses led you out, but he could not lead you in. Joshua led you in but he could not give you rest. Now there is one greater than Moses and Joshua Who leads out, and leads in, and gives rest. We must discover Him in spiritual communion.

Do you doubt at that point, my brother, my sister? Nay, do I doubt? Are we in danger of doubting? Let us think once again. The whole superstructure of our moral and spiritual life depends upon the living presence of the living Christ. This Bible is only the sacramental symbol. It is a great certainty, but do not worship it. In the name of God, do not worship it! It is the living Leader Who is the supreme certainty for the days to come. Are you not tempted to say, "If I could but put my hand upon the hand of His flesh I should know Him better." Not at all. The men who did it never knew Him until He withdrew the hand of flesh and came in spiritual power at Pentecost. These frail hearts of ours still hanker after the hand of flesh upon which our hand might rest, something more present, more tangible, of which we might be sensible; but He is as definitely in the midst of us, as positively by the side of every pilgrim of faith, aye, and more so, than was Joshua present to the hosts of old. Thus we have in the present the Word, written and incarnate.

The final certainty is the future. The past is past. I cannot go back. The present is passing, and I cannot hold it. Twenty minutes ago I was talking of the present. That is now the past. We say, "Tomorrow never comes." As a matter of fact we never possess anything certainly except tomorrow. Everything else is shifting, changing, gone. The future is mine! That is the truer word; it is the word of the man who struggles up after his fall; the word of the man who builds his castle in the air; the word of the man who feels the lure of the coming days. The future is mine. That is true.

Thus here we stand, on an ever moving present, between an irrevocable past and a challenging future. I repeat the phrase already used more than once, the lure of the future is on our spirits. How shall we meet it? The answer is in these early chapters of the Book of Joshua. There is a special word here for the leaders, a special word to Joshua. Now for the moment Joshua becomes the symbol not of the lonely and supreme Leader, Christ, but of all those who are put into places of oversight. What is the word to leaders, preachers, teachers, prophets, overseers? "Be strong and of a good courage." If you read all that first chapter you will find that that was a call to Joshua by God and by man. God said to him, "Be strong and of a good courage"; and presently, when he charged the Reubenites, and the Gaddites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, as to what they were to do, they said, "According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses... only be strong and of a good courage." God said it, and man said it.

It is so today. The appeal of God to those who are charged with leadership is, "Be strong and of a good courage." Let not your heart faint. Do not tremble. Do not play the coward. The appeal of humanity to the leaders of the Christian Church is the same, "Be strong and of a good courage." If you tremble, no victory will be won.

How shall we meet the future? What is the word to the hosts? This also have I recited, "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." How were they to sanctify themselves? With regard to the past, they were to remember! With regard to the present, they were to see the Ark, to keep at a sacred distance from it, and to follow it; to discover that it was the new symbol of their relationship; to treat it with holy reverence; to follow it. Their relation to their leader was to be that of loyalty, so long as he was loyal to God.

What of the future? With the inspiration of the past filling the soul, with the certainty of the present enabling the life, they were to go in and possess.

Thus let us go forward to face each day in the name of the Captain of Salvation. Oh, but giants are there! To be slain! Walled cities are there! To be taken! Difficulties await us! To be overcome!

So may God give us grace to follow our greater than Joshua into the unknown tomorrow, and to possess it in His name, and for His glory.

Judges 7:7. God's Fighting Forces.

Judges 7:7.

God's Fighting Forces.

By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you.

Judges 7:7

In his address from the chair of the Congregational Union last month, Mr. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, uttered these words:

Numbers are not the first consideration with the Christian Church. We need to be delivered from the tyranny of schedules and from the craven fear of comparative tables and statistics. It is possible for churches to lose in numbers, as Gideon did, and to gain in strength.

These were courageous words in an hour when the passion for figures is paramount, and when the mention of decrease breeds panic in the heart of the people of God. They were timely words because on every hand we hear of decreases. The returns of church membership come in at this season of the year in many cases, and if one note has impressed me in the meetings of this year which we now designate May meetings, it has been the note of depression consequent upon statistics which declare decrease in church membership. I have not the ear of all the Christian Church, but I have the ear of those who gather here, and I desire to utter a solemn and at the same time, I trust, a sympathetic and courteous protest against this whole business of lamentation.

Yet, we are compelled to recognize the absence of many things which even our eyes have seen in other days and under other conditions, the absence of many things of which our fathers have spoken, and of which we have read in the history of the Church. There does seem to be just now a widespread indifference among multitudes of our people to spiritual things, and an almost appalling lack of enthusiasm within the Church of God. If we are not to be depressed by the story of decrease, we are to be anxious as to our own personal, individual responsibility, not for the decreases, but for the halt which seems to have come in the march of those enterprises of our Lord and Master which are, or ought to be, the supreme things in our thinking, in our life, and in our serving.

I am not interested in the causes of decrease. I believe that the cause—and I draw the distinction carefully between the singular and the plural—is that God is sifting our ranks, revealing weakness as prerequisite to the creation of strength. It is not against the sense that we have been halted, and that there is a lack of spiritual consciousness, that I make my protest. It is rather against the way in which men deal with this sense. It is against the prevalent idea that decrease itself is a sign of the absence of the working of God. Not that we are to be less careful concerning the matters of His Kingdom, but that we should interpret the signs of the times in the light of God's perpetual method with His people. So far as I read my Bible, so far as I am able to read the doings of God in

the history of the Church for nineteen centuries, I affirm that sifting and decrease are but evidences of His activity. Let us understand that activity. I have read these words from the address of my dear and honoured friend Mr. Jones, and my business this evening is to take the illustration which he gave in less than half a sentence, and make it the basis upon which we may illustrate and enforce the principle that he laid down in the course of the brief paragraph I read to you. Let us remind ourselves again of this old story of Gideon. Seven and forty years had passed since Deborah had sung her song. After the singing of that song, and the deliverance wrought through the inspiration of the prophetess and the leadership of Barak, the land had rest for forty years. There succeeded to the forty years of rest seven years of Midianitish oppression. It is not for me this evening to tell the story of that oppression. It is written in the Book of Judges, and you may turn to it for yourselves if you are not already familiar with it. Suffice it to say that perhaps at no period in the earlier history of the people of God was oppression so severe, and suffering so great, and the sense of defeat so overwhelming as during those seven years of Midian's oppression. One instance will suffice. The people were so cruelly treated, so oppressed by Midian that in multitudes they had left their homes and made dwellings for themselves in dens and caves of the earth, hardly daring to show their faces. Then there came the hour, the "set time." The "set time" arrived when the people became conscious that the visitation was a visitation of chastisement and judgment, and affliction of God intended to teach them lessons of profound importance. With the coming of the "set time" there came, as there always does, the providential man. Gideon was discovered, not by Israel, but by God. God almost invariably discovers the man of the hour where no one else is looking for him. He found Gideon, and there were two qualifications in the character of Gideon which fitted him for service. First, that of his personal faith in God; and secondly, that of his fidelity to his own business. With reluctance almost amounting to fear, he shrank from the work to which he was called, and asked tests of God. We may criticize him for so doing. We might be inclined to say that it was evidence of faltering and feebleness of faith, and I think such criticism would be perfectly true; but while we criticize, let us remember that God gave him the tests he asked.

Gideon sent his call through the tribes, and in response there gathered to him thirty-two thousand men. As I watch them gathering out of the different tribes around the standard of Gideon, two thoughts occur to me. First, it is a very wonderful response, seeing the terrible condition of the people. Second, it is an utterly inadequate response, if the vast hosts of Midian are to be engaged in battle and overcome. These, I say, would be the impressions made upon my own mind if I watched the movement with perfect naturalness, as one unacquainted with the deeper secrets of the Divine procedure. A leader has arisen, he cries for helpers, and thirty-two thousand marshal to him from among the oppressed people. Only thirty-two thousand! If you can put yourselves back for a moment in imagination in the place of Gideon, and look at these hosts of Midian encamped along the valleys, holding all the strategic positions, hemming in the people of God, and then look at the army of thirty-two thousand as against the unnumbered hosts of Midian, you will discover how hopeless the task must have seemed, to engage Midian's trained, disciplined hosts with only thirty-two thousand oppressed, and broken, and degraded people.

Then the voice of God, speaking in the soul of the man, declared to him that the people were too many. Too many! A very simple test is given. He is to proclaim to the company that all who are—mark the words—fearful and trembling shall return to their tents. Almost immediately we see

twenty-two thousand passing back because they are fearful and trembling. Now Gideon has only ten thousand left. Again the voice of God, speaking within the soul of the man, declares to him that the number is too great, and a new test is imposed.

The essential need of the physical life of these men is water. Let them now be tested in the presence of necessities. I watch the procedure. It is purely Eastern, and as such we must look upon it. Of the ten thousand, nine thousand seven hundred kneel, bending over the water in order to obtain that which is a necessity of life; but there are three hundred men who stand, and, bending over, catch the water in their hands and lap it. Three hundred men taking necessary things, but in the evident expectation of the work they had to do. Nine thousand, seven hundred men taking unnecessary time with necessary things. It was a severe ordeal. Nine thousand, seven hundred men go back. Then the words of my text are heard: "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you." That is a story of decrease. It is the story of God's method of sifting a people.

Look over the actual story again. The whole nation is conscious of the oppression under which it suffers. The whole nation desires deliverance, but when the call is given, of the nation thirty-two thousand rise a little higher than the nation, thirty-two thousand are prepared to make some venture, and to gather around the standard that is being raised. Among the thirty-two thousand there are twenty-two thousand who are not quite sure, twenty-two thousand who feel the tremor of fear shaking them, and they are sent home; ten thousand are left who have moved to a higher level. Of that ten thousand, there are nine thousand seven hundred who will take unnecessary time for the supply of the necessities of life. Let them be sent home. There are three hundred only out of the whole nation for God's fight.

There is no more radiant revelation of God's method of sifting His people in the whole Bible. It is a revelation of the fact that with God quality is infinitely more than quantity. It is an explanation out of the Old Testament of the reason of the severity of the terms of Jesus as we read them in the New. It explains that constant habit of our Lord and Master, strange habit that has so often surprised and startled us, of scattering crowds by the severity of His terms. I venture to affirm that there are words of Jesus in the New Testament which if I read in this congregation at this late hour of the Christian era, men would shrink from them as from the touch of fire. This severity of terms was due to the fact that always quality counts with God for more than quantity. That is a beneficent movement, therefore, which sifts the ranks and gets rid of certain classes of men, always because, in order to accomplish any great, mighty work, God must have men upon whom He can depend.

There are two lines of thought that I shall ask you to follow briefly. First, the story as it reveals the men with whom God cannot move to victory. Second, the story on the positive side, as it reveals to us the character of the forces with which God is able to win His triumphs.

I am not discussing the subject of personal salvation, but that of service. There is no weak, faltering, failing, cowardly heart that God refuses to receive for salvation. Let no man imagine that God demands that any man who is seeking His grace and favor shall be courageous. He may come with all his trembling and all his weakness, meanness, cowardice, and God will make him a new man.

There are two classes with which God cannot proceed to victory—the fearful and the trembling. Who are the men who are fearful—the men in whose vision the foe bulks bigger than God? That is always a cause of fear. It is a perfectly natural thing. I see those massed, mighty hosts of Midian encamped in all the valleys, and I feel that it was a perfectly natural thing that men looking at those hosts, continuing to look at them, beginning to count them, should be filled with fear. The natural outlook in the great conflict of right with wrong is always a depressing outlook. It always has been; it is yet. It is possible for us today to count the forces against us, and gaze upon them until the heart is filled with fear. These twenty-two thousand men who were fearful were men who were looking at the foe. Is there not a deeper reason why they were fearful when they looked at the foe? I think the second word in the ancient record helps us, trembling. Why trembling? They were men who thought more of their own safety than of the great cause. They looked at the hosts, and said: "If this means battle we shall be slain; we cannot win." That was the inspiration of panic. They were not prepared for suffering and death. They were fearful because they looked at the foe, trembling because they were more anxious about their own safety and ease than they were concerning the great victory of the Kingdom of God.

Why is it that God declines to move with such men for the accomplishment of His enterprises? First, because such men create panic in a crisis; fear is contagious. Lead thirty-two thousand men to fight, twenty-two thousand of whom are fearful, and the ten thousand will be afraid in the clash of the conflict and in the hour of battle. Second, because men who are fearful and trembling cannot strike any heavy blow in the hour of battle. Trembling is always weakness.

I am inclined to think the application need not be made in any word of mine. Are we afraid of the issue? Then God cannot work with us. Are we so busy in these days, looking at the foe and counting the forces against the Lord, that in our heart there is the tremor of fear? Then we are not the men God can depend upon. In the day of battle our fear will spread to others; it is contagious. In the day of dire conflict we cannot place any heavy blow upon the foe. Fear paralyzes the arm because it unnerves the heart. All such fear is born of gazing upon the foe. The fearful and trembling man God cannot use. I know the word is a severe one, but it is the word of this story and of the whole Bible. The trouble today is that the fearful and trembling man insists upon remaining in the army. A decrease that sifts the ranks of the Church of men who fear and tremble is a great, a gracious and a glorious gain.

Mark the second type of man revealed. I have twice described this man as one who takes unnecessary time over necessary things. To do that is always to lack a keen sense of the urgency of the mission in hand. This is one of the causes of weakness and failure today, and perhaps a more prolific and widespread cause than any other. Is not this true of many men who have no fear of the ultimate issue, the ultimate victory, who have no panic as regards God's ability; but while they name the name of Christ, and profess to be His crusaders, they take unnecessary time over necessary things? There are things necessary to the physical life, if I may begin on the lowest level, such as eating, sleeping, dressing. There is a vast amount of time wasted by men who name the name of Christ on all these. Or take the mental level. Unnecessary time is spent over reading, unnecessary time over study and investigation. I have in my own mind now a man, finely, wonderfully equipped in mind, who has spent all his life in preparation, and has done nothing—no blow struck, no brick laid in the great building, no serious work put into the business of cooperation with God. Unnecessary time is taken over the most necessary business of personal spiritual

culture, reading and study of the Bible, with no application of its teaching in the warfare against sin, seeking for personal enrichment in the spiritual realm, and no output in sacrifice and strenuous endeavor. Unnecessary time is taken over recreation. I think I need not say one single word here to defend myself from misunderstanding. I believe in the necessity for recreation, but how much time we are wasting! Unnecessary time in the matters of the daily calling, the amassing of wealth.

There is no sense of urgency. The idea of Christianity with too many has become that of an opportunity for their own worship and their own ultimate salvation, and they forget that there is a great battle on, and that God is seeking for warriors, and that He does—account for it how you will or leave it unaccounted for, a mystery of His own gracious and perfect will—He does limit Himself by the method of seeking the cooperation of men. He must, as His own economy has arranged, strike the blow for His victory through men. There is no instance in all the history of the centuries of God acting entirely as apart from His own. All this is lost sight of, and we name the Name, and sing the songs, and wear the uniform of the army, but we take unnecessary time over these necessary things.

The urgency of this business of Christ's campaign in the world, His battle against evil, His compassionate regard for men, and His desire to deliver them, His passion for the Kingdom of God; these things are not recognized as urgent. Such attitude is not the attitude of conflict. Such repletion of necessary things unfits for campaigning. If it be that in these days He is sifting, sifting, sifting; and those departing are those who are fearful and afraid, or such as are not prepared to make His business the one overwhelming master passion of all their life, then we gain by the decreases. Even though the numbers be reduced until they be but three hundred out of every thirty-two thousand, God's word to us, as it was to Gideon of old, is this: "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you."

Who, then, are the men who constitute God's fighting force in the world? They are courageous men. That is to say, they were men who saw the vision of God, who saw God at the back of national life, and who saw God in the movement to which they were Called. They were men who were prepared to venture something in the great enterprise of the moment, men with such a lack of consciousness of their own importance that they were prepared to die. A man never can say this kind of thing in this day without being rebuked for it. I made a reference of this kind in a recent sermon here, and have had several letters protesting against my saying that it is necessary today for a man to die for Christ. I am perfectly aware that every man must be true to the laws of God about his own health in the interest of the war; but all of this lack of conviction about the supreme importance of the things of the Kingdom of God breeds ease and softness, and unfits men for the fight. God does want men today who have such a clear vision of Himself as to have no panic in their hearts and such abandonment of themselves that they have no trembling as they go forth to the war. Such men inspire confidence. Thank God He has many such today, more than three hundred. Such men do exploits; they are winning their victories even in a day when we hear of decrease. He has those upon whom He can depend. They are men of courage, courage born of their vision of God and of their conviction of the supremacy in all life of the matters of His Kingdom.

They are also consecrated men. Consecration means discipline, the ability to do without. Consecration means ability to take necessary things in necessary quantity and in necessary time. This is the practical expression of consecration. Men who realize the urgency, and "use the world

as not abusing it." God seeks such men because with such men He can fight, for such men are ready for the fight, and are not seeking merely for parade; and because such men are ready for the fight, they can "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

Turning, finally, from the story itself, and with its teaching in our hearts, let us apply God's tests and act. Are we fearful, are we trembling? How shall we cure this tremor of the spirit, this fear in the heart? Only as we see God. Unless the vision of God be clear to us, it is better for ourselves and for the world, and better for the Kingdom of God, that we retire out of the fighting line. What does the vision of God do for a man? It reveals two things to him invariably. First, his own utter, absolute unworthiness and uselessness. Secondly, God's infinite ability, and his own usefulness to God when once he yields himself to Him.

Mark the stories of your Old Testament. The vision of God was granted to the prophet, and he said: "Woe is me, for I am undone." When a vision of God came, the patriarch who had argued at length against all the philosophy of his friends said: "Behold, I am of small account." Daniel, in the light of that vision, exclaimed: "My righteousness is become as filthy rags." No man ever comes to vision of God without feeling the sense of his own unworthiness and the overwhelming conviction of his own inability. That is the first condition for fitness for fighting. I know how easily it is said, and I know also how hardly the lesson is learned. I speak tonight in the presence of those whose experience in life and warfare has been longer than mine, but I am perfectly sure, if my appeal might be made to them, and their answer given to this congregation, they would all agree that the hour of victorious fighting in the enterprises of God dawned when they found their own weakness and inability. It is out of the "I am unable" that there comes the great "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Gideon saw God, and saw that he could do nothing apart from God, and therein was the first stage in preparation for doing everything. He shrank from his work. Therein was evidence of the commencement of God's making him fit for the doing of his work. Over against the panic to which I have made reference, over against this complaining lament which has run like a minor monotone through the meetings of the past month, there is another tone even more perilous, the tone that affirms our ability to do anything. The courage that can endure fighting and conquer is always generated in a sense of unworthiness and unfitness born of the flaming vision of God. There Gideon began. There Isaiah, Job and Daniel began. There all the men of the past began, and there we must begin. We shrink from it and hold back from it. We will not look toward the glory that breaks upon our lives, will not submit ourselves to the fiery, searching test of the eyes of flame. Hence our weakness and hence our fear. False fear can only be cast out by the birth of the new fear, the fear of God and the fear of our own inability.

Our first business is to inquire in His presence as to whether we are fearful and trembling, and, if so, then what is left to us? I put the whole thing into this brief word. See God, or else retire from the fighting line.

To make application of the second truth both in its negative and positive aspects. Are we kneeling at some stream of personal satisfaction? I am afraid, as I almost invariably am today, to begin to illustrate that question, and apply it. I would infinitely rather leave the question to be answered alone in the presence of God.

Suffer me an impossible supposition. If Christ is to be defeated, how much will you lose when He is bankrupt? That is the test of whether we are ready for God's fight or not. What have we put into

this business of time, of toil and serving? When that question is asked, we begin to see where we are, kneeling at some stream simply desiring to satisfy ourselves. Up, men, lap and march, or fall behind! The Christian Church devoted to the Christ of God, having seen the vision that rebukes and heals, having observed the glory that burns and renews; the Christian Church, placing all her resources, the resources of her individual membership at the disposal of Christ; and the Christian Church, conscious that the first business of every believer, not on one day in seven, but on seven days in seven, not in fulfilling the service of the sanctuary, but in all the duties of the hurrying days, is the business of waging Christ's warfare and winning Christ's victory; that Church will immediately produce the very results that we long to see, arousing the attention of the multitudes, affirming the reality of spiritual things, compelling men—or, if you will take the more tender word, constraining men—to the Lord Christ. All dearth and all death are to be blamed upon our own failure and not upon the withholdings of God. The Midianitish hosts are in all the valleys; the forces against God and His Christ are marshaled, perchance, as they never were before. We are not to be oblivious of the forces of the foe, but in God's name, we are not to look at them so long that we fail to see God Himself.

The true outlook is that of the man who wrote the Roman epistle, who began by looking with such intrepid courage into the heart of the world's corruption as he wrote the third chapter of the Romans. If you want to know what are the massed forces of sensualism and evil, read that chapter again and again, and yet again. Paul began there. He looked straight into the heart of it, but he did not end there. He moved on in argument and appeal until I see him climbing the height, surveying all the field, and saying: "If God is for us, who is against us?" There is a note of laughter in the question, a ring of triumph in the challenge! He saw the forces massed against Christ and His Church—things present, things to come, angels, principalities, powers, all the massed forces of spiritual and material evil—and he said: "If God is for us, who is against us?"

A man with such a vision of God is such a one as Paul, who for at least three and thirty years of Christian service never halted, never wavered, never took unnecessary time even for necessary things, was forevermore a warrior and a pilgrim, a builder and a toiler, in perils oft by land and sea.

We lack this vision, therefore we lack this consecration. Now God is sifting the ranks. Let us be reverent and let us wait, and let us have done with our lamentation over falling statistics; but in God's name let Him have His way with us. Let us at least remit our own lives to Him, and beseech Him to banish the fear and end the trembling by giving us a clearer vision of Himself. Let us beseech Him that He will so reveal to us the urgency of the enterprise that we never again shall bend over a stream and take unnecessary time over even necessary things. Then we shall be among the number of those of whom he will say today, as he said of old: "By the three hundred that lapped will I save you."

1 Samuel 26:21 Playing The Fool

1 Samuel 26:21

Playing The Fool

... behold, I have played the fool....

1 Samuel 26:21

That is autobiography; clear, truthful, inclusive. In half-a-dozen words we have the story of Saul, Israel's first king, like the nations. Under stress of circumstances, men often tell truths and whole truths, which, if they had time to think, they would never utter. God's method of crisis is that of the commonplace. His method of examination is that of the unannounced. When for a moment a man is off-guard, in all probability you will know more truth about him than in all his attempts either to reveal himself or to hide himself. The ever-present consciousness, habitually, carefully hidden, flashes forth. Later, he may apologize and say he did not mean what he said, that he was not at the moment responsible. The fact is that he was surprised into saying what he was constantly thinking. In all probability Saul had never said that before and would never say it again; but he had been thinking it for a long time, "I have played the fool." It is an error to suppose that a man does not know the truth about himself. In that sense also, God hath not left Himself without witness. There is no escape for any man as long as reason continues, from the bare, naked, unadorned truth about himself. He may practice the art of deceit so skillfully as not only to hide himself from his fellow men, but in his unutterable folly to imagine that he has hidden himself from God; but he has never hidden himself from himself. In some moment of stress and strain, he says what he has been thinking all the time. So with Saul.

Saul had slept deeply that night, for the record tells us that "a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen" upon him. He was awakened from his slumber by the voice of David calling to him from the opposite mountain. Waking he became keen, acute, neither dulled by food nor drugged by wine; everything was clear and sharp about him, as it so often is in the waking moment. Ere he knew it, he had said, "... behold, I have played the fool...." That is the whole story of the man.

Let us consider then the man who spoke; the opportunities that came to him; how he played the fool; in order that we may finally inquire what this story has in it for us.

Let us look at the man as he is revealed to us in the passage we read, and as he is revealed in all those chapters from beginning to the sad and dire calamity in the midst of which they end.

In the first place, he was a man of good family. His father Kish, a Benjamite, was a "mighty man of valor," that is of substance, wealth. Saul looked upon life from the viewpoint of good family connections, that viewpoint from which every young man would desire to look upon life; a viewpoint which should compel a man to thank God every day he lives.

I observe, in the second place, that Saul was a man of splendid physique, "... a young man and goodly:..." says the record, standing head and shoulders above his fellows, a man with all the advantages of height, and health, and handsomeness. Let no man undervalue these things. I know perfectly well what may be in the minds of some of you, especially those who lack those qualities. You will remember that Isaac Watts wrote:

Were I so tall to reach the Pole

Or grasp the ocean with my span;

I must be measured by my soul

The mind's the standard of the man.

Quite right; but let no haggard and thin man pretend he does not admire the magnificent physique of his friend!

In the record, I also find that this man was a man of simple life, a yet greater advantage; living at home, interested in his father's affairs, and bound to his father by the ties of very sincere and honest affection. When we are introduced to him, he is about his father's business. In those long wanderings in fruitless search after the lost asses of his father, there is a revealing touch in the fact that at last he said to his servant, "... Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought of us." Saul had all the advantages of actual work and responsibility in rural surroundings. No sane man would live in a city if he could escape it. As Bismarck said, "Great cities are great sores upon the body politic."

Further, he was a man of modest disposition; a man who, when he was saluted by the seer in those remarkable words which suggested to him that all desirable things in the kingdom were for him, replied that he was a Benjamite, the smallest of the tribes, and a member of the family that was least in the tribe. In that answer was revealed the pride of modesty.

Once more, he was a man of slumbering courage. Its manifestation came after a little while, in his action when the nation was insulted by Nahash. The story I am not going to tell for you know it. Simply let me say of the man Saul that he was a man of that courage which farms until occasion demands and then strikes with passion and force in defence of national life.

That is the man who at the end said, "... behold, I have played the fool...."

Let us look again at the opportunity which came to him. It was a unique, remarkable, surprising opportunity. He was called to kingship, to a position of responsibility and authority in the life of the nation. The people had clamored for a king; it was an evil clamor, it was a clamor that proved their degeneracy; it was a clamor according to God's interpretation of it to His servant Samuel, which demonstrated the fact that they had rejected Him from being King. Nevertheless, they had clamored for a king and in working out His own purpose, following that principle which always characterizes the Divine activity, that of giving people what they ask for and thus compelling them to work out their own desires to ultimate manifestation, He granted them a king; but He chose the king, He selected him. The call to Saul was clear, definite, solemn. What a scope for his powers! What a chance to bless men from that high position of authority. What an opportunity to cooperate with God in such a way as to prove to the people that God was still King. What an opportunity to

exercise authority under the authority of God in such a way that through his authority the authority of God might be manifested anew, and the heart of the people turned back to Him from Whom they had wandered. It was a great hour and a great call.

Notice further, not only his opportunity in itself, but in its equipment. His first equipment was himself. He was such a man as he was, and in that fact lay great value for the doing of the work to which God had called him. Whenever God calls a man to high vocation, it is not merely true to say He will confer upon him what he needs for the fulfilment of that vocation; it is also true that He has chosen the right man for the work. If God calls a man to preach, it is not merely true that He will give him his message and equip him for his preaching, it is also true that He has called a man who can preach. The call of God is always answered by the capacity that lies within a man; it is made to that. Saul had himself; he was kingly in himself. He was equipped in his own personality, having within it the capacity for kingship which God recognized in the moment in which He called him to the place of kingship.

He had more than that; he had God with him. Said Samuel to him, "... God is with thee," and as he turned from Samuel and went on his way, he was conscious of some strange change, "... God gave him another heart:..." and he became another man. More than that. "... the Spirit of God came mightily upon him,..." and on his journey home he joined a company of the sons of the prophets who were traveling; and lo, the Divine afflatus possessed him, and he saw visions and lifted up his voice and uttered words of Divine truth.

There were other forces at his disposal. He was equipped in the matter of the men who were about him. His preparation for his work is demonstrated by the friends he possessed, and by the foes he discovered. Samuel was with him, and there is no more radiant verse in the story than this, pregnant with suggestiveness, "... there went with him the host, whose hearts God had touched." He was prepared for kingship by the fact of his foes. Who were they? The sons of Belial, worthless, base fellows. You may often know what a man is by discovering who his foes are. When the sons of Belial are against a man, you may believe in him.

This is the man who at the end said, "... behold, I have played the fool...."

Let us now ask how he played the fool. Going over the old, well-known story in the most rapid way, I want to speak of the manifestations of his folly, and that in order that we may try to find the secrets thereof.

The first manifestation came very early; soon after his anointing. When they sought him on that subsequent day of popular election which was to ratify the Divine election, he was hiding away; and in that hiding away there is the first manifestation of weakness, the first evidence of folly. I am going to say to you quite frankly that I know a great many will join issue with me here. I have heard it declared by men for whom I have the profoundest respect, that the hiding away was a new demonstration of his modesty, but I ask you to remember that there is a modesty which is wholly evil. If God has called a man to kingship, he has no right to hide away. If God has called a man definitely, anointed him, equipped him to take charge of the Empire, if that man out of any sense of modesty shall hide away and try to escape the responsibility, therein is the first evidence of his weakness. So it was with Saul.

I notice next that this man manifested a strange new form of military pride. For the first time there was established in this nation a standing army, and I begin to see the line along which his kingship is going to move. Saul created a standing army of three thousand men, he himself taking charge of two thousand while the remaining thousand were with Jonathan. Note the sequence; the whole story is graphically told. Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines and Saul blew the trumpet in Israel. Israel heard that Saul had smitten the garrison!

I watch him a little further and observe that he has become restless, impatient, self-dependent. Samuel has not come; then we can do without Samuel; offer the sacrifices! He violated a principle, and despised a command in the rush of his restless impatience.

I follow him a little further and find another story, the story of his rashness in taking an oath which imperiled the life of Jonathan which would have resulted in his death if the people had not interfered and rescued him.

I go a little further and find another illustration of his failure; his disobedience in the matter of Amalek and his lying afterwards.

The most glaring revelation of his folly is that ruthless, persistent, undying hatred of David; hunting him, as David himself did say, like a partridge upon the mountains.

The last manifestation of his folly is that in which we see him in the night time commerce with the underworld of evil, and trying to find out the hidden secrets through the muttering of a witch. A man with whom God was, who received from God a new heart and became another man, who was mightily clothed with the Spirit of God so that he joined the ranks of the prophets. What a morning of promise! At last, in the darkness of the night he is seen creeping stealthily to find a muttering witch, dealing with evil spirits. He was startled and surprised in the darkness of the night, for there also he found God, and to her surprise, the witch found God for Samuel came. That is the last phase of his folly.

These are but the manifestations, the symptoms, the results. The tragedy of the man's life lies deeper. His hiding away, his military pride, his impatience, his self-dependence, his rashness, his disobedience and lying, his hatred of David, his traffic with the witch; these are all manifestations of something deeper. Wherein then lay the folly of this man? I shall answer my question fundamentally and processionally. I shall speak of that which is fundamental and then ask you to notice how that expressed itself in the man's history.

I am almost afraid to tell you the fundamental wrong because it has so often been said and because the saying of it is not the sort of thing that troubles men as it ought to do. It is so old a story. The fundamental wrong of this man was that he failed to submit himself to the one King. Lack of loyalty to God; that was it. That is nothing new, of course. That is what we hear so constantly; so constantly that all the keen edge goes off the truth, and men are not troubled by it as they should be. In that terrific hour when the prophet told him of his rejection, we have these words, which are quoted often enough, "... to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Therein lay the man's failure, that he had not obeyed, that he had not hearkened; "... I have played the fool...." Created by God, being in myself all that I am by God's creative act, called by God to high, dignified destiny, equipped by God with all that was necessary for the fulfilment of that destiny; "... I have played the fool..." in that I have forgotten God to Whom I owe myself, my

destiny, my equipment. He had trusted in his own strength, he had trusted in natural advantages; but he had forgotten that his own strength was God's gift to him, that his own natural advantages came to him from God. He had forgotten God.

Mark the manifestation of it. No longer in the events chronicled but in the processes which are revealed. This man failed entirely to exercise the true function of kingship. This man in his government of Israel was a warrior and nothing more; he was never a shepherd. He manifested from the first only one kind of concern about his people, concern about the frontier, concern about enemies. It had its place; it was necessary that he should make war upon the Philistines, and this he did successfully through a long period. I am not affirming that he was wrong in being a warrior; the times demanded it, and the command of God was that he should deliver his people from Philistia. But that concluded his kingly activity. He had no care for the people; he lacked the shepherd heart. It was Homer who said, "All kings are shepherds." These words of Homer are certainly vindicated by the biblical revelation of what kingship means. Kingship is always shepherdhood in the Divine economy. There is no greater psalm in all the five books, celebrating the Kingship of God, than that old and familiar one which we so constantly recite, "The Lord is my Shepherd." That is the supreme song of Jehovah's Kingship. This man Saul lacked the shepherd heart and the shepherd quality.

Then observe, as he passed on through the years, his neglect of his true friends; his neglect of Samuel, his cruelty and injustice to Jonathan, and the persistent, devilish hunting of David to which we have already made reference. He became a man, self-conscious, self-dependent, self-assertive, self-centered.

These evidences of the man's folly are simply revelations of the things resulting from that central, fundamental wrong; for if he had not forgotten God but had been obedient to Him, then in communion with Him he would have been not a warrior alone, but a shepherd also. If he had not forgotten God and ceased to be loyal to Him, he would have known the value of Samuel and Jonathan and David. The man who forgets God is self-centered. Every man lives under the government of God or of Himself. The man who forgetting God, neglecting Him, disobeying Him, living without Him, finds his soul circumferences around the center of his own desire, lust, passion, will and waywardness. That man inevitably in some hour of crisis will be compelled to the confession, "... behold, I have played the fool...."

So finally, let us gather from the story some of the things it ought to say to us immediately. I suggest to you, first of all, that the story of Saul teaches us that advantages are not insurances of success. You may have all the advantages and yet at last be a disastrous failure. Advantages as to family, and physique, of natural disposition characterized at once by modesty and courage are all valuable; but a man may have all these and yet play the fool. I say that almost with bated breath lest I be misunderstood. Do not undervalue your family relationships. When next you think of your advantages, head the list, if indeed it be true, with this: my father lived a clean life before me and left me the legacy of his example; and my mother prayed for me through all the days. But remember, your father's example and your mother's prayers are not enough. A man may have had these things also, the highest spiritual family advantages, and yet he may play the fool.

I observe, in the second place, that the story of Saul teaches that opportunities do not crown men. You may have heard the call of God, a kingdom may be waiting for you to govern it, rule it,

administer it. You may have with you the comradeship of the good. These things are all valuable, indeed they are all necessary if life is to be fulfilled. But a man may have the whole of them and play the fool. A man may have heard in his soul the call of God to the ministry, to the mission field, to professional life at home, to commercial life at home, for I maintain that in these things God also calls as distinctly as to other things. You may know you are where God put you. Saul knew it, the anointing oil had been upon his head, he had made no mistake. The profound, spiritual conviction is yours that you are exactly where God would have you be. Yet you may play the fool, spoil your life, miss your kingdom, weaken your volition, end disastrously. So thinly separated from opportunities crowning a man, every opportunity for that which is high, noble, wonderful, is an opportunity for terrific failure. The greater the opportunity that comes to you, the greater the possibility of disaster, unless you find the secret of life and obey it.

I learn, quite simply and finally, from this study that there is one thing necessary. The one thing necessary for the fulfilment of life is that of surrender, loyalty, obedience to God. Apart from that there can be no proper understanding of life. Apart from that there is no wisdom or power to deal with life.

I know full well as I speak to you how the minds and hearts of some of you will rebel against such a statement as that; that a man may tell me he knows himself and his capacities and powers and knows perfectly well the true way to deal with these to assure success to himself. Well, I pray you think again, and think more deeply, and recognize the fact ere it be too late, ere disaster come, that no man knows himself perfectly, finally. If you would have witnesses to the thing I am now saying, they are here; I cannot call them, cannot ask them to speak, but they are here; men who are going grey, men who have been weathering the storms and finding out themselves. They will tell you that the most astonishing hours that have ever come to them were hours in which they discovered in themselves things they never dreamed were there; things sometimes of good and sometimes of evil. The last words of the old Greek philosophy were great words, "Man, know thyself." It was great because it brought every man face to face with himself and so to the discovery that he was greater than he had ever known, so great that he could not know himself. Infinitely more true to the experience of human life was the word of the Psalmist in the Hebrew psalter, in that marvelous one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, opening as it does,

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me,

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,

Thou understandest my thought afar off.

Then the Psalmist said,

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

It is high, I cannot attain unto it.

"Such knowledge,..." that is knowledge of myself. I do not know myself. When a man has learned that lesson, then he is prepared to submit himself to the One Who knows him, and so the great psalm which opens with the affirmation,

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me

ends with the prayer,

Search me, O God, and know my heart:

Try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting.

That is the language of the wisdom of the man who realizing God's knowledge and his own ignorance, will submit himself to God at the beginning of life, when the flush of dawn is upon the sky and high hope is singing its song in his heart. The man who will begin there will never end by saying, "... I have played the fool,..." for "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Apart from his surrender, loyalty, obedience to God, there can be no proper understanding of life, no adequate wisdom or power to deal with life.

There are many manifestations of the fundamental folly. I will content myself with grouping those suggested by the story. A man plays the fool if he halts when God calls him to some pathway of service. Has he called you, my brother, did you hear the call? Why are you hiding? End your folly, and march according to the Divine command.

A man plays the fool when he neglects his best friends. What are these new friends that make you neglect the old ones? How is it that we have missed you recently from the fellowship of the saints of God? God set round about some of you a band of men whose hearts He Himself has touched. Why neglect their company? I believe in the communion of saints. I believe in the value of keeping in the comradeship of the saints. I do protest that unless I maintain my comradeship with the saints, I shall wander from the path of the just. I owe more to the spiritual sympathy and help of the children of God than I can ever tell. How many a man have I seen drift out of the Christian church and out of Christian work because he has neglected the friends that God provided.

A man plays the fool if he marches upon the Divine enterprise when God has not commanded him. That is only the reverse of the other truth that a man plays the fool when he halts when God commands. Go upon no enterprise at your own charge. Await the Divine command, for therein is the Divine covenant, and the Divine covenant provides that thou shalt find the resources needed to meet the command. A march without God is a march of unutterable folly toward final disaster.

A man plays the fool if he disobeys in even the smallest matter. To obey is better than sacrifice. The religious excuse is the most damnable of all excuses. To disobey God in the interest of religion is to blaspheme.

A man plays the fool when he attempts to justify the wrong he has done. It is upon the basis of confession that God can forgive sin and reinstate a man in righteousness. That is not merely a Divine enactment and requirement. It is a moral necessity. When a man justifies wrong, tries to excuse it, he is playing the fool; for he is keeping the evil thing that has already threatened to ruin him.

A man plays the fool unutterably when he allows some hatred to master him, as Saul did in the case of David.

There is some man here who is saying, "... behold, I have played the fool...." What shall I say to that man? What that man supremely needs is help that comes down to his level, takes hold of him, touches him in pity but also in power, bends over him in infinite compassion, but also with force that will remake him.

That is what Browning felt when he wrote his great poem:

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek In the Godhead! I seek and I find it.
O Saul it shall be A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me, Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever! a Hand like this hand Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

To every man tonight who is saying in the deepest of his soul almost in despair, "... behold, I have played the fool,..." I say, "... See the Christ stand!" He has come to the foolish to make them wise, to the ruined to redeem them, to the lost to find them, to the impure to purify them, to the dis-crowned kings to crown them, to the souls that have unutterably and disastrously failed to realize within them the original intention and lift them into the place of fellowship with God.

1 Kings 18:21. Halting.

1 Kings 18:21.

Halting.

How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow Him.

1 Kings 18:21

Ahab was King of Israel. The kingdom was in a most deplorable condition, perhaps at a period darker than any other in its history. Ahab was a veritable incarnation of evil, and his influence, together with that of Jezebel, had been blighting and spoiling everything of essential greatness. Clouds and darkness were over all the land. Images of Baal and Ashtaroath gleamed in the valleys. Temples of idolatry were erected everywhere, and the altars of God were broken down. Then, while such darkness reigned throughout the land, while it seemed as though no cheering star gleamed through the blackness, as suddenly as the falling of a thunderbolt, there appeared on the scene one of the most remarkable and fiery of all the prophets.

In the previous Chapter we have the beginning of the story of the mission of Elijah. "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab." That is the introduction of this man. We know no more of him than this, a Tishbite, and we are not sure even until this day what that may mean. It is even suggested that he was a man of another nationality, not of the chosen seed. Be that as it may, from somewhere, no one knows where, somehow, under what influence none can tell, this man broke in upon the condition of affairs with a message that was fiery and forceful, terrific and timely, a veritable message of God, a message that was brief, a message that was a message of judgment, a message that made no apology, and offered no conditions, and suggested no compromise.

It was briefly this: "As the Lord, the God of Israel liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word," and, having uttered it, Elijah vanished.

But the Word of the Lord, which is ever powerful, which is never void, but ever thrills with energy, wrought out into actual and terrific fulfilment, the word of judgment, that there should be no rain and no dew for three years, and the people who, in material prosperity, had forgotten God—no, infinitely worse, had defiantly rebelled against God—were brought back face to face with God through the process of a judgment which had been foretold by the prophet. Elijah was cared for, first, at the brook, and then at Zarephath, until the time foretold having passed away he appeared again on the scene, first to Obadiah, and then to Ahab.

Our story is that of the hour in which Elijah faced Ahab. It is a wonderful story, dramatic and startling. Ahab, at last, stood face to face with the man whose prediction, having been fulfilled, had wrought such havoc in the condition of the nation. He asked him, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" And with quiet, calm dignity the answer of the prophet was given, "I have not troubled

Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed the Baalim." And then addressing himself still to the king, in the language of a superior, with the note of authority, he said, "Gather to me all Israel... and the prophets of Baal." The king, who, in his first words, manifested the anger that was in his heart, and the murder that lurked there, made no difficulty, but, under the tremendous power and will of the prophetic command, backed by the authority of God, gathered the people together.

The story is better written than I can ever tell it. All I stay to do for one moment is to notice the different classes that were gathered on Mount Carmel in that wonderful moment in the history of the people. On the one hand were the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty; and the prophets of the Asherah, four hundred; and all those who followed their teaching and worshiped at their shrines. On the other hand, stood the one lonely messenger of God, Elijah, confronting the prophets of a false religion, confronting the corruption of a corrupt court, confronting that most terrible of all things, an undecided mob. On the one hand, men who are decided in their worship of Baal; on the other, a man who is decided in his worship of Jehovah; and then that great company of the nation, waiting for leading, undecided, a mixed multitude, many of them never having confessed openly their allegiance to God, even though in their heart they were loyal to Him, for while Elijah said "I, even I only, am left," elsewhere we are told that God replied, "Yet will I leave Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." And beside that seven thousand, the great multitude of the people who knew the will of God, who had been nurtured in the very atmosphere and enforcement of His law, but into whose heart there had come the lusting that is at the base of all false worship—a great crowd, undecided, uncommitted, halting, wavering, taking neither one side nor the other.

It was to this multitude that Elijah spoke, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Between opinions, that is, without opinion. A man who is between two opinions is devoid of an opinion. How long halt ye there? said the prophet. Now listen to him. "If God be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him." I think I hear the fervor and the passion in the prophet's voice. I think I know how he felt that day. I think, if I may put this old Hebrew and stately language into the language of the present day and the language of my heart, it is as though the prophet said, Take sides at all costs. Let us know where you are by one thing or the other; find your God, and follow. I think I hear the prophet saying, as he looked out on this great crowd, wondering over the discussing and philosophizing and arguing, "If God be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." Build your altar, burn incense, and go the whole way. "If God be God, rebuild His broken altar, and follow Him." It is the prophet's protest against indecision. "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

The times have changed. We do not gather now on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal are not among us as they were there. Our altars of God are not the same as were the altars raised of old. All the accidental robing has passed, but essential men are still here. All that is merely Eastern has gone out of the story, but the living vital principles abide. And as God, Who alone is able to do it, sifts and divides among us we fall on different sides and into different positions just as did these men of old. The local coloring has passed away, but the central truth abides. There are those who are definitely and openly and positively worshiping God. Thank God for the company. There are those—alas, that it is so, and yet it is true—who are openly and definitely and positively worshiping at other altars, for every man is worshiping, every man has some deity enshrined in his heart and life. Every man has some master passion of his life to which he burns incense as the days come

and go. There are those who are worshiping at the altars of idolatry, at the altars of pollution, at the altars of sin. But there are also very many who are not definitely and positively and avowedly committed either to God or Baal, either to purity or impurity, either to right or to wrong. The choice has not yet been definitely made. They have not yet said, God is God, we will follow Him until we see Him. They have not yet said, Evil is God, we will follow it until we see it unmasked in perdition. They have not said these things. They are standing and halting and waiting between opinions, with opinion unformed, with decision unmade.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?" I make the same appeal as did the prophet of old. "If God be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." If the God Whom I declare to you be indeed the One Who can best fill that place in your heart which clamors to be filled, if He be the One Who can best guide, direct life, enoble you, crown you, follow Him. But if evil can best satisfy you, if you have come to the decision that you can best be fitted and fashioned and formed and satisfied by evil, then follow evil. Only do one thing or the other. In the name of God and humanity, for the sake of God and humanity, take sides, and let us know where you stand. The man who is turning his face toward evil and pollution with all his heart and soul and mind is not doing half so much harm in the community as the man who is taking on his lips for discussion the language of sacred things, while in his heart he refuses to follow them to an issue. That is the kind of statement that some of you resent. I shall repeat it and emphasize it. Here is a man who has given his whole life to the clamant cry for stimulants; here is a man who is a drunkard. That man's influence on the children of the district where he lives is not half so pernicious as the influence of the father of the children who plays with the thing that may damn his child. Think of it. I will take my boy in the freshness of his boyhood's days by the hand, and I will lead him along some street, and there in the gutter lies the man absolutely abandoned to drink, bloated, bruised, and degraded, and my boy looks there at that man, and he is warned. But it may be there lies in the life of my boy some hidden fire, which once ignited, will burn him to ruin, and he sees me indulging, not decided as to whether it is right or wrong; he tries to follow me, and may be ruined. I know that is extreme, but it is true.

You are undecided. You have never come to a definite decision either for God or for evil. There is a man in your store, in your shop, in your place of business, who is "going the whole pace," to quote a phrase with which every man here is familiar. The influence of that man on the other men is not half so pernicious as the influence of the man who discusses and does nothing, affects to believe in the Gospels of the New Testament and never obeys them, speaks patronizingly of God Almighty and of Jesus Christ and in life rebels against God. That is the man who is harming others by his influence, the man who drifts and is not decided, and is willing to discuss, but never to do; to philosophize, but never to surrender; to argue, but never to commit his life to Jesus Christ. Oh, these men and women who are uncommitted, these men and women in our churches and our pews and in our services who come and go, drifting, drifting, until they block the river way and hinder others. In the name of God, I appeal to you, do one thing or the other. If God be God, follow Him. If evil be the true master of life, follow it. Let us have the line of cleavage clearly defined.

If you want to form your decision and cease your halting, if you want to decide whether it is to be Baal or God, sin or Jesus Christ, come back for a few moments and look at the picture in the Chapter in which our text is found. If you look carefully you will see the service of sin exemplified in the prophets of Baal; you will see the service of God exemplified in Elijah. I will come, in conclusion, to the same appeal with which I started, I will ask you to halt no longer, to make your

choice, and to join with the men who worship Baal or God.

Look at the picture. I never read that story without feeling how graphically it sets before my vision the truth about the men who are serving sin, and serving self, and serving Satan. I look back at these prophets of Baal, and there are different points from which I view them. I see in them, first, a point for admiration; I look at them a little more closely, and I see a point for sarcasm; I look at them again, and I see a point for anger; finally, I look, and I see a point for pity.

I look today at the men who serve sin with high hand and outstretched arm, and I see exactly the same things—a point for admiration, a point for sarcasm, a point for anger, and a point for pity.

A point for admiration? someone says to me. What do you mean? I am not dealing with the halting multitude. There is nothing to admire in them. I am dealing with the prophets of Baal as they exemplify what sin is. What is the point for admiration? It is the courage, the daring, the enthusiasm, the force that these men put into their business. And I do not hesitate to say that I admire it. It was a daring thing for these men to accept the challenge of Elijah at all. And then there was no half-heartedness. All day they cried, "Oh, Baal, hear us." And there was no voice, no answer. And again they cried, and I watch them as the day wears on leaping in frenzy on the altar, stirring up the passion of their inner life with knives. I look at their zeal, at their earnestness, at their determination, and I admire them.

I look at the men who are sinning hard, and I admire them. I have a great deal more hope of winning that man who serves the devil well than the man who stays half-way between God and the devil, and does not know which to serve. Oh, the passion men are putting into sin!

But I look again, and I see a point for sarcasm. It must be a tender sarcasm. Jesus had a great deal of sarcasm about Him. You cannot read the records of His life without finding it. God grant that our sarcasm may always be like His, very keen, but very tender, based on love, and yet flashing like a searchlight. Listen to Elijah. He looks at the men when the noonday has arrived, and he says: "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." All of which means this, your gods are all very well until you are in trouble. Your gods will do when you do not need help, or to feel a presence, or know a power. Baal is all right so long as you are not face to face with a crisis. But get there, and you will know the folly of the whole business. Cry aloud, perhaps he is sleeping. Think of the sarcasm of it. Men driven wild with a frenzy of desire, and their god asleep!

You who make sin your god, who worship it, and serve it, because of what you get out of it, wait a moment. There is a day of crisis coming. It may come in different ways to you. It may come as bereavement, when the house is darkened, and the heart is sad, and some little child is put down into the grave. It may come as poverty, when riches take to themselves wings and fly away. It may come as death, when you yourself know that you are passing away. Now, oh, bereaved man—think me not unkind, for in God's name I would only drive you to truth—oh, poverty-stricken man, with nobody who cares to help you in the day of your adversity; oh, dying man, with the shadows creeping round you, cry aloud to your god, ask sin to help you now. You see the folly of it. You dare not. The thing for which you have sacrificed your loyalty, the thing for which you have turned your back on God and Heaven and life, cannot help when the crisis comes. Where is your comfort, oh, bereaved man? For your own sake play the man, do not turn your back on Jesus

Christ and sin against Him and crucify Him, and then when your child dies want His words to be uttered about resurrection. See this thing through. If you are going to turn your back on my Master tonight see it through. Oh, the unutterable folly of it, that a man will take his life, spirit, soul, and body, and pour all out in worship of the thing that never gives him an answering word of pity or of power when the crisis comes. And yet again I look at these men, and I find there is a point that demands my anger. It is the willfulness of their folly. These people, many of them, who had become the prophets of Baal, and all such in the nation as had listened to the teaching, and followed the guidance of the prophets of Baal, who were they? They were the people who had such a wonderful history, people who belonged to the upper and the nether springs, people who possessed the oracles of God, and yet were deliberately choosing Baal because he gave license to passion and self.

The picture is repeated today. I look out on the servants of sin, and sometimes it seems as though the very anger of the heart becomes hot. Why? For the same reason that God is angry with men, because in their folly and perversity and willfulness they deliberately choose the things that ruin them. Oh, yes, but let the last note be sounded.

I look at these prophets, and I find there is a point for pity. See the effect on them of their own sin. Admire the passion, if you will, as it burns. Be as sarcastic as you will, that in the presence of crisis there is no help. Be as angry as you will over the unutterable folly of wickedness, but look at them after the long, weary day, fainting, wounded men. You cannot look at the prophets of Baal in their weariness and their wounding without pitying them.

You will at once see how this applies to us. The Godly heart, the Christly heart always feels a great pity for the sinner. Oh, these wounded men, these hardened criminals, these ruined lives! Oh, these men, with physical constitution spoiled, and with mind diseased, and spiritual capacity paralyzed and dead! Oh, weep over them! Oh, the pity of it! Oh, dear man, that thou shouldest put passion into the business of destroying thyself! Oh, that thou shouldest take the Divinely bestowed powers of thy wondrous manhood, and burn them up only to burn thyself! Oh, the pity of it! The service of sin, there it is, passion without principle!

For a moment look on the other side, and in that one lonely man, Elijah, see the service of God exemplified.

First look at his boldness. Did we say it was a bold thing for the prophets of Baal to accept his challenge? It was a far bolder thing for one man to challenge eight hundred and fifty. He stood alone. He had an avowed purpose to attack idolatrous worship, and he stood confronting the king whose court was corrupt, and all associated with him.

It is not a blustering courage, a courage characterized by foolhardiness. It is not the courage that whistles in the dark. It is the courage that is quiet and calm and strong, calm when Elijah challenges the king as the troubler of Israel, calm in the waiting of the long day, calm in the final crises and in the midst of all circumstances. But these are only outward things.

Mark not merely the boldness and the calmness of this servant of God; but discover the reason of the boldness, of the calmness. At last the prophets have done, and have failed. At last his own sacrifice is laid on his altar, and with magnificent daring he has saturated the whole sacrifice and altar with water until the very trench is full of it.

If you want really to see Elijah, you must see him now; see him as he comes quietly forward toward that altar in the presence of all those people, and hear him as he says, "Oh, Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire fell. Here we are at the heart of it. Elijah quietly built his altar, placed his sacrifice, and then lifted his voice to God, and the moment the cry of His servant reached the ear of God the fire fell.

I am not surprised that Elijah was bold now. I am not surprised that Elijah was calm now. He is seen now as the man who lived by faith, in touch with the secret forces. He is seen to be a man who had communion with God. He knew how to move the hand that holds the world, to bring deliverance down. He lived, not in the power of things seen, but in the power and possession of the unseen. The prophets had cut themselves, and cried in an agony to a god who did not answer, because he did not exist. In the calm of eventide, without frenzy, with quiet bold dignity, this man spoke and fire fell.

This is the picture of the life of the Christian man. That is what we are asking you to choose. You can be bold, you can be calm, you can be courageous, and why? Because if you worship God your life is linked to Omnipotence, your life is linked to Omniscience, your life is linked to Omnipresence.

I will say no more to you save this: I speak here as in God's presence. I have chosen. I will follow God. I will be a Christian man, and now I know that this life of mine is linked to the infinite wisdom of God, and this, if I will but use it, will guide me until time shall blossom into eternity I, so weak and frail that the slightest breath of temptation will make me sin, if I try to fight it alone—and I speak the thing I know—I am linked to the power of God, and "I can do all things in Christ, Who strengtheneth me." And I that am often lonely if I trust to other friends and other helpers, my life is linked to God, Who is always just where I am. At home, He is there; in the railway train, He is there; in the place of joy, He is there, and His laughter mingles with mine; in the place of sorrow, He is there, and His heart is moved with pity and with help. I am never away from Him.

How long halt ye? How long? How long? I pray you, if sin be the god, follow it. But, oh, if this God be God, if this be life indeed, follow it, follow Him. How long? How long? And why should not the answer be given now, even as my last words are sounding in your ears? God grant that in the hearts of men and women the answer may go up. No longer. Here I choose, and I will give myself to Thee, soul and body Thine to be, wholly Thine forevermore.

2 Kings 18:4. Nehushtan.

2 Kings 18:4.

Nehushtan.

He brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan.

2 Kings 18:4

We at once realize what an astonishing statement the Chronicler makes here concerning king Hezekiah. Hezekiah ascended the throne of Judah in the third year of the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, a young man twenty-five years of age; and immediately—undoubtedly acting under the influence of Isaiah, the great evangelical prophet of the old economy—he commenced a work of reformation. One of the first acts of the reign of the new king was that of smashing to fragments one of the most valuable and historic relics in his kingdom.

So strange an action is in itself worthy of our closest attention, and I think we shall find in our meditation a revelation of some of the great facts of human nature and of some perils threatening men in the region of the most sacred things of their lives; and, consequently, a revelation of principles of perpetual value and of immediate application.

Let us first attempt to put ourselves back into the days when, with what must have appeared to be the strangest disregard of cherished prejudices, Hezekiah commenced his reformation by this act of iconoclasm. I need hardly tarry to remind you of the facts concerning this brazen serpent. In order that we may have our memory refreshed we read the simple story as it is contained in the book of Numbers. However, it may be well to notice one fact. According to the story as there told, it is not suggested, neither was it suggested to the people at the time, if we follow and accept the words as here recorded as being correct, that there was any healing virtue in the brazen serpent. No suggestion was made to the people of Israel that the serpent itself could produce any mystic effect. To read the story simply is to see to its very heart. The sin of the people had been their departure from the attitude of absolute submission to the government of God. In the midst of this rebellious people now punished by God, the brazen serpent was erected, and the word of God which Moses was commanded to speak to them was a declaration that if any man, bitten and in peril, would look at the uplifted serpent he would be healed. That was God's word. No explanation of the relation between the looking and the life was given. We sing, "There is life for a look at the Crucified One," and in so doing we may be singing what is perfectly true, or we may be singing that which is entirely false. What brought these men back to life was the fact that they returned to submission to the government of God, as, for the moment, that government was focused in that wonderful and yet simple provision. The healing virtue came from God, and was operative in answer to that act of submission in which men, no longer arguing as to the wisdom of the method, submitted to the Divine command. Because men in rebellion must be dealt with as children—there must always be a picture, something that appeals to the eye—God in infinite grace said to these

men, Take a serpent of brass and set it on a standard, and let the word of My government for the moment be My command to look. Men looked because God commanded, and looking because God commanded, they turned by that act to the Divine government and were healed. This is the history.

It was in itself a remarkable thing that the serpent of brass should have been so long preserved. Between that event in the wilderness and this iconoclasm of Hezekiah at least seven hundred years had elapsed. Think how carefully it had been preserved—by Moses during all the years he remained with these people, all through those tedious and perilous journeys through the great and terrible wilderness; by Joshua through all his forty years of campaign and settlement as he led the people into the land; during the strange and troubled period when the judges as dictators were raised up to govern the people according to immediate necessities; during the splendor of the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon; and through all the troublous and turbulent times of the kings succeeding to Solomon on both sides of the border, in the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Somewhere this brazen serpent had been preserved. I repeat that for over seven hundred years it had been a relic, historic, interesting, and essentially valuable, in that to illuminated eyes and waiting souls it was forevermore a reminder of their own sin in the past, of the judgment which fell on them in consequence of that sin, and of the deliverance which God had provided for them.

In process of time interest grew into veneration, until this very symbol was set up in the midst of the people as an object of worship. At last they actually burnt incense to this brazen serpent. This was the deification of a symbol, the turning from the veneration of a relic for the sake of its essential values to the veneration of that relic on the supposition that it had some virtue resident in itself.

We immediately see that this story is not old, as at first it appears to be. Indeed, almost absurd as it seems, this very idea persists to this hour under the shadow of what is named after Christ. In the Church of St. Ambrose, in Milan, they will show you this brazen serpent. In the year 971 a Milanese envoy in Constantinople was asked to take some treasure of the city as a gift, and he chose a brazen serpent which the Greeks assured him was made out of the very pieces of the serpent which Hezekiah broke into fragments. That certainly is in a country still enslaved by Roman superstitions, but the same things are practiced among us, if in more subtle forms.

Looking back to the ancient story, I ask you to notice that this deification of the brazen serpent, this setting it up as an object of worship, and this burning of incense to it, was in itself a most significant sign of the condition of the people at that time. It was, first, a revelation of their loss of consciousness of God. These people never could have burned incense to the serpent if the presence of God had been recognized and realized. One goes back in memory to the solemn days in the history of these people in the wilderness, when it was necessary to erect this serpent, days when they had before them the outward symbols of the presence of God in the Tabernacle, with all its suggestiveness, and when they had no right to sin. Yet they had sinned, and had been punished by God, and had turned back to Him. We call to mind also the whole history of these Hebrew people, not to dwell on any single detail, but to make this general statement: in hours when they were supremely conscious of God setting up such an object for worship would have been absolutely impossible. It is patent that the sight of these people gathered together around the brazen serpent for the purpose of burning incense to it, making this particular relic of their past

history an object of worship, demonstrated the fact that they had lost the consciousness of God.

Yet their action proved more than that. I see a people hungering after what they have lost. An idol always means this. An idol created by the fingers of men, or chosen by men and appointed to the place of a god, is forevermore a revelation of the sense of need, the sense of lack. It is an evidence that the deepest thing in the human heart is its cry after God. This is not to defend idolatry, not to defend the action of these people in the deification of the brazen serpent, but to say that when people lose their consciousness of God they do not lose their sense of need for God. Whereas I look back on these people in this hour and say they have lost their vision of God, have lost the sense of His nearness, have wandered far away from that spiritual communion with Him which is in itself a fire and a force, I say also that having lost the vision and having lost the sense, they are restless. When the one true and living God, having been revealed and known, is lost to consciousness the heart will clamantly cry for that which is lost. This worship of the serpent was certainly a revelation of the hunger of the people after God.

There is one other matter which I think this event reveals. Having lost their vision of God, and still being conscious of the necessity for some object of worship around which their spiritual life could gather, their deification of the serpent was a revelation of the utmost confusion. It was history misinterpreted. A blessing of the olden days was made a curse in the present moment by that misinterpretation of their own history. Setting up the brazen serpent as an object of worship suggested that the serpent itself had been the means of their healing on the past occasion. Their vision of God lost, and the cry of their souls after such a God, and the blundering confusion of a people who, looking back at their own history, emphasized it wrongly, interpreted it falsely, and treated the serpent as though it had been the means of their healing in the past—such was the abuse of the brazen serpent.

When Hezekiah came to the throne he did two things. First of all, he named the serpent "Nehushtan," a piece of brass, or, with fine contempt, a thing of brass. Then he broke it in pieces.

The naming of the serpent thus was intended to be a revelation to the people of their unutterable folly: they were burning incense to a thing of brass! It was intended to be a revelation to the people of their unutterable sin: These people whose worship had been of the unseen and eternal God, Who had demonstrated Himself to them by all the wonder of their history, were actually worshiping a thing of brass! There was a fine contempt in this naming of the brazen serpent, undoubtedly intended by the king to reveal to men their unutterable folly and the absolute wickedness of their idolatry.

Now, what will this king do with this thing of brass? No blame can be attached to the people for having preserved it; there was no sin in their preservation of the serpent; it was something which, coming up out of their past history, ought to have reminded them of God and the spiritual lessons they had learned in that hour of sin and of judgment and wondrous deliverance.

Hezekiah took this sacred relic and broke it in pieces, its associations notwithstanding. This he did because, with true insight, he understood that it was a source of danger to the people and therefore he could make no compromise with it. It was an act of true reform. It was the act of a man who would make no peace with that most sacred thing, a thing which in itself was not an evil thing, which in itself had no virtue and no vice, but which had become a source of danger to the

people. It must therefore be destroyed. That is the story. Now let us make certain applications of it to our own day.

The first I suggest is this: God's very gifts to men may be so abused as to become positively injurious. Anything to which we are burning incense merely because of the sacredness of its past associations is a peril to our spiritual life, and ought to be destroyed. Let me be pertinent and practical. What are some of the things to which we are in danger of burning incense today?

I have known Christian congregations burn incense to the very building in which they assembled for worship, as though it were sacred in itself, as though to pass its threshold and be under its roof were to be in the very house of God and at the gate of heaven. That in itself is idolatry. We may so revere a building as to make a true worship of God impossible inside it. This is a strange paradox, and I shall ask you to bear quite patiently with me as I give you a very simple illustration out of my own past experience. I remember twenty-five years ago it had been arranged that I was to go to a certain church—of what denomination and in what town is of no matter—to conduct special mission services for fifteen days. As the time drew near I had a letter from the officers of the church saying that while they still felt the need of such services, the church had been recently renovated, and they had decided to abandon the mission in case the paint should be injured by strangers coming in! That is cold history. We may say that we should not do such a foolish thing as that; but we need to remember that the attitude of mind which made such an action possible is a perpetual peril. We call bricks and mortar a church. There is a sense in which that is true; but there is a sense in which a material building may become a grave and a terrible menace to the spiritual life of a church. We burn incense to our buildings and imagine that when we have passed into them we are separated to the worship of God. It is possible for a man to sit in this building from beginning to end of the service and never draw near to the true place of worship.

Then there are the exercises of public worship; we may burn incense to them, and make our form of service so ornate, so regular, so beautiful, that the very Spirit of God Who, like a breath of wind, would pass over the congregation, would not be able to find room to enter. We may burn incense to order, and so create the gravest disorder.

We may burn incense to the ministry considered as a caste. It may be that here we are in no danger of doing that. It may be that those of us who belong to the Free Church are in no danger of that particular form of idolatry, yet the peril lingers even among us. I know men who do not care to take the sacrament unless some ordained man preside. That is priestcraft. I would be quite content to take the bread and wine from the hands of some godly mother in Israel.

We still burn incense to the individual man, and though we have never used the word nor do we think of using it, our attitude is that of the deification of the individual. We have an idea that the whole Kingdom of God will fall if a certain man fails us, or moves to some other sphere of work. A subtle idolatry threatens us in spiritual things, sacred things. The danger that threatens us is that we may worship that which is the means rather than the God Who reaches us through those means.

It is possible to burn incense to a creed, to systematized theology. It is possible to crib, cabin and confine spiritual growth by loyalty to some dead hand of orthodoxy. I venture to say with all boldness that I am the right man to say that kind of thing. This Divine Library is final in authority;

but not your interpretation of it, nor mine, nor that of any man. No creeds that have been drawn up by honest souls in the past are final interpretations of the literature of the heavens. This Bible is as wonderful as the Spirit of God, forevermore breaking, annulling, destroying human interpretations, and blossoming into new beauty, singing itself out into new poetry, making poor the finest utterances of past interpretation. Yet there are men who ask me to sign a creed, and subscribe to a dogma, and contribute to systematized theology. They are burning incense to a creed. They are making a creed, which is a thing of men's hands, devout and sincere in itself, an object of worship.

I have even known men to burn incense to a trust deed and allow the work of God to be interfered with and spoiled because of the terms that lie within some such deed, drawn up amid some conditions that long since have passed away. There was a need for a certain wording of the trust deed at the time; but that is no warrant for saying that a trust deed must hold men today and prevent them from going forward and doing the work to which God is calling them, work which the age demands and which the mental mood of the hour is calling them to do. In many ways we are doing what these Hebrews did, lifting a serpent of brass and burning incense to it.

It is possible to be idolatrous in the matter of prayer, and in the matter of the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism. It is possible to treat all these things which are means of grace as though they were grace. It is possible to treat these things which are Divinely appointed ordinances, symbols, signs, sacraments, outward and visible signs of the inward and invisible grace, as though they in themselves were channels of the invisible grace. That is sacerdotalism. Not merely the claim of the priest of Greek, Roman, or Anglican ordination, but the worship of the sacrament by men who profess to have escaped from all such bondage. That is burning incense to an idol.

I have known men who were worshipers of the day of their conversion. I know men who tell me that ten, twenty, or thirty years ago, here or there, they were born again; and today they are dead in trespasses and sins, but still burn incense to the old experience, imagining that to be true worship. The memory of an hour of illumination, of clear shining, may change the volition and transfigure the life, I admit it; but such a memory has no value today unless today the light is shining, the soul is poised toward God, and the attitude of the life is what it ought to be toward our fellow men. Yet we burn incense to these dead things. They were living things at the moment, they had their place and their value, they were God's own means of blessing to us; but today we gather about them and worship them and have no dealing with God.

Of all such action, looking back at the ancient story, I will say that such abuse of things in themselves sacred and right and God-appointed can come only out of spiritual degeneracy. Loyalty to God will maintain all these in their true place and true proportion. The serpent was never the depository of virtue, nor is any one of these I have mentioned.

The only way of virtue, using the word in its broadest and best sense as meaning strength and sanctity—the only way of virtue is the way of immediate dealing with God. So surely as men are burning incense to the brazen serpent, to creeds, to human instrumentalities, to ordinances, even God-appointed ordinances, so surely it is because they have lost the power of commerce with heaven and communion with God. No man will ever burn incense to any of these things who lives and works in the light and hears the voice of God within his own soul. The man who hears the voice of God within his own soul can find Bethel in the railway train, on the highway. It is loss of the

vision of God that is demonstrated by the deification of anything less than God.

Yet, blessed be God, this deification of the little is demonstration of the fact that man cannot find rest except in God Himself. If you have lost the vision and the true spiritual communion, then you must worship something, you must put something back in its place. That, as I said before, is not to defend idolatry, it is not to say the final word concerning the activity, for if it be true that idolatry demonstrates capacity for God, it is equally true that idolatry ultimately destroys the capacity for God. If it be true that having lost God, I put this idol in His place, so surely as I do I shall presently become like the idol I make, and having eyes I shall see not, and having ears I shall hear not, and having hands I also like my idol shall not be able to feel, I shall become insensate. Deification of anything less than God demonstrates the capacity for worship and is a revelation of hunger; but it issues in the destruction of the very capacity it demonstrates.

What is the right attitude toward all such things? I suggest that our right attitude is first to name the things rightly. Look and see that this cunning artifice of brass is not a serpent, it is brass. Then name it Nehushtan, a thing of brass. Call the church a building of bricks and mortar. Call the minister a man, and remember that he is none other, and if he is other he ought not to be in the ministry. Call the exercises of worship forms, remembering that form without power is in itself a curse. Call creeds and systematized theology human opinion, and respect it as human opinion and in no other way. Call the trust deed paper or parchment, as the case may be. Call prayer words. Call the day of your conversion past.

If any or all of these things are coming between your soul and God Himself break them in pieces. Not merely the idols which your fathers had before the flood, not merely the idols which you found in the land, but the idol which is one of your sacred things which in a past hour of need was God's provision for your well-being. If it has become an idol, then must it be broken in pieces.

Let us bring our most sacred things to the test, and let us remember that to whatever we burn incense we must destroy if the burning of the incense has resulted in the loss of the vision of God and issued in inability to commune with God. Infinitely better to be stripped of every means of grace, and to come to worship as a naked spirit with God alone, than to allow these things which He has instituted to help us to such worship, to stand between us and Himself. That is the teaching.

Yet a final word is this; the true attitude of the soul is that of the retention of all these things in their true place and in their true proportion. The true attitude of the soul is that in which it looks back to the day when life began in Christ and rejoices in it, but immediately brings that past experience into expression in the living present. The great autobiographical passage of the Apostle Paul in the Philippian letter has often been quoted; let us hear it once again. Writing to his Philippian children from prison and reviewing the process of his Christian life, looking back to the hour on the Damascus road when he was apprehended by his Master, he said, "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ." That counting was at least thirty years before, but there was no virtue in that. A little further on he added, "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss." The "I counted" of yesterday is of no value unless it be carried into the "I count" of today. If today I count all things but loss, then I shall never undervalue that past experience on the way to Damascus; but the light that shone on me on the way to Damascus, or in the midst of that revival of thirty years ago, is of no value today unless there shines on my soul this morning the light of

God, and I answer it.

So with prayer. Savonarola declared on one occasion that when prayer reaches its ultimate height words are impossible, that when the soul has come to terms of communion with God words are left behind. I think every Christian man and woman who knows anything of the secret place knows how true that is. There is another application of the great truth concerning prayer that we often lose sight of. In my experience the prayers that have most profoundly touched my soul and moved me, the prayers that I have felt have most perfectly taken hold of God, were prayers that broke down in the middle, that could not be continued, but ended in blundering articulation and half-finished sentences, and then a sob and silence. That is prayer. If the sense of God that produces such an attitude in the soul of man is absent, then elegance of diction is blasphemy, and beauty of phrasing is impertinence, and we are burning incense to a thing of brass rather than worshiping God. The true attitude of the soul is that which—to use the word of the old economy—brings with it words, and pours out thought in speech before the throne of God, setting no value on the form of the words, but all value on the grip of the soul on God, and the touch of God on the soul.

Not to proceed further with these things already referred to, the final thing is this; let us keep this serpent of brass, let us learn to keep it by making the necessity for its destruction unnecessary. Let us retain it and let it speak to our hearts its true lesson. Let it say to us forevermore: I remind you of the hour of sin; beware of sin; I remind you of the hour of swift judgment which must come again if you sin; I remind you of the hour of deliverance. If we so keep it, and let it thus speak to us, we shall never burn incense to it, but when it has thus spoken we shall forget it as we worship God.

Nehemiah 6:15. How The Wall Is Built.

Nehemiah 6:15.

How The Wall Is Built.

So the wall was finished.

Nehemiah 6:15

These words constitute a declaration of success. They are vibrant with triumph and joy. So far as the actual event to which they refer is concerned, they record what I may term an incidental victory. Nevertheless the story is microscopic. It is suggestive of vaster truths than the actual narrative in this wonderfully fascinating book of Nehemiah contains.

Our purpose is to find out the secrets of that remarkable success. I shall take it for granted that the story is well known. How came it that such desolation was turned into so excellent a construction within seven weeks? What were the secrets of success?

The wall was intended to enclose a Divine idea, and to preserve it until the hour for its development should arrive. Zerubbabel had come back first, and had erected an altar, and immediately following thereupon had commenced building the temple. For long years the temple, rising but a few feet from the ground, had remained until it had become overgrown with weeds, a picture of desolation. Under the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah men had turned again to its building, and it had been completed. Thus life was gathered round the altar and the temple in the city of God. As Paul said long after, in writing to the Galatians, referring to this very fact: "Before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." Within those walls was to be gathered, and preserved, the Divine idea, until after four centuries had run their course the coming of Christ should be the first movement forward to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

There arose a prophet in those times, named Zechariah, who saw a young man going up to measure Jerusalem, and heard an angel declare to him that Jerusalem cannot be measured. Eventually, Jerusalem will not be contained within walls; it will enclose villages, and its only walls will be the glory and fire of the Divine presence. Long, long centuries after, another seer beheld the city of God coming down out of heaven to earth, and described the walls as great and high, and made of jasper, the symbol of conflict, including a new order. So the figure of the city of God runs through the Book, and the figure of the walls recurs again and again. In the narrative of Nehemiah we have the account of how in seven weeks walls were rapidly flung round the city, and the deed was celebrated by the writer in the words of the text: "So the wall was finished."

Looking at the work of those seven weeks, observing the man who came up to do it, observing his method with those who surrounded him, observing their response to his enthusiasm, watching them carry out their work, seeing them as difficulties presented themselves and were overcome, I want to find out what were the elements that made for the success.

The first element I observe is that, in the case of Nehemiah and under his influence, in the case of the whole of the people for those seven weeks, there was the element of forgetfulness of self in the presence of the passion for the accomplishment of the great end. When the need for building of a wall was manifested and these people came to an understanding of the need, each sank himself and worked for the common weal. The vastness of the work to be done filled the souls of the people, and created a natural, unstrained spirit of self-abnegation. That is always the first secret of success. It must be by natural, unstrained selflessness. When a great passion fills the soul, when some high, holy purpose is to be accomplished, then a man forgets himself. In working as a community this is very necessary. It is an element that moves to success whether it be for good or evil. Along the line of individual self-denial that became a corporate self-abnegation the men moved to the building of the wall, and so it was finished.

That involves another element. It is unity. Unity was not sought, not mechanically arranged, it was not the outcome of consultation. I read of only one consultation in this book. I will quote it: "I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles." That is the consultation that arrives somewhere. There is no other consultation here at all. Here each man built over against his own house; every man did the piece of work that was nearest to his own dwelling. As self-denial was unconscious, born of the vision of the importance of the work, so the unity was unconscious as to any effort to produce it; it was born of the passion for the accomplishment of the great object. It is an old saying—but we need to be reminded of some of the trite sayings today—that unity is strength. All the fibrous strands of hemp are of no use, but weave them together, and by their very entanglement, skilfully arranged, you create the cable against which the mighty ship will strain in vain. For the best illustration of unity outside the Bible that I know I recommend that all, young people especially, read Rudyard Kipling's *The Ship that Found Herself*. When that ship started on her voyage across the sea, how the parts talked to each other! The rivets grumbled at the bolts; the planks objected to the upheaval of the beams; but through stress and strain and storm and tempest, at last the ship arrived, and the grumbling voices of the bolts were silenced, the complaints of the rivets were heard no more; all the parts had forgotten themselves in the realization of the unity of the ship that found herself.

Apart from such unity there can be no success in toil. Too often, we have been busy building, and we have tried to build the piece of wall near at hand, but we have been so busy building it high that we have not broadened it to touch the building of our neighbor; and the devil passes through the gaps, and laughs at us and destroys our building.

I look at those builders again during those busy weeks and I am impressed by their consecration. What is consecration? The expression of real consecration is the perfect discipline of life as it submits to the law created by the necessity of the case. These men were doing their work by hard discipline. At the heart of all real consecration there must be discipline, submission to authority.

I remember as a boy how I read with almost breathless interest the story of the taking of Quebec by Wolfe. It comes back to me almost with the scent of the flowers under a Gloucestershire hedgerow, where I sat to read. I remember, too, how vividly it all came back to me when I stood on the Heights of Abraham and saw the place where it was done. How was it done? By discipline. How was discipline expressed at the taking of Quebec? The boats dropped down the St. Lawrence, and the one order issued to every man in every boat was to be absolutely silent, not a

word was to be spoken. That army, comparatively small, must climb the Heights of Abraham by way of a narrow defile which could easily be held at the top by twenty men. They dropped down the river without speech, with scarcely the sound of oars; they climbed silently to the heights, and waited in silence until the order to charge was given. That is consecration. "So the wall was finished."

I watch them again, and I am further impressed by their consistency, their cohesion, their holding together. I do not now mean the holding together of all in unity, but the consistency of every man, the all-roundness of them. The whole thing is graphically suggested by the use of a phrase that we always think of when we think of this building of the wall—the sword and trowel. These men were girt with a sword ready for conflict, while the trowel was busy. Every man was building, but every man was ready for battle. That merging of caution and courage, that splendid bringing together of the sense of danger and the readiness to meet it—that is consistency. Under Nehemiah's inspiration these men were ready to bring every part of the forces of their personalities into this one work. The whole thing is condensed into a statement of the book: "We made our prayer unto God and set a watch." These men neglected no side that was necessary to completeness, left nothing undone that must be done. What wonderful cohesion is manifest in the activity of every man, and this consistency within each personality, multiplied by all the workers, made for the finishing of the wall, until Nehemiah was able to write, "So the wall was finished."

But there was something more than all this: there was that indefinable, wonderful force which we describe as earnestness or enthusiasm. That is expressed in one sentence from the pen of Nehemiah: "The people had a mind to work." The work lay near their heart and captivated all their powers, so that it was commenced, continued, and completed. They were men who believed in the possibility of that to which they set themselves. They knew the importance of that completed wall and all that it meant to their city. That earnestness was the central secret of all their success. Men who lack enthusiasm will never do anything for God. Men who lack earnestness will never build any wall for God. Not by the dilettante discussions of committees will work eventually be done. I am not undervaluing committees, provided they are small enough! Certainly not by disparaging the work in hand, nor by declaring that the wall never can be built, will the wall be built. It is only when the fire that inspires construction and perfection fills the heart that a man can do God's work. When the fire in the individual heart is multiplied by the fires of united, consecrated souls, then the work of God goes forward.

Out of the fire of their enthusiasm emerges another quality making for success—stability. When Paul was writing of Christian work he said, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The two words do not mean the same thing. Steadfastness is that square-backed quality of fidelity that stays at work however long it take, however hard it be, however much drudgery there be in it. Unmoveableness is the same thing in the presence of opposition. If ever a man was hindered in his work Nehemiah was. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, sent four times to lure him from his work, but his answer was quick and sharp, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Opposition arose within the city when Shemaiah advised Nehemiah to hide in the temple. He indignantly refused, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." The spirit of the leader permeated them all. Nothing moved them, nothing hindered them, because their enterprise was

deeply rooted. The secret of stability is to have the life so completely rooted in the Divine enterprise, the Divine will, the Divine power, that life becomes unmoveable in the presence of opposition. By stability of this kind that wall was built.

Yet again, the wall was built, finally, by the sobriety of the rank and file, by the quiet, steady, plodding work of all the men whose names certainly are not mentioned in the record, and probably were hardly known at the time. Great enterprises are always won by that element of sobriety and self-control, with its quiet, steady, plodding work. That is the work that tells in the building of the city of God and the building of the wall around the city of God. It is so everywhere. There is a place in nature for the volcanic; but it is occasional, not regular. Some of you, perchance, have sailed across the great Pacific, and have seen the thousand islands that gem its waters, all things of beauty and joy. How came those islands there? Ever and anon a volcanic island is seen; it was flung up in a night by some convulsion; and it is sure, stable, beautiful; but the majority of the islands were not so flung up, but were formed by the tedious, persistent work of coral insects through long millenniums. When at last God's city is built and the wall is finished, there will be recognition of the volcanic men who did things explosively, and suddenly and magnificently; but if there had been none but they the wall had never been built. It is the quiet, steady workers, going on through what would seem to some of us the hopeless monotony and dulness of days and years who build the wall. How I could illustrate where I stand tonight, as I think of the work of this particular church through all its history. There are those here today who were here fifty years ago, who through stress, and toil, and storm, hoped, prayed, believed, and wrought with God for the building of the wall! These are the men and women that the Church needs if she is to do her work. That is the element that builds. "So they finished the wall."

If we have really seen these things we have discovered that the note on which I began is the note on which I must end. These people had perfect confidence in the work they were called to do. They saw the whole of it. There was one man who went down to the dung-gate and built there, where nobody wanted to go; but he built there until he had finished the work; there was another man who, perchance, had to cover a larger piece of work, and his daughters helped him, they went and built with him; one chapter gives us many such details. The secret of every individual effort was that of the vision of the wall itself, the absolute confidence of the people in its importance, and the integrity of the one appointed to lead them in building the wall. In answer to that vision they wrought, and the wall was finished.

In God's great economy two processes are going forward still, as they have been through all the centuries and all the millenniums: the processes of building and of battle, of destruction and of construction, of the sword and of the trowel. As I said before, this is a story, an incident by the way; but it is microcosmic. The whole Divine process is revealed in the picture of these men and the seven weeks of building the wall.

Are we engaged in this business of God? If we are, how can we prosecute it so as to be perfectly sure of ultimate success? The day will come when the city of God shall come down out of heaven, when its jasper walls shall flash with beauty, and its streets shine with gold—all figurative and symbolic language, figurative because the fact is so fine that it can be expressed only in figurative language. God's victory is yet to be won. That we believe with all our hearts. Are we doing anything to hasten it? Are we engaged in the building? Are we doing anything in the battle?

There are times when the question reacts on the soul and almost scorches us as with flame. There are days when looking ahead to the ultimate victory one feels as though one would be ashamed to share it if one had no scars of battle and had never known weariness in the process of building.

All this is most pertinent today. Surely we have felt as though the walls were broken down and the gates burned with fire; all the fair things that we had hoped and longed for lie about us in catastrophic ruin; but to sit and lament is to be disloyal. Our businesses to hear the cry of the leader, Come and let us build again the walls of Jerusalem. If we hear the cry of the Leader, then with our eyes on Him, and our eyes fixed also on the consummation toward which His loveliest eyes are ever looking, let us hear in mind that we shall do our building only as we learn the secrets of this lesson and yield ourselves thereto.

Self-denial is the first necessity if we are to succeed, and that must be after the pattern of Christ's Cross, which was the supreme revelation of self-emptying in the interest of God's high enterprise. That Cross leads the sacramental hosts!

We must also know unity in Christian service. Could anything be more ghastly today than that this nation should divide itself as within itself, and begin internecine quarrels in the presence of a common foe? Yet we are in a little danger in that very direction, and I say to you here and now publicly that I would suppress half the newspapers that are keeping up this unholy strife in the national life. At the heart of the struggle today is this supreme spiritual necessity for unity in the Church. I think there can be nothing more disastrous than that the Church of God should emphasize its divisions today. Oh for such a vision of God's purpose and of the necessity for building the wall and the restoration of Jerusalem that would bring every section of the one Catholic Church side by side to stand for the Christian ideal of the compassion and grace, the righteousness and justice, of God. Under the stress of the present conflict we are seeing many things as we have never seen them. We are seeing drink as we have never seen it before, but it has been here all the while. There has been no more drinking in the aggregate, but rather less because of the war; yet if a newspaper refers to the fact that a deputation waits on the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to this question it points out that they were no teetotal fanatics! Is fanatic ever the proper word with which to describe men who see the dire disaster that drink has wrought in the commonwealth? At least there must be no internecine strife. The Church must come into unity for the process of righteousness if the wall is to be built, or perhaps I should say, if the wall is to be rebuilt, for it seems to lie in ruins, burned and blackened with devilish fire.

There must be new consecration under the authority of Christ's Lordship expressing itself in discipline and obedience to every command that falls from His lips or is whispered by His Spirit to the soul of a man.

There must be a new consistency in the communion of Christ's Spirit holding together in balance and proportion. There must be the sanctifying of all life and the secularizing of all religion. Religion must proceed from the high altars of the Church, the cloistered quietness of the sanctuary, into the market place, the legislative halls. Wherever men go they must carry the force of religion in order that the walls of the city may be rebuilt.

We must also know that holy enthusiasm in the enterprise of Christ's Kingdom which may be analyzed by the use of three words: faith, fervor, fidelity.

We must know stability. We must have our lives rooted in the things unseen and eternal, or we shall be entirely unable to touch the things seen and temporal. This we may find in the fulness of Christ's eternity, and only as we live in that relationship with Him can we ever hope to be stable in the midst of the stern and terrible conflict.

We want as we never wanted before all the quiet, persistent sobriety of the unnamed workers. In this hour of national crisis and religious catastrophe we depend most on the multitudes who are unknown and inconspicuous, and on their remaining quietly in the home, the office, or the shop, doing in the strength of Christ's patience the commonplace drudgery of the darkened days.

Mistake me not. As God is my witness, there is no panic in my heart and no fear in my soul. The walls are yet to be built. The city of God is yet to come down out of heaven. The triumph of our God is assured. Whatever Armageddon there may be ahead of us in some dispensational, prophetic sense, the central Armageddon of the ages is accomplished, and the victory was with God. In that hour of loneliness when the universal Man, gathering into His own personality all types and temperaments and nationalities, trod the winepress of the wrath of God alone, in that hour when He bent to death and by dying slew death, in that hour He won the victory. Every subsequent catastrophe is by comparison with that but the administration of victory already won. The ideal of the Christ is the master ideal, the all-conquering ideal, only I want to have some share in the travail that makes the Kingdom come, I want to have some part in building the wall so that when at last He who came first to visit the ruin and inspect it—taking counsel with no man but Himself—when He shall write as the summary of the battle and building of ages, "The wall is finished," I want to have some share in the thrill of His triumph, some partnership in the joy of His victory. These things I can have only as I stand by Him building, and stand by Him fighting until the work is done.

Psalm 4:6. Restlessness And Its Remedy.

Psalm 4:6.

Restlessness And Its Remedy.

Who will shew us any good?

Psalms 4:6

That is not the inquiry of the psalmist. It is a question which he quotes, in order that he may reply to it. Let us, therefore, read not only the inquiry but also the answer:—

There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?

Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

Thou hast put gladness in my heart,

More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased.

In peace will I both lay me down and sleep;

For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

"Who will shew us any good?" So far as we are able to judge from the pages of history, humanity is one in all ages. There are changes upon the great stream of human life, but they are surface changes; changes in manners and in methods, and even in the maxims of men; but underneath is the same human nature, asking the old questions, making the old complaints, and wondering with the old amazement. Humanity today is confronting the problems of long ago. In the process of the ages they come to the surface, and men attempting to answer them, find themselves again and again unable so to do, and decide presently that they will abandon the effort, and the problem sinks back in the tide and is forgotten. It reappears, and when it reappears we call it new, but "there is nothing new under the sun."

In the days of the Psalmist he said there were people who asked, "Who will shew us any good?" It is the language of a man who, looking back, is dissatisfied, looking around him is full of cynicism, and looking on is pessimistic. It is the language of restlessness and dissatisfaction. The question is being asked today by men in utterly different circumstances. Satiated men, overfull, full to repletion, come at last to the moment when they say, "Who will shew us any good?" Hungry men, conscious of the pinch of poverty and the pang of want, gaunt, desperate men say, "Who will shew us any good?"

Successful men, using the word as the world uses it, men who seem never to have failed in any enterprise their hands have touched. We watch them as they climb from point to point, until at last we think of them as having achieved the most remarkable success, and then they come and sit by us and say, "Who will shew us any good?" "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity."

Men who have failed, for some reason we are never able to discover, there are men who always seem to fail; trial after trial, attempt after attempt, effort after effort, but always beaten, always a little lower, until at last with heartbreak they say, "Who will shew us any good?"

Is it not worth our attention that men in such opposite circumstances make the same inquiry? Does not that fact suggest that the inquiry is a revelation of some underlying malady which is independent of circumstances; the full man, the hungry man, the man successful, and the man of failure are alike disappointed. Let us hear their challenge. It is sounding in our ears on every side. This age is peculiarly restless. There is a hot feverishness manifest on every hand expressing itself in a thousand ways and with ever varying emphasis. I venture to say that you can express the whole of it in this old, simple, blunt language of my text, "Who will shew us any good?" Is life worth living?

Have we any answer to that inquiry? In reply to that inquiry concerning the inquiry, I would say at once, yes, we have an answer. The answer is as old as the inquiry. The answer lies here upon the page of this ancient psalm. While men may quarrel about the authorship and about the date, I am infinitely more interested to discover its consciousness of human unrest and its answer. Here is the answer:

Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

Thou hast put gladness in my heart,

More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased.

In peace will I both lay me down and sleep;

For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

Am I not right in saying that is an all-sufficient answer? Has not the consciousness of this congregation agreed as to the accuracy of that answer? "Who will shew us any good?" said the restless, feverish men of the psalmist's day, and he replied, the source of good I will declare, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us"; the experience of good I will recount in your hearing,

Thou hast put gladness in my heart,

More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased;

and finally, I will give you the result of this goodness, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep." "Who will shew us any good?"

Is that the inquiry that was hot in your heart as you found your way to the sanctuary tonight, my brother? Is that the question you are asking, sister mine, after all the attempts to satisfy the craving of your fine nature with the things of dust and the excitements of the world? Tired, broken, disappointed, angry, cynical, do you say, Is life worth living?

I pray you listen in the sanctuary to this great answer, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us," which being interpreted, may thus be explained. This man, and those of us who take our stand by his side in testimony, declare that we find good where God found it and

finds it. If that declaration seems for the moment to wander a little away from the meaning of the Psalmist when he said, "Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance," I beseech you keep that word in mind while I depart to a distance only that I may come back to it to discover its richest meaning and profoundest intention. We find good where God found it. Where did He find it? We read those old and familiar words in the first chapter of Genesis. I want you to be quite simple and like little children, and see what the first chapter of Genesis says. Light, the earth and the sea with all its myriad forms, the sun in the heavens in the daytime, and the silver queen of night, all the flowers, the birds of the air, and the fish in the sea, and the great creatures on the earth, and man; and God said these things are good. "Who will shew us any good?" Wherever you are you are near to some of these things. God says these things are good. Turn a deaf ear to the man who tells you they are evil. They are not evil. Do not believe the man who affirms that this is a wicked world. It is an absolutely untrue statement if by the world you mean the earth God created. These things are good. Light is good. The earth with its store of wonders is good. The deep and fathomless ocean of which the finest thing in literature is in the Bible, "Thy way was in the sea, And Thy paths in the great waters." The ocean is good. All the flowers and fruits of the earth, the fauna and flora of nature are good. The brightness of the sun, and the sunlight in either winter or summer; the radiance of the moon and the pictures she flings upon the sky as she plays with the clouds; these things are good. The fish in the sea, the fowls of the air, in every sense are good. You are living in the midst of these things and are saying, "Who will shew us any good?"

There is something wrong somewhere. Step a little higher and look once again at the Genesis picture. This time not at isolated items which in every case God pronounced good, which in every case rested the heart of God, and at last so rested Him that He hallowed the day of rest as a memorial of His own satisfaction with the things in the midst of which you live your life and I live mine. Climb a little higher and what are the conditions which are presented to your vision in this early chapter. The first is that of the supremacy and sovereignty of God. The second is that of the viceregal dignity of man. He is made a little lower than God, and is given dominion over all the creation beneath his feet. The third is that the creation potentially is waiting for the touch of men in fellowship with God to answer him in laughter and flowers, the abundance of harvest, yielding up to him the deep and profound secrets that lie within her bosom. If you will take one step higher and look no longer at isolated items, no longer at the condition, but look at the spiritual suggestiveness of this first chapter of Genesis with its picture of original conditions, what do you find? A picture of fellowship. A picture of cooperation. A picture of happiness. A picture of fellowship between man and God, and between man and everything beneath him; and therefore, between everything beneath man and God, through the instrumentality and mediation of man.

Man in rebellious selfishness shuts God out of his life. There is the tragedy of it all. As God is my witness, the last thing I desire to do is to speak in metaphor, or to look at dim and distant pictures. If you came here tonight saying, "Who will shew us any good?," the root trouble with you is that you do not know God. I will make that affirmation on the positive side. No truly Christian man or woman ever asks that question. The man or the woman who by grace has come into fellowship with God says, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart. More than they have when their corn and their wine are increased."

"In peace will I both lay me down and sleep:

For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

If you are hot and restless, unable to sleep, unable to find anchorage, crying out in the agony of your soul, "Who will shew us any good?" Is life worth living? The reason is that you have lost touch with Eden. You have lost consciousness of God.

Now some of my young friends are saying, We understand the reason for that very peculiar reading in Genesis, but why did you turn to Matthew? I read that old story of the baptism of Jesus, and of the word that came out of heaven, because there, in the Man of Nazareth coming to fulness of human life and just entering upon the ministry to which He was ordained, I find God's new resting place. If that sentence sounds a strange one let me tell you just what I mean. In Genesis, God saw that His creation was very good, and He rested; and then came the tragedy of rebellion, the tragedy of sin, and man lost his rest. When man lost his rest through sin, God lost His rest, and never found it again until He rested in His Beloved. "In Whom I am well pleased." Pleased with earth and air and sun and flowers and fish and fowl, the whole creation; pleased with man, but wounded in man's apostasy, God never found rest again, until He found satisfaction in the perfection of the humanity of Jesus. If you should be inclined to charge me with imaginative interpretation, I pray you hear me while I quote the words of Jesus upon a memorable occasion. Passing through the Bethesday porches, He saw a man who had been for thirty-eight years in the grip of infirmity. He healed him, and when men criticized Him for working a miracle on the Sabbath day, He answered, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." You must interpret His word by His miracle. He claimed in that moment to be identified with God in activity, and what was the activity? It was activity in the presence of human limitation resulting from sin, the activity which wrought against the thing that spoiled until it was spoiled, and man remade.

But the earth when it was created did not yield up its secrets, did not sing its songs, did not come to the full manifestation of its potentialities. Man was there to discover its secrets under the guidance of God, to make it sing its songs, to bring its potentialities out into flower and glory. There are most curious notions abroad in the world about the garden of Eden. I have seen pictures of it. They are almost invariably pictures of impossible Italian gardens, through the wonderful pathways and amidst the curious flowers of which man is seen walking. I do not so read my Bible. I read, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden," that is, fixed its habitation, marked its limitations, arranged its boundaries, and put man "into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it"; made him responsible for it, put him there that he might delve, in order that presently to his unutterable amazement and growing wonder, flowers might grow, and fruits might ripen; put him there that through the process of the cultivation of that planted garden, under the government of God, he should bring to light its hidden secrets. Every rose that blooms lies potentially in mother earth, but it never blossoms to perfection until man's hand has worked in cooperation with Divine power. That is the picture that I find in Genesis. It is a picture of fellowship and cooperation, and therefore of happiness. No one in Eden's garden said "Who will shew us any good?" God said it was very good; and man, yielding obedience to the throne of the Eternal, and exercising authority over everything beneath him, said, it is very good. There was no restlessness, no feverishness, no disappointment, until—ah me, that is the root of the malady—I leave the until incomplete.

You say, "Who will shew us any good?" God help you to see the tragedy of all this. It is not true of all of you. Some of you find perfect rest in one little plot of your garden because you find God in

every blade of grass. "Who will shew us any good?" say they, and they cross the great Atlantic back and forth and play bridge and never see the beauties of the sea or listen to the anthem of the hurricane! They play cards ceaselessly, and then say, This voyage is very tiresome! "Who will shew us any good?"

Man out of harmony with God has lost the key to nature, and has lost the capacity for rest, and is hot and feverish and restless. The Man of Nazareth realized the first intention of God. In Genesis I read that man was given dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and the secrets of the earth. In this Book of Psalms I find the question asked, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Singing up out of the Psalmist's essential humanity came the answer,

Thou hast made him but little lower than God,

And crownest him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands,

Thou hast put all things under his feet.

But I cannot find that man, until I come to the gospel stories, and then the writer of the letter to the Hebrews quotes the ancient psalm and says, "We see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." If you watch Jesus at His work you will see the perfect Man mastering the secrets of nature. His miracles are attestations of His perfect humanity rather than demonstrations of His Deity.

Why do I linger here so long? Because to eyes that have ever looked upon the Son of God, the picture is full of glory and beauty. Yet I have another purpose. If in the things I have now endeavoured to say, you have caught a new consciousness of the perfection of the Man in Whom God found His rest, follow Him to the end, I pray you. What is the end of His life? The cross. What is the cross, "Who will shew us any good?" There He is, spoiled, mauled, murdered by men who ask that question. God came incarnate into the lives of the multitudes who had lost their vision of God, and "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." Therefore He was bruised and broken. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." We were wrong. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Incarnate God is upon the cross.

Is that the end? Is that the last word? By no means. Another man is hanging on a cross by His side, a thief, a robber, a malefactor. Out of the strange mystery of crucified iniquity there comes this weird and awful cry addressed to the central figure, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom." From the lips paling in death comes the regal answer, "Today shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise."

I see the first gleam, it is not the full light, but the first gleam, the accursed tree is the healing tree. The cross erected by man's sin is enwrapped in the Divine determination to save. By that sign of the cross, I know that all the tragedy is being dealt with, and that man can be remade. Behold Eden, and out of its ground came thorns, a curse upon man's sin. Behold the cross, and see the thorns are plaited into a crown bathed in blood on His brow. Coincidence do you say? There are no coincidences as accidents in the economy of God. Just as Mrs. Browning sang truly when she sang that the chaffinch implies the seraphim, so that crown of thorns reveals the way by which

God deals with the malady, in order to bring man back into the consciousness of rest and of goodness. By that cross men may be repossessed of Eden.

Yes, you say, you mean that if a man shall trust in that cross he will find his way to heaven. I certainly do mean that, blessed be God, but I mean something else. I mean that by the way of the cross, by man's restoration through that cross into the place of fellowship with God upon the ground of sin forgiven, man can find his way into Eden here and now in this world. Do not let us be afraid of the simple illustrations with which we began, the light, the earth, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, the flowers, the birds; all the things of the earth; man can go back and find delight and rest in all these. You have often heard the saints singing it, and they mean it if they know the cross,

Heaven above is softer blue,

Earth beneath is softer green;

Something lives in every hue,

Christless eyes have never seen.

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,

Flowers with deeper beauties shine,

Since I know as now I know

I am His and He is mine.

"Who will shew us any good?" The Psalmist's answer is the only one—

"Lord lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." You have lost this world, because you have lost God. You find no rest in your own garden because you are out of fellowship with the God of the garden. You are tired of everything in this life because God made you for Himself, and you cannot satisfy the clamant cry of your deep, profound life apart from Him. It is quite impossible.

Shall we not get back to Him? You say, The journey is so long. No, there is but a step betwixt thee and God. At this moment, while the preacher is uttering his last words, and while the men and women who are sitting next you know nothing and can know nothing of the transaction, you can return to Him, and the light of His countenance will be lifted upon you, and the gladness that is greater than the gladness of plenty of corn and wine will fill your heart, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will garrison your heart, because you are right with God. May He bring us to the trysting place in His grace, and constrain us to that return which means perfect rest.

Psalm 25:14. The Secret Of The Lord.

Psalm 25:14.

The Secret Of The Lord.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant.

Psalms 25:14

The sob of a great sorrow sounds throughout this psalm. The circumstances in which it was written are most evidently revealed by the words which occur through its process; desolation, affliction, distress, travail.

These and other kindred words, sobbing in sorrow, vibrant with pain, are the outstanding words of the psalm. Yet, its main message is not a message of despair, but rather of hope, of confidence. If at your leisure you will read this psalm again, you may discover that with which one cannot stay to deal at all, particularly now. The singer depressed by sorrow, yet perpetually rises above it; profoundly conscious of the overwhelming and crushing pressure that rests upon him, nevertheless spreads his wings and, rising, the sob becomes a song. The sorrow is made the occasion of the psalm. It opens and closes with prayer. The first seven verses constitute a prayer, and the last seven verses constitute a prayer; or, rather, and more accurately, the first paragraph and the last paragraph constitute one great prayer; and between these two paragraphs is the central one, beginning at the eighth verse and ending with the fifteenth. That central paragraph is occupied almost wholly with the contemplation and declaration of the goodness of God; not that these things are confined to that central paragraph; they run like a major note throughout all the minor wailing of the sorrowful experience, which created the necessity for, and found expression in, the psalmist's prayer.

Out of the central song of contemplation and declaration, we have taken this one verse, because it is the secret of the song in the midst of sorrow, the explanation of the reason why this man was able, even in the day of darkness, to lift a face radiant with light. It is impossible to escape the conviction, if the psalm be carefully studied, that in this declaration we have found the secret of this man's triumph over pain. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

My message tonight is to those who are sorrowful, a message to which I am constrained for a reason which I cannot give. I am content to answer the call, and attempt to lead such of you as are in sorrow, stress, strain, difficulty of any kind to an examination of this wonderful word of the psalmist of old, very familiar to all of us who have known anything of our Bibles from childhood, and full of wonderful suggestiveness. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

First, let us quietly meditate upon the blessing that is here referred to, "The secret of the Lord." Second, let us solemnly consider the condition upon which we may enter into the experience of

the blessing described, "Them that fear Him." In conclusion, let us notice one result of the blessing which the psalmist describes, "He will shew them His covenant."

"The secret of the Lord." We need to be careful with this word. There comes to mind another of the great verses of the Bible, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." I cite it only that I may ask you to remember that the word "secret" in that verse is an entirely different one from the word "secret" in our text. "Secret things"; that is, quite literally, veiled things, hidden things, things that cannot be discovered, things that cannot be revealed. There are always such, even for the saints, to the end of the journey; the secret, veiled, hidden mysteries of life and of government. But the word here is quite other, and I propose this evening to adopt a method of interpretation, wholly Biblical. I am going to illuminate my text by four other texts in which the same Hebrew word occurs, but in which it is used with a slight variation of application and of intention. If we can gather from these four the thoughts which they suggest, I believe we shall find something of the wealth and comfort that lie in this old and familiar declaration of the psalmist, "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Let me be understood. The verses to which I shall now refer do not, in the whole of their statements, throw any light upon this passage; but the occurrence in them of the same word will help us to understand the richness of suggestion in our text.

I turn first of all to Psalms 111:1, and I find these words: "Praise ye Jehovah. I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart, In the council of the upright and in the congregation." We may therefore, with perfect accuracy, say that "The council of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Let us turn to Psalms 55:14 : "We took sweet counsel together; We walked in the house of God and with the throng." The word of my previous reference was "council"; "Counsel" is yet another word with a slightly different suggestion. We should be perfectly justified in reading, "The counsel of Jehovah is with them that fear Him."

Let us turn to the Book of Proverbs 3:32, and we have the word of our text translated in the same way, but another suggestion is made by its use in the light of the context: "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His friendship is with the upright." With the suggestion of the word there we shall deal presently.

One other reference, again from the Book of Proverbs 11:13 : "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Let us now examine these four verses, not for their own statements, but for their use of our word, in order that we may find out what the psalmist meant in all fulness and richness when he said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

When the psalmist said, "In the council of the upright," he used the word in its very simplest sense, a sense more truly in harmony with its root idea than that of any other of the verses we have read. The idea is that of a company of persons sitting together, of one mind, of one heart; of a company of people separated from the heathen and from strangers, unified, of one heart, with single purpose, at absolute agreement with each other. It is a very beautiful idea, rarely realized in the experience of any company of men and women. The poetic and beautiful idea of the psalmist is that of the gathering together of such as have no controversy as between themselves—a perfect company. Once in the history of humanity, so far as I know, there has been such a gathering. It

was on the day of Pentecost, when they were all together of one mind, and of one heart, and of one spirit, under the dominion of one Lord; with one master passion in their heart, that of obedience to Him. It was soon lost, and we have never regained it. That, however, is the idea of the Hebrew word; perfect union because of no discord; perfect harmony therefore. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Jehovah sits in council—that is, in perfect union, in perfect harmony—with such as fear Him. There is no controversy between them and Himself, no controversy between Him and such.

The word suggests the consciousness of perfect friendship, though no word be spoken. It suggests that friendship which is equal to absolute silence. Not the friendship—let me carefully safeguard this—that must be silent, but the friendship that can be silent. Turn the thought back for a moment, for the sake of illustration, to the simplest things of love and friendship in your lives. You have not many friends in the world. Mark that well. Just a few friends; many acquaintances, thank God for them all; but not many people that you can be absolutely safe in being silent with. I sometimes think that in all human relationships the last sign of friendship is this ability to be quiet. The acquaintance will entertain the stranger, and weary him by talking to him; but the friend will sit by his side silently, knowing that there is no need for speech; in mutual understanding, with no controversy, no conflict, nothing that has to be hidden. There are children of God who know this secret in its height and depth. We know that they know by the serenity and calmness and dignity of their friendship with God. That is the first thought, the council of the upright, the assembly, the meeting, the sitting together. The idea of speech is not in the word in this connection. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

In Psalms 55:14, the word, as its context shows, has a slightly different meaning, or, rather, shall I say a slightly different suggestion? Let us hear it: "We took sweet counsel together." Here the silence is broken; here is speech, but it is the speech of familiar conversation. It is a step in advance of the last. The word in its use in this psalm suggests the freedom in speech that comes when friends understand each other well enough to be silent. I am afraid that that is awkwardly stated. Yet some of you know at once what I mean. When friendship can afford to be silent, then speech is the speech of friendship. I never can make such a reference as this without there coming to my mind a passage from a book written by Mrs. Craik. Many of you are familiar with it, and those who know it best will least object to hearing it again. She says: "Oh, the joy, the inexpressible delight of being alone with your friend, when you can pour out everything that is in your soul, all you think, wheat and chaff together, knowing that your listening friend will with the breath of kindness blow away the chaff and keep only the grain." That is the kind of speech that comes out of the capacity for silence. "We took sweet counsel together." We talked to each other by the way, amid the busy throng, in the courts of the temple. We talked, and each said to the other all that was in the heart. This is the freedom that comes when friends understand each other. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The secret of the Lord is with the man who has no secret from Him. Who pours out before Him all the things that are in his own heart, God can talk too of the things that are in His heart, and in His purpose, and in His will.

Can God speak freely to me? I make the question personal. I had rather do it than put the question to you. I do not propose a public answer, but a private investigation. Can God speak freely to me? This age often affirms that God does not speak to men now as He used to do. I will not argue it save to say that the measure in which that seems to be true is the measure in which men have

ceased to talk to Him. If I have a secret from Him, then He cannot have His secret with me. When I have learned friendship with God so as to be able to pour out everything before Him, then He can speak freely and unreservedly to me.

I turn to the use of the word in Proverbs 3:32 : "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His secret is with the upright." The setting of the word there suggests another phase of the same great and gracious and wonderful fact. Not now the silence; not now that familiar and confidential speech in which each pours out to each the deepest and truest things of the life. Here the thought is rather that of advice and guidance. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." To such He can give advice, can guide, can say behind them as they walk the path all wrapped in mystery, "This is the way: walk ye in it."

Once again, while the verse seems to have least to do with our theme, the word is used in its fullest sense in Proverbs 11:13 : "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets." Secrets—what are they? Particular confidences, the last and most intimate demonstrations of friendship. As we grow older we do not talk so much about secrets. Take two children, especially girls, who are friends—close friends in the sweet, bonnie days of their winsome childhood, and the last proof of friendship is that one tells the other a secret! You smile at it. You have lost something since the days in which you were young enough to have secrets, and to tell them. Why do we cease talking about secrets as we get older? Because we are afraid someone will betray us. Why? Because we have so often betrayed someone else.

When Jesus Christ took the child, and put him in the midst, He was right. The child is nearer the ideal of the Kingdom of heaven than anyone in this house tonight. So we get back to the children, and their secrets constitute the last seal of their friendship. God help us all to see the beauty of it, when two children have secrets between each other.

"The secret of the Lord is with the upright." We do not want any exposition of it if we will thus get back to childhood and look at the children. God can tell His secrets to some people. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do? For I have known him." And He did not hide it from Abraham. Lot, the successful, progressive, business man knew nothing; but the old-fashioned man of faith got the secret of the Lord. Do not tell me that is old history. It is as fresh as the morning. There are men to whom God can tell His secrets still, the deep confidences of His own heart, of His own economy, of His own purposes. They cannot tell them to other people. Do not misunderstand me. The secrets of the Lord are not for publication. "I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth such a one caught up even to the third heaven... and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." God told Paul secrets, and you have never found out what they were. They were secrets that drove him and made him, and the revelation of the secret is not the telling of it, but the manifestation of the changed and glorified life resulting from it.

Mark the four things, then. I will but name them. The first thought is that of sitting in restful silence because there is no controversy. The second is that of mutual conversation. Just two, telling and listening. Then counsel, advice, guidance, and finally special confidences. The secret of the Lord.

Oh, sorrowful heart, God comfort you with this tonight. This is to be able to do what this man did in this psalm, say everything, the thing of sorrow, of desolation, of travail. The man who knows this

will never play the hypocrite in the presence of God. He will never pretend resignation when he feels rebellion. He will pour out the rebellion in the listening ear of heaven, and God is never angry with that. To know this is to have found the light that turns the tear of sorrow into the medium of the rainbow of hope. "The secret of the Lord." Who does not desire it, long for it? To be able to sit in silence with God; to talk to Him and to hear Him talk to me; to know that when I talk He hears, and that if I listen He will speak; to have immediately and directly, not as the result of any mechanical contrivance or priestly intervention, his guidance, His counsel; some day, perhaps, to have Him tell me some secret.

Ere we pass from the brief meditation on the blessing itself, I must ask you to notice another word. Those of you who followed my reading of the psalm, perhaps wondered why, when it says Lord, I said Jehovah. Simply because it is the actual word. Every occasion in this psalm where the word Lord appears, the Hebrew word is Jehovah. I emphasize it because it is a significant word. This psalm, which is a sob of sorrow merging into a song of salvation, the psalm which has at its center this revealing verse that we are trying to think about, through all its process refers to God as Jehovah; not Elohim, which suggests His might, not the secret of the Mighty One; not Adonahy, which suggests His sovereignty, but Jehovah, which suggests His adaptability, His adaptation to the capacity of men and the needs of men. "The secret of Jehovah" the becoming One, the One Who becomes in all circumstances, to all men, the thing necessary to their succour and for their salvation.

Let us think for a brief moment of the condition. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Though the distinction has often been made, at this moment we must make it again. Let us understand what fear really is. There are two kinds of fear. They have been defined as servile and filial. I sometimes define them thus. There is a fear which is fear lest God should hurt me. There is a fear which is fear lest I should grieve God. This last is the fear referred to in my text. They are utterly opposed. Servile fear dreads God, and issues in hatred, in deceit and in ultimate ruin. But this fear, how does it issue? Note the first fruit of this fear. I am certainly in the humor tonight for Bible definition. Let me go back to one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament, to Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." From that, turn over to chapter 16:6, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." I am content with these two passages for our present purpose. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." What is it to fear Him? To hate evil and to depart from evil. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who loves his sin. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who, conscious of sin, hating it, yet refuses to abandon it. Is it true that we know nothing of being able to sit in silent fellowship with God? Is it true that we know nothing of holding familiar intercourse with God? Is it true that we know nothing of what it is to hear God directly, immediately, counseling, advising, guiding? Is it true that He cannot tell us a secret? Why not? There is only one reason. It is that our sin is shutting us out from God. The old prophetic word is a living word; it is the whole truth in a sentence for this hour. Hear me with patience. Have you been reverently, but decidedly, amused by the meditation of this hour? Have you said this is all a preacher's dreaming about the secret of the Lord? I can call witnesses in this house if it be necessary that the thing I have said is a thing of sober and immediate truth. There are men and women here who know the secret of the Lord. I charge you remember if you know nothing of these things, if the language is foreign to you, then it is because of your own sin. Your sin—not your father's sin, God has dealt with that in the economy of His grace, and can break its power—your

sin, your persistence in some way of evil, your definite decision and determination not to depart from evil. The crookedness of your business methods! The dishonesty between yourself and other men! Some sin of which friend and neighbour nothing know until this moment, but in which you still indulge. Your sins are the things that shut God out of your consciousness. I pray you pause and consider carefully before you affirm that the religious affirmations of past generations and the religious declarations of living men are false. Inquire whether it be not that you have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, that the spiritual sense is so blunted by your own sin that it is impossible for you to discover the very things in the midst of which you live. "The secret of Jehovah," the friendship of God, living, actual, personal, positive, is with them that fear Him; with such as hate evil and depart from evil. God will not give Himself to such as love evil and persist in evil. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

One final word. The psalmist gives us one result of the great and wonderful blessing. "He will show them His covenant." What is a covenant? An engagement entered into. The covenant of Jehovah with His people is an engagement into which He has entered with them, and I may add today, for I speak under the shadow of the cross, the engagement which Jehovah enters into with His people through His Son. The old prophet of lamentations and tears foresaw and most wonderfully described the great and gracious covenant. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." The first application was to the house of Israel, and will be fulfilled to the letter. The principle within it is the principle of the covenant, an engagement entered into between God and His people. He enters into an engagement with all such as hate evil and, desiring to depart from evil, find their way to Him through the Man anointed, appointed to be Saviour and Judge.

"He will show them His covenant." The thought is not that He will make plain to them the terms of the covenant, but that they shall see the ratification of it in the experience of their life.

The fear of the Lord is to have His secret; with what result? We shall watch through all the processes, and disciplines, and trials, and sorrows of life, God's faithfulness to His covenant with us. There will be many a day when, by reason of our own frailty, our own fearful and trembling hearts, we shall wonder whether or not God has forgotten; but before many hours have passed we shall be ashamed of our wonder. Has it not been so? Look back, dear sorrowing heart, tonight if it be possible; look back out of the midst of the present stress and strain and difficulty. There are other days in the past—dark, mysterious days—when everything seemed to be failing, when we were foolish enough to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me." Then come a little way forward from that place at which you have been looking, and you had to say with Jacob again, "The God of the covenant has been with me all my days." Is it not so? The showing of the covenant is not wholly postponed to the life beyond. Then it will be perfectly shown. Then—ah, then—and we know it well, who know anything of the secret of Jehovah, then we shall look back over all the way, and we shall sing, "Right was the pathway leading to this." But we sing it already in measure. The music is already being wrought out into clearness to our astonished ears. He is showing us His covenant.

Those who have been in His fear longest, and know His secret most profoundly, can trace the meaning of this text in its last declaration. There are men listening to me tonight, and women also, who look back over a pilgrimage of faith far longer than that of which I have had experience, and it is good sometimes to take a backward glance. There lie the strange, devious paths of life; hours of agony and hours of deliverance; strange, perplexing phantoms of the night that came gliding over the storm-tossed seas, and then the voice, "It is I, be not afraid." He is ever showing us the covenant. That He will continue to do, until if our Lord shall tarry and we pass through the valley of the shadow, then there will be light in the valley, and the gloaming and the glooming will merge into the gleaming glory of the unveiled face of God. "He will show them His covenant."

We are sure of the last anthem because "The secret of the Lord" is already ours. Then may we learn to set the sorrows of the hour in the light of the present consciousness of God, and the sob of sorrow shall become the song of salvation.

Psalm 27:13. The Tragedy Of Life Without Faith.

Psalm 27:13.

The Tragedy Of Life Without Faith.

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Psalms 27:13

The psalm from which our text is taken is a song of conflicting emotions, in which victory is on the side of the nobler. As we listen to the singer we discover the opposing forces at war within the soul. Faith opposes itself to fear, joy strenuously contends with sorrow, songs resolutely lift themselves for the silencing of sighing.

The fear, the sorrow, the sighing are patent. Note the questions at the commencement of the psalm which even though they be prefaced by affirmations of faith, reveal the assault of fear, "... Whom shall I fear?" "... Of whom shall I be afraid?" Observe the tumult of circumstances as revealed in the phrases that run like a dirge through the psalm; evil doers came to seek to eat up my flesh; mine adversaries and my foes. An host against me; war against me! The day of trouble! Mine enemies round about me! My father and my mother have forsaken me. Mine enemies, mine adversaries, false witnesses, such as breathe out cruelty! There can be no escape from the sense of the tumult and trouble in the midst of which the singer lived.

Nevertheless, the Psalm in its entirety has not made this impression upon the heart of man. It is preeminently a Psalm of faith, of joy, of song. Note the affirmations with which it opens. "The Lord is my light and my salvation... the Lord is the strength of my life"—or even better, more accurately—"the Lord is the (stronghold) of my life." Observe the affirmations answering the questions. My heart will not be afraid! I will be confident! Mine head shall be lifted up! I will sing, yea, I will sing!

Then observe, after the opening stanzas of praise, the prayer that breaks from the heart of the singer, and notice how through the brief prayer there throbs the note of perfect confidence mastering that of overwhelming pain!

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice:

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee;

Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Hide not Thy face far from me;

Put not Thy servant away in anger:

Thou hast been my help;

Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

When my father and my mother forsake me,

Then the Lord will take me up.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord;

And lead me in a plain path,

Because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies...

For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe:
out cruelty.

Finally consider the last stanza of the Psalm, marking well its appeal;

Wait on the Lord:

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: and let thy heart take courage;

Wait, I say, on the Lord.

The spiritual experience revealed in this song is one which, I venture to affirm, we all most earnestly desire. The tumult of sorrow we know. Is the triumph possible? Is it possible to know triumph in the midst of such tumultuous circumstances of grief? We wonder, we question, we doubt. Our sorrows are so subtle, our pain is so poignant, our difficulties are so complex, our circumstances are so peculiar.

Well, let us consider the reason of this singer's triumph. It is, of course, declared in the opening affirmations—

The Lord is my light and my salvation;...

The Lord is the stronghold (strength) of my life....

It is illustrated in many subsequent statements which I have already quoted. From the standpoint of the soul's experience, the secret is most forcefully revealed in the words of my text. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

A critical examination of the text seems at first destructive of its simplest meaning. You will observe that in the Revised Version and the Authorized, the first three words are italicized; "I had fainted..." In Miles Coverdale's translation, that wonderful version that has been, thank God, preserved for us in the Book of Common Prayer, the phrase has yet more of emphasis, "I should utterly have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." There also, the whole of the words are italicized. These words constitute an exegetical gloss, introduced by the translators to fill up some gap, some hiatus, to complete the sense of the text. As a matter of fact we must omit them, if we are to be careful in our consideration of the text.

What have we left? "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." When we yet further examine the text, we find that the word "unless" is not found in some manuscripts; neither is it found in the Septuagint, in the Syriac, or in the Vulgate. In the manuscripts in which the word is found, in the Masoretic Text, it is dotted over and beneath, which suggests that it is a spurious word.

As to the first words, "I had fainted," we certainly must omit them. The word "unless," I am not prepared to omit. The absence of it from some manuscripts is not conclusive evidence. As old Hengstenberg suggests with quaint humor, the Massorites evidently lost their feet at this point. The sense of the passage demands the word. The statement without it is incongruous, following as it does immediately after the words, "... false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." When the word is retained the whole text becomes a gasp, an exclamation! It is an imperfect sentence, indeed, no sentence at all, but a cry which is almost a groan. It is completed by a revealing hiatus, an eloquent silence. "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" Then the translators attempted to fill this gap, and inserted the words, "I had fainted," or "I had utterly fainted." I can understand why they put them in. They were trying to write what the man was thinking. He did not do so. He left the blank, suggesting a something that could not be expressed. "I had fainted!" Nay, verily, that is altogether too weak. The horror was greater than that. There are moments in which the soul cannot faint. That is the sense of my text. This man who sings so finely, whose music marches to major strains, all the while mastering the minor, pauses and reveals the deep secret of that major music in this half-finished exclamation: "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The horror is too profound for words; the terror is too terrible for utterance. It is nameless.

This, then, is a brief word of wonderful unveiling of the soul's consciousness of some lonely singer in the long ago, perchance David, more probably Hezekiah, I know not—but of some soul who had been looking out upon life. Poetically referring to the thing upon which he looked by the phrase, "The land of the living," a phrase describing the earth as he saw it, the dwelling place of men; he said: "Unless I had seen more than the land of the living, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord there—!"

Leaving from this moment the peculiarly personal notes of the psalm, let us consider the essential thoughts of the text along two lines, first, the land of the living as it appears in itself; second, the land of the living as it appears in the light which is here described as the goodness of the Lord.

First then, the land of the living as it appears in itself. We must introduce this line of meditation by reminding ourselves of the viewpoint. It is not that of childhood. Childhood never sees the land of the living as this man saw it. Childhood, thank God, is beneficently sheltered and cannot see the things that some of us see so clearly and so tragically today. No child looks tragically upon life. Oh God! must I not amend that to say no child ought to do so! I fear there are some children who do, but it is not the natural viewpoint of the child.

Once again, it is not the natural viewpoint of youth. As Browning sang, "Youth sees but half." Youth is only intended to see half. It has not yet seen life in its entirety.

This is the viewpoint of that which, for lack of a better term, I may describe as maturity, the viewpoint of the man or the woman who has been compelled to face all the facts of life, who has passed through childhood's years with their sweetness and their softness, their laughter and their fun, who has gone beyond the golden age of youth, who has seen the colors fade upon the eastern sky and has tramped under the grey or under the blazing heat.

What, then, are the experiences of such? The land of the living is to them the place of weakness. There comes to us inevitably sooner or later this overwhelming sense of inability. We look back over the pathway we have traveled. We look at the things we have done, and looking back, we note how imperfect they all have been. We look carefully at the things we are doing today, and the sense of imperfection is even more appalling in the presence of immediate service than when we look at that which has been rendered. Then, ah, then, we look on, and there are so many things to be done which we shall never do, intentions that will never be fulfilled, work that has to be dropped and left and cannot be carried out. Not that the work does not need doing, not that the intention was not glorious, not that the vision was untrue, but that we are unable to do it. The appalling sense of inability, incompetence, weakness!

The land of the living is the place of disappointment. The sense of disillusionment comes inevitably to the human soul. We become disappointed with ourselves; we become disappointed in others. We become disappointed in the matter of our hopes and our aspirations. Many of them are not realized; and those we do realize, are they ever what we thought they would be? Are we ever satisfied? Is it not so, that when we have climbed the mountain height upon which we set our eyes and towards which we have striven strenuously, we are disappointed because there stretches away beyond us other mountain heights shutting us in, and we have not reached the level we thought we should have reached when that mountain height was climbed.

The land of the living is the place of mystery. Oh! this tangle of human life; the injustice of things; the perplexing problems that fret the soul; the thousand questions that perpetually force themselves out of the agony of life and find no answer. By mystery are we hemmed in; we do not know; we cannot explain; and the sense grows upon us with the passing of the years.

The land of the living is the place of sin. I use the word resolutely. Employ any other term that may better help you. However much we may argue concerning it, and whatever philosophy we may employ to attempt to explain it, there is this appalling consciousness of that which is wrong, out of joint, and not out of joint merely, but diseased withal. The terrific sense of the presence of the poison, of its power, and its pollution.

Again, and let this be the last word in the dark and dreary outlook, the land of the living is the place of death. Death, indiscriminating, ruthless, ghastly! Do you tell me that you have lost your hatred of death? Then you are abnormal, and your abnormality is not the abnormality of health but of disease! Death is ghastly, death is hateful! Death that touches the little child in its sweetness, and the child is gone! Death, that strikes down the standard-bearer at the head of the army and leaves a gap that cannot be filled! Death, that by some accident or catastrophe sweeps upon the soldiers of the Cross and the servants of sin alike and engulfs them together so that the place that knew them knows them no more.

Unless there is something more to say than all that, what a tragedy life is, what a horror! The land of the living, this life in the midst of which we find ourselves, without God, what does it mean? No final wisdom or knowledge; no adequate strength to deal with things; no authority that moves right onward toward a goal; no possibility of restoration. I do not wonder that this singer gasped out, "... Unless I had believed!..."

But the gasp was but an interlude in a song. Let us then look again at the land of the living as it appears in the light of the goodness of the Lord. Immediately we are halted by a phrase that suggests a truth, "... the goodness of the Lord!" The truth suggested by the phrase is that of the Lord of goodness, the biblical conception of God, the conception of God which inspired this song, the conception which inspired all the songs of this great Psalter. Shining through the whole of them in their unveiling of the human soul is the light of the God of revelation, the God of the Bible.

Goodness is one of the richest words in our vocabulary if we will but interpret it by the teaching of the biblical revelation. A greater word than holiness is this, a finer word than righteousness, including both, but having other qualities, which suffuse them with light and tenderness and mercy. The Hebrew word here so translated means radical and fundamental rightness, but it was a word that was used and translated by other words, beauty, gladness, prosperity. The Lord of goodness is the Lord of all that is right, all that is beautiful, all that is glad, and all that makes for the true prosperity of human life. He is the Lord of goodness, for He is the fountain head from which all these things proceed and the means by which these things become real in the experience of the race.

What light does this fact of God fling upon this strange, weird, life of ours? How does it help us? In what sense does belief in this God turn the sighing into the song, the fear into faith, the sorrow into joy? What are the things that make the triumph note of a song like this that thrills with pain?

I affirm in the first place that in the light of this revelation we come to understand that life is related to Him, and therefore that it is greater than all its experiences; creating their possibilities, but refusing to be exhausted in them. There is a saying of Jesus which we quote perpetually, and never perhaps without seeing some new light in it. "And this is age-abiding life"—that is life which is the life of the age, which cannot be destroyed in an age, or exhausted in an age, which runs through the whole of them, and touches them, and changes them, but is not changed by them—"to know Thee, the only true God...." Now mark what this means in the case of human life. In the light of this revelation I come to the profound consciousness that my life is greater than all its experiences.

Life itself, whatever mystery it may have to face, whatever pain it may have to endure, whatever darkness it may have to go through, whatever agony it may have to bear, whatever sins it may have to mourn, life is vast. It is a Divine creation, and it is thus to this very God of goodness. Therefore, all these experiences of life, being related to Him, take on a new meaning, have a new value, have a new suggestiveness.

I have said that the land of the living is the place of weakness, that we become conscious of inability. In the light of this revelation of man's relationship to God, we discover that the sense of inability is a suggestion of possibility. I cannot do these things, and yet they are things that are to be done and can be done. The fact that I have seen the vision of them is in itself worthwhile.

Human life will be measured presently and ultimately not by what it has achieved, but by what it set itself out to achieve, which, if it but be related to God, it will achieve in spite of all the darkness and the apparent disappointment of the present hour. That I know my own weakness is a sign of my own power. That I know there are things I do not know is a sign of my capacity to know the things I do not know. When a man says, "I cannot know the Infinite," in that acknowledgment he confesses that he knows it. He cannot include all the facts that are within it within his present consciousness. But to recognize the Infinite is in some sense to know it. That is at once a demonstration of relationship to God and a result of relationship to God. It would be a dark day indeed for the race if men became satisfied with the things that they have done and the things they are doing and imagined that when they had done their piece of work, all work had forever been completed. It is this very sense of inability which becomes the inspiration of endeavor for it rises out of a sense of possibility.

Again, the experience of the land of the living as a place of disappointment is after all but a demonstration of high possibilities to the man who has seen the face of God and rejoiced in the light. Noble disappointment is a demonstration of the splendor of things seen although never realized. Art thou disappointed with thyself tonight? Then know this, that if thou hast seen a vision of thyself which is finer and higher, in the seeing there was value. The goodness of the Lord in the land of the living is that which makes a man, broken and disappointed with himself, look up into the Face of Deity and resolutely and daringly say, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me. If you take that away from me, then I despair in the midst of life. But leave me that, and,

With spirit elate,

The mire and the fog I press through,

For heaven shines under the cloud

Of the day that is after tomorrow."

If the land of the living be the place of mystery, to the man who has seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living or who believes to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, the very fact of mystery is but the expression of profounder things, greater and more glorious. In the twilight of the Jewish Dispensation, the great founder, the lawgiver, uttered words that are to us today fresh and wonderful because of their immediate value; "The secret things" are the things that fill the soul with fear, the things of that realm of mystery which lies about us in life; the problems that confront us; the questions we ask and no answer comes; the secret things! Well, what of them? "They belong to the Lord, and the revealed things are for us and for our children." When we believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, we know that there are no secret things from Him, that what we know not, He knows, that what amazes us never amazes Him, that the things for which we find no solution lie naked and open to His vision. Then if there are things which assault us and we cannot understand why they are permitted, the fact that they are permitted no longer troubles us, for He has permitted them, and He can make no mistake. The whole problem of evil lies there illuminated, and there and there alone the heart can find its rest.

The land of the living is the land of sin. The consciousness of sin is born of the conviction of holiness. Apart from the conviction of holiness there is no consciousness of sin. Then let us remember that in the full biblical revelation of God, at the very heart and center of the awful

holiness that appals us, there burns and flames the infinite compassion which becomes passion and acts there-through for the saving of sinning souls. Woe is me, I am a sinner! Unless I believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! But believing that and seeing that and knowing God, then even my sin shall not make me afraid!

And what of death? Our protest against death is the protest of life, and our horror of death is the horror of health. When once we see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, we discover that death is not in His original intention for humanity. The scientists may tell us it is but the fulfilment of the natural order. We affirm that it is the carrying out of an unnatural condition resulting from human sin, that there should not have been any place for death had there been no failure and no sin. The goodness of the Lord in the land of the living transfigures the sackcloth and declares that through death there is the life, and beyond death there is a resurrection. If you take these things away from me, then death is still a horror so terrible that the only relief from it is in itself. I am not surprised that men who lose the Face of God end their lives, "... unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" Without that light, life is not worthwhile; life is a tragedy. Blot out this God from the heavens, deny me the Deity of the Face that shines in human tenderness for the unveiling of the Divine, take this God of the Bible away from me, then life is some hideous mockery and sport of demons. Unless! Oh! the horror of it, the nameless horror of it! Fainted? Nay, the soul becomes too quick and alive, with very agony and despair, challenge and revolt, hot anger and rebellion, ever to faint. Rebellion against what? Against the tragedy, the weakness, the disappointment, the mystery, the sin, and the death, the whole dark outlook!

Ah! but we have believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; we have believed because we have seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and we believe still to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. We believe that all the things which in themselves fill the soul with fear are held in the grip and grasp of the Great Father of an infinite grace.

At last there will be some explanation of all the pain and the mystery and the disappointment.

What then is to be the true attitude of the soul? Let the psalmist tell us as he ends his song.

"... Wait on the Lord." Or as the American version has it, "... Wait for the Lord. Be strong, and let thine heart take courage. Yea, wait thou for the Lord."

Those who have seen the Face of God are those who have seen it in the Face of Jesus. This is the ultimate in the biblical revelation. Through all the Old Testament we have prophecies, hopes, gleams of light, rosy flecks of a dawn yet to be. Would we view God's brightest glory? we must look in Jesu's Face! To the soul who has seen the Face of God in the Face of Jesus, faith is forever against fear, joy lays hold upon sorrow, and songs rise up against sighing.

What then is the condition? Wait! There is nothing more difficult to do. It is much easier to work for God than to wait for God. To dare in active service is a far less wearisome thing than to wait, and yet by waiting the victory comes as well as the vision.

Moses, nurtured in the Court of Pharaoh, came to an hour when there was born within him a passion to deliver. What was his mistake? The mistake of imagining that in the hour when that

passion was born, he was able to do the thing he desired to do. He had to wait for forty years. He always had to wait. In the hour of the wondrous deliverance, when by plague and judgment God set His people free, Moses did no other than wait. It is by waiting upon the Lord that the victory will be won. His goodness will be seen in the land of the living in proportion as His people wait upon Him.

I repeat as I finish, that this outlook is not that of childhood, and the final message is not for the child; the outlook is not that of youth, and the final message is not for youth.

The outlook is that of the men and women who have looked at life, looked at it all, and who if they have had nothing other to look at than life, have gasped with horror and been faint with fear! If such have believed to see the goodness of the Lord, then He teaches them this lesson, that in their waiting, they give Him His opportunity to work. He worketh for him that waiteth for Him.

Psalm 32. Sin, Sorrow, Silence.

Psalm 32. Sin, Sorrow, Silence.

Scripture: Psalms 32

Whoever wrote this Psalm knew much of spiritual experience on ordinary human levels. It is difficult sometimes to understand how some of these psalms were written so long before the coming of Christ. They seem to have been written by men who were almost as familiar as we are with all the great facts of the grace of God, as that grace was made known in Christ Jesus.

Among all of them, I do not know one that has more of the evangelical spirit than this, the thirty-second. Who that knows anything of the abounding and abundant grace of God has not at some time or another found a suitable vehicle of expression in its language? Observe the experiences that thrill throughout it. Sin is here, not as a theory, but as an experience. It was written by a man who knew sin, who knew it in his own life, who knew its bitterness, its burden, its hateful-ness; who had been very profoundly under conviction of sin.

Here, also, is the experience of sorrow, sorrow described in figurative language as the overflowing of waters; described, although not in words, yet inferentially, as the sweeping of a great storm; described, again, by inference as a prison house. All these figures are here, not actually named, but suggested by the terms that the psalmist used to describe his victory over sorrow.

The psalmist knew also that desolating experience of ignorance with which we are all familiar. I do not mean merely intellectual ignorance, but spiritual ignorance, the ignorance of not knowing which way to take, the ignorance of perplexity about the things of life created by the problems that vex the soul. All these experiences of the soul are grouped and referred to in this psalm.

Yet observe again that the things to which I have referred, sin as an experience, sorrow as an experience, ignorance or perplexity, or, if you will, silence—for I think the word "silence" is a most eloquent word to express what we feel when we do not see the way, or know the way, when there is no light upon the pathway, or voice speaking to us—sin, sorrow, silence; all the experiences of the human heart are here in order that over against them may be placed the things that correct them, the things that cancel them. If this man knew sin he knew forgiveness. If this man was familiar with sorrow he had experienced a wonderful succor. If this man was conscious of silence he had been brought into the place of instruction, and of a speech that had become to him the very guide and counsel of all his days.

Therefore, this is a psalm that thrills to tireless music, and makes its perpetual appeal to the heart of those who share these common human experiences.

Now, let us look a little more closely. First of all, observe its opening exclamation and its closing appeal. Between these we shall find a very definite movement of experience. When this man sat down to write this psalm he began with a doxology. It is the fashion of the Church today to close services with doxologies. The fashion of the Bible is to begin with the doxology. We find it in the

psalms and in the epistles. There are doxologies at the close also, but the great writers of the Bible constantly began with a note of praise and gave their reasons for praise afterwards.

The first verse of the psalm reads thus:

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Whereas that may be a very accurate and beautiful sentence, in the Hebrew it reads somewhat differently; this is what the psalmist wrote:

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

As a matter of fact, in that first verse there is no personal pronoun. The psalmist was not describing an experience in which man has any place, or any part, except as the result of something that God has done for him, and provided for him.

It is an exclamation resulting from contemplation and meditation. All the experience which he was about to describe in the psalm found its vent in his opening doxology. The blessings are two: transgressing forgiven, and sin covered. Every form of sin is recognized in the course of the psalm. Presently there is a reference to iniquity. All these are different words, conveying different ideas of sin.

The Hebrew word, "transgression," means the actual, wilful wrongdoing of which a man is conscious, and of which he is guilty. "Sin" is the common Hebrew word which has the same significance as the common Greek word, namely, missing the mark. No day passes in my life in which I do not sin, which does not necessarily mean that I sin wilfully but that I come short of the glory, I fail of the highest, I do not attain unto the best. After thirty years at least of the experience of following Jesus Christ, the apostle had to say, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect.... I count not myself yet to have apprehended." In so much as I have not attained, in so much as I am not yet made perfect, in so much as I have not yet apprehended, I am a sinner, I miss the mark, I come short, I do not reach the standard.

There are thus two ideas in this opening doxology: one wilful and positive sin, the other, missing the mark, in which will may have no part. Both are dealt with; the transgression is forgiven, and missing the mark is covered. That is the opening exclamation. It is that of a man, conscious of God's infinite grace, of what someone has spoken of, and I think wonderfully spoken of, as "the incredible mercy of God."

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

The psalm ends with an appeal.

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous;

And shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

The opening exclamation and the closing appeal are closely linked. "Oh the blessings of transgression forgiven." "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous." "Of sin covered." "Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." The blessings of the forgiveness of transgression and of the covering of sin come from God, and in response to those blessings we are called on to be glad in

the Lord, and to shout for joy.

Between that opening exclamation and that closing appeal we have the general movement of the psalm, a record of the experiences of life in sin, in sorrow, and in those silences in which the soul is ignorant as to the right way to go and the right thing to do.

First, as to sin. Everything is founded on a right relationship with God, which results from the activity of grace as expressed in the first verse. Moving out from that provision of grace, the psalmist deals with the individual. "Blessed is the man." In the first verse is an exclamation: "O the blessings," the blessings that God provides for the race; and consequently, of course, for individual men; but now, from that contemplation of the whole economy of God's grace, he passes to the individual soul.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,

And in whose spirit there is no guile.

Here the psalmist describes a man standing before a judge, the judge being the Lord, the judge being Jehovah. Here the psalmist describes a man acquitted by his judge: the Lord imputeth not iniquity, Here, moreover, the psalmist reveals the condition on which that judge will acquit the man, "in whose spirit there is no guile," Let it be remembered that we cannot have this second blessing apart from the first. There must be, first, the fact of the infinite blessings in the economy of God, of transgression forgiven, and of sin covered. That is taken for granted in the first outburst of praise. This psalm was written, if not consciously, yet most surely, under the shadow of the Cross. It could not have been written anywhere else. Nowhere else can we find the possibility of transgression being forgiven and sin being covered. Calvary, dark Calvary, with all its mystery of darkness and of light, of sin and of salvation, of the unveiling of sin in the light of the glory of God, and the unveiling of the grace of God against the dark background of sin. All that is expressed in the first verse; then we get to the second verse, and we find how God is prepared to deal with a man who is conscious of sin, of iniquity, which is perverseness, crookedness, the life out of the straight.

This verse always comforts my heart, because the psalmist said: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." He did not say, Blessed is the man unto whom his neighbor imputeth not iniquity. I am very thankful for that. He did not say, Blessed is the man unto whom those to whom he ministers impute not iniquity. The man stands at no judgment bar save that of God, and, believe me, it is far easier to please God than anybody else. I would much rather have to please God for one day than anybody else in the world. It is far easier to please Him, for He is far more reasonable, more patient than are men, for His reasonableness and patience are based on His perfect knowledge. I think one of the most wonderful things in the Bible is that in speaking of the ultimate rule of the earth by God's anointed King it declares that He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes or by the hearing of His ears. Think of judgment in England today, think of law in England today, think of any law court into which you may go—everything is based on the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and there is no other way in which men can judge. In every court of law witnesses give evidence of what they saw and heard, and the jury listen and find their verdict, and the judge passes his sentence, on the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears. God does not judge by the sight of the eyes or by the hearing of the ears. How, then, does He judge? His judgments are righteous. They are so because they are based on His knowledge of all

the underlying facts of the case. There is an old saying, To know all is to forgive all. It may be falsely used, but there is a vast amount of truth in it, and we may depend on it: if we knew all we should be far more likely to forgive most men than to condemn them.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." There is a grandeur about this statement in that it shuts the man up to God, excludes all other judges and juries, and says: Stand before God, and let Him judge you!

And what will He do if a man will stand there? It depends on the man. God will not impute iniquity to him if there is no guile in his spirit. That is the condition. What is guile? Deceit, cloaking over, trying to hide! We are inclined to say that no man can practice guile in the presence of God. Think again. Oh, how constantly we do it by arguing in God's presence that some evil thing is not so very evil, or we try to find an excuse for sin. That is guile. God imputes iniquity, fastens the guilt on the soul that is hiding it; but if the sin be confessed, He puts away the guilt which the man cannot himself put away. If there be no guile, if there be no cloaking, no hiding, if the moment has come in which I am constrained to say, Oh, God, I have hidden this thing long enough by trying to excuse it; I have done with it; God be merciful to me a sinner; then, in a moment, swift as the lightning's flash and swifter, sweet and gentle as the daybreak, the guile is no longer imputed, the man is acquitted; God immediately pronounces on that man the verdict of guiltless, and the man says, "Happy is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile." That is how God deals with sin.

In order that this may be clearer, the psalmist immediately described the contrary experience, showing exactly what happened in his own soul when there was guile there, when he was cloaking something evil, and hiding it.

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old

Through my roaring all the day long.

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me;

My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer.

I do not think there is any language in all the Bible more wonderful in its clear, concise, graphic, startling revelation of the experience of a soul trying to hide sin from God. When I kept silence, when I knew, knew in the deepest of me that something was wrong but would not own it, I tried to put a brave face on it and excuse it to myself, and to make myself believe—strange and devilish deceit—that God did not disapprove, which was only another way of trying to make myself believe God did not know. Then

My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long;

My moisture was changed into the drought of summer.

There was no life; there was no sap. What that means may be learned by quotation from another psalm, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." The Hebrew does not say "sap." The word has been added by translators, and it is very full of beauty. Yet another psalm will help us, the one which declares that those who put their trust in God are like trees planted by the rivers of water. A tree

planted by the rivers of water is a tree whose roots run down and under, and find their way to the Water. In the case of such a tree, a living, healthy tree, we may take the utmost bough and break it, or take a leaf and break it in twain, and sap exudes. The trees of the Lord are full.

My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. There was no sap, no life. The godly man is like the tree planted by the rivers of Water. There is sap, he is full of it. In business he is full of life; and in everything full of strength. But the man with sin unconfessed is like a tree in the desert, having no water; it is dry, scorched, burnt up. His faith in God fails. The death of faith in God expresses itself in the death of faith in one's fellow man. The man who believes in God believes in humanity. The man who loses his faith in God begins to question humanity, is suspicious of everyone. That is the condition of those who keep silence.

The psalmist then tells us why his bones waxed old and moisture Was changed into drought:

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.

That sounds severe, and so it is, but it is full of beauty. Not Only is the severity of God in it, but also His goodness. It is as though the psalmist had said: In those days when I kept silence and tried to hide my sin Thou didst give me no peace, Thy hand was always on me, always troubling me; the thing I tried to hide Thou didst keep alive within me as a consciousness. That habit of life, that friendship that God condemned, that thing we persisted in, how it haunted us! That was God's hand on us! He will not let us escape. We argue it out and think it is settled, and go on, and, suddenly, it rises before us again: the controversy with God is continued, and God never rests until it ends in our submission, if we are His children:

Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.

Now take the opposite:

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

Then the psalmist goes yet further back to show how quickly God answered, and how quickly God acted. Whereas the psalmist did acknowledge the sin and ceased to hide the iniquity, God did not wait for the actual acknowledgment, but in the moment when the psalmist decided he would do so God met him;

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;

And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

I said I would do it, and the moment I made up my mind Thou didst act. That is a true picture of God. Some child of God may be burdened with sin, sin persisted in; if such a one at this moment will say, I will confess my sin, then, in the moment in which the heart has taken the attitude of confession, God will forgive the iniquity of the sin.

How truly the prophet described Him as "a God ready to pardon." Oh for some figure of speech to help men to understand the meaning of that "ready to pardon." There is no figure of speech finer than that of this psalm: He is so ready to pardon that when man makes up his mind to confess, he is forgiven before he does confess. God does not wait for your formalities; He deals with your attitudes. He does not wait until the Sabbath day comes round. He does not wait until the human

confessional is open. He does not wait until the special Inquiry Meeting is called at the end of the service. He does not wait for an hour. This is not ancient history; it is present fact. At this moment, without sigh or sound that mortal ear can detect, or attitude that the eye of man can observe even before the thing is said, when I make up my mind to confess, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin!" Do you wonder that when this man was going to write a psalm about this matter he had to begin:

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

In the moment in which a man ceases guile and makes his soul naked in the eyes of God he is forgiven. God, in an awe-inspiring mystery, respects the veil that a man tries to fling over himself, and excludes Himself from communion with the man until the man tears the veil and says, I am going to be before God what I really am, when, in that moment, God makes him what He would have the man to be.

Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

Then follow the matters of sorrow and silence. "For this let everyone that is Godly pray." "For this" means because of this or for this cause. It does not mean we are to pray for forgiveness. There is no need to do that. All we have to do to obtain forgiveness is to quit hypocrisy, and to make our souls naked, and confess. So it is not that we are to pray for forgiveness, but because of it. The questions of sin and sorrow are intimately related, and the place of prayer is thus guarded. It is only when a man is guileless before God, and sin is dealt with by God, that he has free access to the place of prayer. Having that access, a man finds that the way of prayer is the way of deliverance in sorrow.

Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.

That is an apparent contradiction. When the great waters overflow they shall not reach him! That is a paradox indeed. It is the picture of a man in the middle of overflowing waters, but the waters do not reach him. The same thought is in the next figure:

Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.

Not keep me from going into trouble, but preserve me from it when I am in it.

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Not keep me from going into prison, nor even necessarily bring me out of prison; but enable me to sing in prison!

The psalmist does not declare that the Godly man is to be immune from sorrow, but that he is to be triumphant over it, that sorrow is not to be allowed to harm him. Great waves and billows will overflow him, so that the Godly man of all godly men, God's own Son, could perfectly say, All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over Me! Oh, the waves and the billows that have gone over our heads, floods of great waters; and yet, even though at the moment we felt as though we were about to be drowned, we were not drowned! The great waters have not reached, they have not harmed, they have not destroyed us, because we had access to God by prayer, and so sin was dealt with. We prayed to Him in the time when the proud waters went over our souls, and we were

delivered.

Thou art my hiding place; Thou wilt preserve me from trouble.

Quite literally, Thou wilt preserve me in a tight place. Oh, yes, we may often be in a tight place, but we shall be preserved; for nearer to us than all the pressure of circumstances is God, and though circumstances press until we think we shall be ground to powder, we never are, because the resistance of God against the pressure of circumstances keeps us safe.

And yet again,

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Such songs are sung in prison. We are familiar with the New Testament illustration. Paul and Silas sang praises when they got out of prison? No! After the thunder, after the earthquake that shook their feet loose from the stocks? No. They sang with feet fast in the stocks, with backs sore from Philippian rods. That is the place of song to the forgiven soul. The psalmist knew sorrows, knew the sweeping of the storm, knew the rolling of the waters, knew the loneliness of the prison house; but he knew deliverance, he knew a hiding place in which he was safe, and therefore he could sing in the midst of the sorrowful hours.

Then he passed to the matter of silence, and now he seems to have been so full of the consciousness of God that he adopted the language of God, changed the methods of his speech, and did not sing of God, but wrote as though God were singing to him:

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;

I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee.

Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding;

Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in.

Else they will not come near unto thee.

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:

But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

"I will instruct thee," that is, I will make thee circumspect, I will make thee intelligent. "I will teach thee in the way which thou shalt go," that is, I will point out thy way with the finger. This is a picture of God dealing with a soul troubled, perplexed. The sorrow of silence is the worst of all, the appalling perplexity of hearing no voice in the hour of greatest need. God says, I will make thee intelligent, and then with My finger I will point out the way. It is as though God bent over the soul perplexed and in difficulty about the way, and said, I will give thee the capacity for understanding Me, and having done it, I will show you the right way. And, more, I will counsel thee; not, I will guide thee with mine eye, but, I will talk to you, and give you counsel with My eye on you. I will never lose sight of you.

Then follows a loving word, which is most arresting. It may thus be expressed bluntly: Do not be a mule! The horse and the mule need to be kept near to their drivers, with bit and bridle, so that they

may be controlled. God says, I do not want to put a bit in your mouth; I want to keep you near Me in other ways. If we will not yield to the constraint of His guidance, then He will put bits into our mouths; but He would rather that we waited for Him, watched for the pointing of His finger, listened for the whisper of His word, and followed the light in His eye.

What wonder that the psalmist finished as he did:

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous!

If we have done with our hypocrisy, He will put away our sin; that being settled, if we pray, He will guard us from all the evil of our sorrows; He will guide us with His counsel. Then let us be glad in the Lord, and let us not be content with being glad, let us obey the further command:

Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

When men really know God, they become hilarious, full of laughter and merriment and song and perpetual gladness.

So may He in His grace lead us into the secrets of communion.

Psalm 32:9; Ephesians 5:17. Understanding, Or Bit And Bridle.

Psalm 32:9; Ephesians 5:17.

Understanding, Or Bit And Bridle.

Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee.

Psalms 32:9

Be yet not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:17

The similarity between these two texts is self-evident. The Hebrew Psalmist, and the Christian Apostle say the same thing. The method of the former is illustrative and pictorial; that of the latter is more direct and interpretive. Each of these men, separated from each other by centuries, saw two ways of living. The one was described by the Hebrew Psalmist in the figure of the horse and the mule, which must be held in with bit and bridle. That same way was described by the Apostle in a word that really is vibrant with sarcasm—"foolish!" This word, being literally translated, means: having no mind. That is one way of life. The Psalmist describes the method to be adopted with that state of mindlessness; the Apostle simply refers to it. The other way of life is described by Psalmist and Apostle by words which we have translated by the same word "understanding." The Hebrew word translated "understanding" means to separate mentally; or, as to say, to distinguish. The Greek word translated "understanding" means to bring together or, as we say, to conclude.

The distinction between the two statements is that the first illustrates one method, while the second interprets the other method. So these texts complement each other while moving in the same realm and uttering the same injunction. The first declares what has to be done with the mindless horse or mule, or man. Such must be held in with bit and bridle. The second shows what the understanding mind takes hold of. It apprehends the will of the Lord.

In these injunctions a central idea of life is implicated, two methods of life are revealed, and in each case an appeal is made to choose the higher and the nobler. These, then, are the lines of our consideration.

We shall perhaps see the central idea of life most clearly by considering the illustration of the Hebrew Psalmist. What, then, are the functions of bit and bridle in the case of the horse and the mule? Let me say at once, and that for my own soul's comfort, that many of you may know a good deal more about horses and mules than I do. However, I am not proposing to deal with the characteristics of these animals, but rather to take the simplest things, which are perfectly patent to the ordinary person. In the case of horse and mule, the bit and the bridle mean, first, restraint, and second, realization under restraint. The restraint is preliminary, the realization is final. The restraint of bit and bridle is the indication to the will of the animal of the fact of a superior will. If the

Psalmist said, and he did say, and that with inspired accuracy, that these animals have no understanding, he did not mean that they have no intelligence. Understanding is something far more than intelligence. Horses and mules have intelligence; they have emotion; they have will. These are the elements of human personality, but in a lower degree and yet very definitely, we find them in what we call the lower animals. No man knows anything about a horse who says that it has no intelligence. And that a mule has will none will deny who has attempted to manage one! The purpose of bit and bridle is to indicate to whatever there may be of intelligence in the animal that it has to do with a superior will.

Thus it becomes the method of compulsion by the superior will, that which keeps all the forces represented in the life of the animal near to the master and under control. That is what the Psalmist says: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in else, they will not come near unto thee." The Revised Version has greatly helped us there. The text is somewhat obscure, but the Authorized rendering: "In order that they may not come near unto thee," is entirely misleading. We put bit and bridle on horse or mule in order to indicate to whatever intelligence they may have that they have to do with a superior will and in order to compel their will to yield to that superior will.

But there is a reason for such restraint; it is always in order to teach realization. In the horse and the mule there are forces of strength, of energy, of swiftness. The purpose of the bit and the bridle is that these forces may be controlled and exercised, that they may become useful, that they may realize something.

For the sake of illustration let us exercise our imaginations and put ourselves in the place of the mule—some of us have not far to travel. The first sense of bit and bridle is simply that of something curbing, hurting, checking, mastering. As to mules I do not know, but I do know that after a while a horse will come to know the very touch of your hand on the bridle. You have but to make your own peculiar movement of the bridle, and it will turn to the right or left, it will halt, trot, gallop, or canter, as you desire. By restraint you have realized its powers, and you have given to the animal itself the sense of power. By the imposition of your superior will, curbing, checking, reining, mastering, you have made its life useful.

Now, what are the implications of that very beautiful illustration from the old Hebrew who loved a horse and a mule I verily believe, or he never would have written this psalm? The first is that life is power, energy, force, having values beyond its mere being. If life be energy, power, force merely, having no value beyond being, then it does not need bit and bridle, it does not need control, it does not need method or direction. In that case, let us merely live. But when a religious singer of the long ago and an apostle of the Christian era charge us not to be mulish, implicated in the charge is the idea that life is power and energy and force, having values beyond being; in other words, that life is purposeful. No human life has come to its realization when it is simply lived. It comes to realization only when it is being lived for purpose.

Again, the figure implicates the truth that life lacks direction within itself for the realization of this purpose. It can exist, but it cannot achieve. The horse and the mule can live in the wilderness and the prairies, but they will not achieve. Lasso them, corral them, break them in, put the bit and the bridle on them; then they will achieve. The bit and the bridle are the means necessary to achievement. Man can live without any control external to himself. He can answer all the impulses

of his own being, he can let them have full sway and run riot. He can live, but he cannot achieve. Unless the forces in his being are under some kind of controlling power that will direct and energize, life is nothing more than a putting forth of effort, which is without value.

And so, finally, this figure of the bit and the bridle teaches us that life needs restraint in order to be realized, it needs impulse in order to achieve, and that such restraint and impulse come, not out of the forces of the life, but from without.

Now let us look at the two methods of life suggested. Neither of these methods is godless. The man who is entirely godless is not in view. Neither writer was thinking of such a man. The Hebrew Psalmist was singing for the people of God, and the whole point of his charge is its application to the people of God. He was appealing to those who had heard the voice of God saying to them:

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;

I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee.

It was that sense of the Divine relation to the soul, and the soul's relation to the Divine, which led him immediately to say what he did. Because of that, because God is pledged to your guidance, "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding." So also when Paul wrote this injunction in the Ephesian letter, "Be not foolish." Therefore I say again that neither of these ways is godless. They rather reveal two methods of God with men; which method He adopts always depends on the man. Whether God shall adopt with me the method of the bit or the bridle, or the higher method, depends on me. But to that we will return in conclusion.

Now, what are these methods? The first is the method of compelling pressure; the second is the method of impelling motive. In the first we see life controlled by pressure from the outside; in the second, we see life impelled by the mystic motive of understanding, which is within. The first is the method of conflict; the second is the method of communion. Be not like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and must be kept under control with bit and bridle. The necessity for getting near, and being under control, is admitted; but because there is no understanding, the bit and the bridle, the compelling pressure, the conflict ending in victory for the superior will, are necessary. Be not like that, said the Psalmist; have understanding. More bluntly, the Christian Apostle said, Be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Get the deep profound inner secret of your life so related to God that you will understand by the communion of love rather than by conflict the restraint which is necessary for realization. We are offered the choice between the restraint of compelling pressure and the restraint of impelling motive, the restraint of bit and bridle and the restraint of understanding. Bit and bridle mean the fight between two wills, and ultimately the mastery of the weaker by the stronger. Bit and bridle are the symbols of intermediary methods, made necessary because the soul is not consciously near to God, because it has no understanding. Horse and mule must be held in with bit and bridle, for they have no understanding. They are not near to their master in spirit, in thought, in mind. They cannot help it. They are not to be pitied. But when a man is in that state he is to be pitied, nay, he is to be blamed. In the case of a man, the bit and the bridle mean God's employment of compelling pressure to force the will to higher purpose in harmony with His own will. God's method with most of us has had to be that of the bit and the bridle, of adverse circumstances, personal affliction, chastisement; and all because we have not been near enough to God to understand Him.

The method of understanding, the method of communion, the method of impelling motive, is the method, not of conflict between two wills, but of co-operation between the will of man and that which Paul, in another of his letters, so gloriously and adequately described as the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The method of understanding is based on the comprehension of these very facts concerning the Divine will, that it is good and acceptable and perfect. To understand the will of the Lord is to love the Lord. Understanding is infinitely more than knowing. It is the comprehension, not merely of what the Lord commands, but of why the Lord commands. Understanding does not mean that we always know immediately the reason of what the Lord commands, but we know the One Who commands so well as to be perfectly at rest, even when we cannot understand the immediate reason of the command. It is good, it is perfect, it is acceptable. If we would finally apprehend the meaning of the word "understand," we may remind ourselves of another great psalm in which the Singer declared: "Thou understandest my thought afar off." That is infinitely more than knowing it. God understands the thought, He knows the reason of it, the genesis of it, how it came to be. Understanding the will of the Lord is the response of the soul of man to God's understanding of the soul. God's understanding is ultimate and final and perfect, and there is no darkness in it. As the soul of man knows these things about God, that soul understands. What it does not know of God's immediate reason or purpose it does understand to be perfectly right, since it is His will. Is there any finer word in the language to express what friendship is than the word "understanding"? Leave all your acquaintances, and think in the narrow circle of your friends. I am not speaking disparagingly of acquaintances; they are very valuable. But no soul has many friends. Fasten your attention on one. The greatest thing you can say to that friend is, "You understand." That does not mean that your friend can explain to you the mystery of the thing you are thinking, but it does mean that your friend understands this mystic call of the soul. Understanding goes out beyond intelligence, beyond emotion, and beyond will. It is a spiritual apprehension. To understand what the will of the Lord is, is to apprehend His motive. It is not always to know what the motive is, but it is to know that the motive is mastered by His infinite and unfailing love.

Now we see why I read that passage in Isaiah for our lesson, which, in some senses, seems to have very little connection with the line of our meditation. I read it for its remarkable suggestions concerning Jesus. The prophet of the olden time, having climbed a great height, having dived into a great deep of understanding, described God's perfect Servant, and in that passage we see Him first as Man, and then immediately as God. The merging of the human and the divine is wonderfully indicated, and in both cases we have this thought of understanding. "He shall be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord." That is the final glorious word about the Messiah in His ideal humanity. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The Revisers have rendered it: "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." The Authorized Version had, and it was a better rendering: "He shall be quick of understanding." Sir George Adam Smith translated it: "He shall be keen of scent in the fear of the Lord." That is understanding! That is the story of the life of Jesus on the manward side, understanding. To my risen and glorified and exalted Lord I render apology for saying the thing I am going to say. There was no need for bit or bridle in the case of Jesus. No compelling circumstances crowded Him into obedience. He went through circumstances that were to His soul as the burning of fire, but not to compel His obedience. He

was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord.

The very next sentence in Isaiah reveals Him on the other side, as God dealing with man. He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears; but He shall judge righteousness judgment. In other words, when the Messiah exercises the judgment of Deity His judgment is not based on the only things that human judgment can be based on; neither according to the seeing of the eye nor the hearing of the ear. His judgment shall be based on understanding, on perfect knowledge, and perfect sympathy. So the light of the great passage comes to help us. This is the higher way of life, understanding. He who understands, yields, not to the pressure of bit and bridle, but to the sweet constraint of the eternal love. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding. Be not foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Both texts make exactly the same appeal. That appeal is based on human capacity. That is the Biblical distinguishing conception of man. He is ever presented as capable of knowing, and of communing with God. Outside the Biblical revelation men have not yet reached that conclusion. They are approaching it. In the days of my youth the physical scientists were telling us that God was unknowable. Science is now beginning to admit that there may be the possibility of communication with a spirit world. That statement, however ignorant it is in some of its applications, is a step towards the ultimate truth that man is fashioned for having communion with God directly and immediately. That is the Biblical revelation. Think hurriedly of its outstanding figures. What are they? The first is that of a man in a garden. It is the story of Adam, the first man. What is the peculiar fact about him which the Bible insists on? That he could talk with God. What is the story of a man who came out from a great civilization that was entirely pagan and became the father and founder of a race that stands to this age in the world for the great monotheistic idea? It is the story of a man called Abram, who heard God speak, who was capable of communion with God. What is the story of a man who was a great lawgiver, and so great a lawgiver that his national code remains to this day the final court of high national morality? It is the story of a man, Moses, who spoke face to face with God as a man talks with his friend. What is the story of all those prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, Habakkuk? They are all stories of men who heard God, who spoke to God, and in whose very bones the fire of the divine word burned.

Finally and centrally, there is the story of Jesus, and it is the story of a Man Who walked over dusty highways and over our fields, and in the midst of our temptations, enduring our toil, living by trust as we live by trust, but all the while talking with God. The Bible says to every man that he may know God and understand God. The highest function of the human soul is the function of adoration. That goes far out beyond intercession, is greater than thanksgiving, is far more magnificent even than praise which is uttered. It is the function of speechless consciousness of God. For that man is made.

The Biblical idea of man is that out of that exercise of adoration there shall come human inspiration for the carpenter's shop, the commonplaces of life, the doing of the next duty that comes, the taking of the next turning. That is the deepest meaning of Christianity.

The conception of Jesus concerning man is found in the words which John records for us in His final prayer, words perpetually quoted and never exhausted by quotation: "This is age abiding life,

to know Thee, the only true God."

The letters of Paul's imprisonment, those to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and the Philippians, breathe his consuming passion that Christian people should come to the full knowledge of God. Again and again we find him expressing his thankfulness for their faith, their hope, their love; and when we read this we are inclined to say: What more could be needed? These people had faith and hope and love. Yet Paul said: I am praying always earnestly for you. To what end? That you may come to the knowledge, epignosis, the full knowledge of God. And there is the Biblical conception. In man is the light of life. In his new birth that light is rekindled. First, it is daybreak; then it groweth more and more unto the perfect day; and so at last it becomes high noon in the life of the soul. If a man will walk by that light, if he will answer that light, he lives by understanding, and the bit and the bridle are not necessary.

The appeal of the text expresses a divine purpose, and the divine purpose fundamentally is that of restraining and realizing life; and the divine desire is that this shall be done by understanding. The divine love, however, says: If you will not walk in the light by understanding, then you must learn by bit and bridle.

So, finally, the appeal of the text offers a great alternative, revealing to the life two methods of God with the soul, urging the higher, that of understanding, but definitely declaring that if the higher is not answered, then God will employ the other, and that for very love.

Now are we saying we have indeed been foolish, we have been as the horse and as the mule, and so we know the bit and bridle? If so, and I speak not to you now, but with you, let us learn to yield to the bit and the bridle, and if we do, because God has created us as He has, we shall come to understanding. Is not that the more common experience of life? Am I not touching the realm of experience when I say that almost all of us pass into the realm of understanding by the way of the bit and the bridle? With the majority of us it has been bit and bridle.

The young I would urge to choose the understanding way at once. This urging comes from one who has known much of bit and bridle through his own folly, through his own lack of spiritual mindedness. Choose the way of understanding. Cultivate your fellowship with God. Make time for the secret place, for the quiet hour, for getting near to God without pressure, that you may know, that you may understand. For the doing of this the great Lord Christ, our Saviour and our King, is ever at our disposal. Take advantage of His comradeship. Watch the glance of the eye, listen to the sound of the voice, observe the activity of the hand. Such contemplation brings the soul nearer to God, to more accurate understanding, and so makes less necessary the bit and the bridle.

Psalm 37:7. The Secrets Of Rest.

Psalm 37:7.

The Secrets Of Rest.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.

Psalms 37:7

Whatever place Mendelssohn really occupies in the firmament of composers, it is certain that no single number of the great oratorios has made profounder or more lasting appeal to the heart of humanity than the poised and perfect air, "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This is due, not only to the perfection of the music, but to the fact that Mendelssohn understood the theme.

The place of the writing of the air in his own life is full of interest, although not now to be dealt with at any length. Those of you who are familiar with the story of his life, a wonderful life of only eight and thirty years, will remember that it was in 1838, when he was twenty-seven years of age, that the subject of Elijah was suggested to him for an oratorio, and that it gradually took shape through years of stress and strain. You will also remember that in 1846 it was produced in Birmingham, and that he went back home again, broken in health, to die in a little more than a year. There can be little doubt that when the music of Elijah was written by Mendelssohn he was himself passing through stress and strain, yet living in the secret place of the Most High, knowing what it was indeed to "rest in the Lord."

Those of you most familiar with that oratorio will know the place this air occupies therein. It is in the second part. We have listened to the angry clamor of Jezebel in that strange hour when it seemed as though unrighteousness must inevitably triumph again over righteousness in Israel, in spite of the victory on Carmel. We have seen the prophet descending from the altitude of his triumph to the lowliness of the juniper tree. Under the juniper tree we have seen the angels come and minister to him. Mendelssohn, in his arrangement of the oratorio, has gathered some of the strains of the perpetual music which had comforted the heart of man, and has treated them as though the angel sang them to Elijah. Among the rest are the words of our text, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." That placing of the air in the great oratorio is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the psalm, the introductory part of which we read as lesson. It opens in an atmosphere electric with trouble:

Fret not thyself because of evildoers,

Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness,

and moves in its earliest verses through stages of experience until at last the ultimate note is reached in my text,

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him

Let me attempt this morning to lead you first in meditation on the attitude described: "Rest in the Lord," interpreted by "wait patiently for Him." In the second place, let us inquire quite honestly, Is this possible? Finally, and briefly, let us attempt some personal application.

First, then, the attitude described in this passage: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." I have already reminded you of that to which I now return for a moment. The text occurs in the first seven verses of the Thirty-seventh Psalm. The rest of the psalm is but exposition, explanation, application of the theme of these verses. All its fundamental verities are in these seven verses. Will you note the boundaries of them: the first phrase is,

Fret not thyself because of evildoers."

The last word is,

Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,

Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

It is immediately evident that this opening movement in the great psalm is in the nature of a protest against panic. Whether the Psalmist was speaking to his own soul, or was writing to comfort and help a comrade, we cannot tell; the fact of importance is that behind the psalm we become conscious of strange conflict; it was composed in an atmosphere perplexing to the man of faith; in the background we see evildoers, men who work unrighteousness, and we see these men prospering in their way, bringing their wicked devices to pass. Wickedness is triumphant. That is the picture in the background. The psalm is addressed to a troubled soul, troubled by this vision of the apparent victory of evil, and I repeat that these opening and closing words, so far as the introductory movement is concerned, are those of protest against panic, "Fret not thyself," literally, Make not thy heart hot in the presence of the apparent victory of iniquity.

Between that opening word, "Fret not," and that final word, "Fret not," we find an ascending scale: "Trust in the Lord.... Delight thyself in the Lord.... Commit thy way unto the Lord.... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Rest, that is the eighth note in the octave. The fundamental note, and the first, is trust. Trust, delight, commit, rest, and wait patiently! As I was preparing my sermon I wished that I could take this congregation and divide it into sections, and make them sing the notes. I would like those occupying the section on my left hand to sing on one note, "Trust in the Lord." I would like those sitting in the central section to sing on another note, "Delight in the Lord." Then I would like those sitting on my right hand to sing, "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Finally, I would like those in the gallery to sing on yet another note, "Rest in the Lord." Then we would have a fine harmony, a perfect chord, the fundamental note, "Trust in the Lord," and the eighth note completing the music, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." All around, the victory of iniquity, the clash of arms, the sound of war, the triumph of unrighteousness, and in the midst of it the music, "Trust... delight... commit... rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Such is the musical motive, theme, method of the great psalm.

For a brief moment longer let me detain you on one matter to which I have already twice referred. The theme of the psalm was that of the energy and prosperity of evil men, causing perplexity and fretfulness to the man of faith. That is the situation. The men of faith, men who have endured on many a hard-fought field as seeing Him Who is invisible, men who have made great ventures on

the basis of their conviction that the spiritual is true, men who have made sacrifices in the interests of the ultimate conquest of the world in righteousness for God, are conscious that things do not seem to be going that way; the drift is against righteousness: Jezebel, in spite of the victory, on Carmel. That is the background. War in spite of arbitration. New rebellions everywhere in spite of revival of spiritual interest. How is it that iniquity prospers? What is the meaning of the fact that these evil men are bringing their wicked devices to pass? The heart is hot, restless. Panic seizes the soul. To that condition the psalm appeals: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"; and the ultimate word is, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

What is this word "rest"? You notice in the margin of the Revised Version a suggested alternative reading: "Be still before the Lord," or even more directly and literally, "Be silent to Jehovah." The word "rest" is one which literally means dumbness: be dumb, be silent, be quiet. You recognize immediately that this is not fatalism, but faith. If I take out of my text the phrases "in the Lord" and "in Him," it has no meaning and no value. If I take out those words, what have I left? "Rest... and wait patiently." That would be the uttermost word of fatalism, and absolutely impossible of realization by intelligent men. "Rest," but "in the Lord"; be dumb, be silent, but in the consciousness of Him. We are to be still in the consciousness of the fact that whatever the appearances of the hour may be, men and affairs are still within the grip of His government.

Yet, as I have pondered these words, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that the only interpretation of the opening injunction to "rest in the Lord" is to be found in the closing injunction to "wait patiently for Him." These are not two things which can be separated; rather, they constitute one great inclusive charge to rest, to be still, to be silent, to be dumb before God, and all that interpreted by that strange word, the meaning of which we are so apt to miss, "wait patiently for Him."

When, for myself, I really began carefully to ponder this great and final word in the music of the psalm, I confess I was almost startled to discover the meaning of this particular word which we translate wait patiently, for there are not two words in the Hebrew, but one. I was startled, I say, when I looked at this word carefully. Take the word as to its real meaning, and it seems entirely to contradict our popular conception of what it is to wait, and to wait patiently. The root meaning of the word is to whirl incessantly; it suggests incessant movement instead of quiet passivity. One was driven therefore from the word to its use. That it would be entirely false to the spirit of the psalm to interpret the meaning of the Psalmist by the root significance of the word is apparent, therefore we must discover the use of this Hebrew word. One found that it was occasionally used exactly as it is used in the psalm to indicate an attitude of soul in the presence of God; but it is far more often used to indicate strenuous agony, proceeding through processes, toward ultimate triumph. It is a word that has within it a sense of pain. It is a word which is persistently used for the travail which issues in birth. In the choice of the word there is a fine recognition of the fact that the hardest thing the man of faith can do is to wait. There is agony in the waiting, but it is the agony that moves toward realization. There is a pang in the waiting, but it is a birth pang. There is travail in the waiting, but it is travail that is co-operative with forces which are moving to victory. Consequently, one discovers in the use of this word, strangely startling in its root significance, that to wait patiently recognizes two things, sensitiveness of the wrong and sensitiveness to the issue.

When thinking of these things I heard outside my study window the sigh of the wind, and became conscious that autumn was upon us, and I confess that sorrow and sadness crept into my heart, sadness that dimmed the brightness of the vision. When I put down my work I took up the Westminster Gazette, and the first thing that met my eye was a little poem written over the signature of S. Gertrude Ford. I want to give you that poem. I will read it without interpretation, save to say that if you listen to the two views of autumn you will see the two viewpoints of the soul that waits, sensitiveness to the darkness and the tragedy around, but also sensitiveness to the issue, the larger fact that lies beyond.

Two Visions of Autumn

Leaves flaming and then fading; pomp of mists

That wreath, at dusk and dawn, the mountain's brow

With pride of opals and of amethysts;

The nest bare on the bough;

The swallow on the wing; the reign of flowers

Whose beauty breathes a wail of "Ichabod,"

Chrysanthemums that crown autumnal hours,

Asters and golden-rod;

The last crops garnered and the last-ripe fruits

Gathered; a sound of sighing in the air—

A sigh, too, in the tune the robin flutes,

And Autumn everywhere!

Autumn! the sleep that brings the waking night;

The scattering of the seed, not sown in vain,

That needs must fall into the ground and die

If it would live again;

The building of the throne where spring shall sit,

Girt round with all her lovely pageantry;

Such death, and only such, as holds in it

The birth that is to be—

This now and Winter later; then, O then,

The violet's breath, the cuckoo's call, the fair

New life that leaps in birds and beasts and men,

And Springtime everywhere!

That is waiting patiently. And the singer sang to me out of her consciousness of autumn the profoundest interpretation of my text: to the nest that is empty on the bough there is sensitiveness to the flight of the swallow, to the moaning, sighing of the autumn winds; but there is also the rarer sensitiveness to the issue, the life wrapped in the womb of death that shall burst to life in flowers, and bring the victory that is to be.

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers" because at the moment it seems as though the darkness were comprehending, apprehending, extinguishing the light, because it seems for the moment as though unrighteousness were winning its victory. "Fret not thyself," but rather "trust... delight... commit thy way... rest and wait patiently," keen and sensitive to the agony of the hour, but more sensitive to the springtime and the summer that are to be.

Is this possible? That depends entirely on our conception of God. What is our doctrine of God? Let me ask the question in another way, using the word with great carefulness and accuracy: What is our theology, our science of God? I want to make this affirmation: a man's conception of God creates his attitude toward the hour in which he lives. Or, to reverse the order of my statement, my attitude toward the hour in which I live is a revelation of my conception of God. Let us be careful in this matter. Our figures may imprison us, may dwarf our thinking, may blight the possibility of true spiritual conception. What is our conception of God? Is He King? What do you mean by king? A king may be a despot. Is He Shepherd? What do you mean by shepherd? What is the ultimate passion of the shepherd, the fleece and the profit from the carcass of a dead sheep? Is He a Father? Be very careful; a father may be one who gives his child an inheritance of death. By all of which I mean to say the highest, inspired figures of the Bible must be very cautiously used. We must always remember, when speaking of God, that we cannot interpret Him by the figure. We must know Him Himself, and so correct the figure to the standard of the infinite fact.

Trust in the Lord, delight in Him, commit thy way unto Him, rest in Him. Who is He? Whether I am able to rest in Him depends on the answer I give to that inquiry. I have to ask these questions to drive me back to this library. What God is revealed in the Bible? Let me summarize.

He is a God of knowledge. Here I dare not trust myself to stay, and I need not. I am speaking to men and women who know their Bibles, and the music of that fact is singing its way into your hearts, "He knoweth my downsitting and mine uprising, my going out and my coming in." He putteth my tears into His bottle; He numbereth the hairs of my head. I lift my eyes to the heavens, and look at the marvels there, unknown, unfathomable, and because He is strong in power not one faileth. He knows.

He is a God of wisdom, which is infinitely more than a God of knowledge. Knowledge is consciousness of the facts. Wisdom is knowledge in its application to necessity.

He is a God of holiness. Let me change the word "holiness" to the old Anglo-Saxon word "health"; He is the God of health, spiritual, mental, physical, and therefore the enemy of disease in spirit, mind, and body. His passion is a passion for completeness, holiness, perfection, and therefore He will make no truce with sin, and will sign no contract with imperfection. He is a God of holiness.

He is a God of might, able to do all His wisdom suggests, and His knowledge proves necessary.

He is a God of justice, judging not by the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ears, but by His perfect knowledge of the underlying motive. For that justice the heart of man cries out almost more than for mercy: to be judged ultimately by One Who will take into account the passion that burned and yet always seemed to be defeated. The God of infinite justice.

He is a God of patience, content to wait and walk with man; and in all poetry there never was a dream more beautiful than that He walks with men, accommodating the fine majesty of his goings to the feeble, halting frailty of human failure. The God of patience.

To summarize all, He is a God of love. I cannot grasp the idea in its totality, but it is inclusive, exhaustive, final.

These are all characteristics which merge in the fact of being, and I want some revelation that will help me to condense, to focus the glory that cannot be seen. The answer to that demand came when He appeared in human flesh and tabernacled among men and they beheld Him full of grace and truth. That is the revelation of God. The measure of our rest is the measure of our knowledge of God as He has been revealed to us in Christ. Restlessness is the revelation of lack of familiarity with God as He has been revealed in Christ. To know Him is to know that beyond the autumn is the gracious winter, and beyond it the glorious spring and triumphant summer, the endless cycle of operation that produces the results on which the heart of love is set and makes the very wrath of man to praise Him while the rest He girds upon Himself and restrains.

There are inevitable questions that a man must ask if he meditate on such a theme as this. Am I at rest? Have I learned to wait patiently? The problems are patent enough, God knows, and we know! Only the callous and hardhearted are unconcerned in the presence of the problems. This waiting patiently is not waiting callously, indifferently; it is not lazing in an armchair while the world drifts on in its agony. It is keen, sensitive, agonizing, consciousness of pain; but underneath is ever heard the anthem of the glory of God assured. The problems are patent enough; we need only merely interpret what I say by the last and most immediate manifestation. I was reading that little poem of Blake, the "Anguish of the Innocents." I am not going to read the poem; I remind you of certain phrases:

A robin, redbreast in a cage

Puts all heaven in a rage;

and again,

A dog starved at his master's gate

Predicts the ruin of the state;

and yet again,

A skylark wounded on the wing

Doth make a cherub cease to sing.

Dear old Blake, father of nature poetry, he was very near the heart of God; he knew. If you are insensitive in the presence of the problem of the hour you are not waiting patiently; if there is no

whirling agony there is no true waiting. Yet there is a great difference between this whirling motion of the sensitive soul in the presence of agony and the fretfulness of the unbelieving heart.

Wait patiently. How can I do it? I take you back again to the thing I tried to say at the beginning: "Rest in the Lord" is the final note in an ascending scale. What are the things preceding? Trust in Him; that is the first venture of faith. Delight in Him; that is the discovery of His way and His law, and falling into His line. "Commit thy way unto Him"; that is, see to it that He has the governance of your life. Then rest in Him.

This, of course, is not the whole, or else we are but idle and noneffective, and that were to deny the persistent Bible teaching that man is called to fellowship with all the enterprises of God. Is He the God of knowledge? Then it is ours to know. Is He the God of Wisdom? It is ours to enter into fellowship with Him, to act wisely. Is He the God of holiness? Then we must be holy. Is He the God of might? Then we must be strong. Is He the God of justice? Then we are called to do justly. Is He the God of patience? Then we must be patient. Is He the God of love? Then love must master us.

But in order to give true effective service it is necessary that we should learn to rest and to wait patiently for Him. So may He bring our hearts into patient waiting through Christ.

Psalm 46:7, 11. Jehovah Of Hosts--The God Of Jacob.

Psalm 46:7, 11.

Jehovah Of Hosts—The God Of Jacob.

Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalms 46:7; Psalms 46:11

In the history of the human race nothing has ever been done for its help or uplifting save through the principle of faith. Doubt is always destructive. Faith is forever constructive. That is to state the principle in the widest and broadest possible way. I am not now speaking only of the faith of the Christian, though, of course, it is to that I am proposing to come. It is true in every walk of life and every department of thought that the man of faith builds. The man who lacks faith breaks down.

This being granted, I submit that the particular quality of faith which has done most for the uplifting of humanity is that of faith in the living and eternal God. Faith that believes in the existence of God, and believes, moreover, in the Divine interest in human affairs, is the faith which has most helped the race.

The fact of God as the foundation of faith is our theme. I am speaking to Christian workers, to those upon whom the burden and the toil that makes His Kingdom come is resting, to those who sometimes amid the conflict are weary and almost discouraged. I am perfectly sure that it is the occasional experience of anyone doing real work for God. If we know what it is to get underneath even the edge of the world's agony with the imperial, lonely Christ, then we know what it is to have days of darkness, hours of questionings, problems, trials, temptation, and difficulties in Christian service.

Yet notwithstanding all such hours, and occasions, and questionings, an undercurrent of conviction exists in the heart of every member of the Christian community; it is one of unswerving and unabated confidence in God. He is the rock foundation upon which we build—the strong rock upon which faith fastens while we toil and suffer and serve all the while confident of the ultimate victory.

If I remind you of these things, it is because I think sometimes amid the toil we should stop and be conscious of the rock. The rock is always there, but perhaps the consciousness of some trembling child of God will be stronger for pausing to think of it.

These old Hebrew singers and seers had a very keen consciousness of the fact, though, perchance, they did not understand the nature and character of God as we do. They had to wait for the full shining of light in the Person of Jesus. This Psalm begins with the announcement in a single word of all the truth that it afterwards unfolded. God—and the psalmist has said everything when he has said God.

Yet, essential light is always such that we cannot look at it. We have not yet been able to gaze upon pure light. Light must be analyzed to enable us to appreciate it, to understand it. The pure light is the final fact, but the light must be broken up in order that we may apprehend it. After the psalmist has uttered the word which is all conclusive, he proceeds to say things about it until he comes to the seventh verse in the heart of the Psalm, until he comes to the closing sentences of the Psalm, and in these two verses he breaks up for us the essential light. "Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." All I want to do is to consider this breaking up of the essential truth concerning God upon which our faith has fastened and must fasten if we are to continue to be workers together with Him and for Him.

Will you follow me, then, along two lines of meditation? First, a consideration of the twofold truth about God which my text suggests, and second, the twofold statement the psalmist makes based upon the twofold fact. The twofold fact concerning God—He is Jehovah of hosts, He is the God of Jacob. The twofold declaration he makes about this God; first, "He is with us"; second, He is "our refuge."

First, then, the twofold declaration concerning God: "The Lord of hosts... the God of Jacob."

"The Lord of hosts," or, as the American Revision has given it to us, "Jehovah of Hosts." The name by which he knew the Deity as self-existent and eternal. Other names of God which have come to us from the Hebrew people are preceded by qualifying words but never so with Jehovah. The Hebrew never wrote this name fully. It was the unpronounceable name, the incommunicable name, the name that stood lonely in majesty as the sign and symbol of the infinite things of God which no man could perfectly comprehend and therefore no man perfectly explain. Jehovah was the name which most forcefully gave expression to the facts concerning God which were beyond human comprehension—His absoluteness, without beginning, without end, without counsel taken, without forethought—for there was no thought before him—Jehovah.

If we are wise, we stand with the Jew in the presence of the name and confess our ignorance while we bow in reverential worship. Jehovah speaks of the continuousness of God, the self-determining power of the Most High, and His inward sufficiency, so that there is nothing beyond His consciousness. It is the greatest of all the words into which the fact of God is compressed in such a way as to announce forevermore to men that it cannot be expressed so that the mind of finite man can ever understand it.

The psalmist comes very near qualifying the word, for he adds "of hosts." Not that the word "of hosts" really qualifies "Jehovah," for, rather, the word "Jehovah" qualifies the "of hosts."

"Hosts." How is that word used in the Bible? It is employed in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the New Testament in different ways. It is used first with regard to the stars. We read in Genesis, "And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (2:1). In the prophecy of Isaiah, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking" (40:26).

The same term is also used of the angels. "... I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left" (1 Kings 22:19); and in the song that sounded o'er Bethlehem's plains after the angel's solo, it is recorded, "... there was... a multitude of

the heavenly host praising God..." (Luke 2:13).

In the Book of Exodus the word is applied to the children of Israel. They are spoken of as the host of God. Thus it is used of the stars in the heavens, of the unfallen intelligences that people the world beyond our vision and knowledge, and of the companies of men that march across the earth and dwell upon its surface, of stars and seraphim and saints, host of stars, hosts of angels, hosts of saints. I believe in my text it is used of all these.

This phrase, "Jehovah of hosts," teaches us that Jehovah is absolute, sufficient, and superior. It declares to us that God is the Lord of the heavens and all their inhabitants. As one has beautifully expressed it, "The universe of matter and the world of mind were not only created, but are marshaled and ordered by God." We are now looking upon one side only of the Divine nature and being, thinking of Him as the One Who knows all hosts and marshals and controls them by His own power, and we are reminded of the wisdom of God and of the might and majesty of the Most High—"Jehovah of hosts...."

Turn to the other half of the declaration concerning God. "The God of Jacob...." If we were not so familiar with this text, we should be startled by the very daring of bringing together two such descriptions of God as we have within its compass. "Jehovah of hosts,..." and in a moment, by a rapid change of terms, we are given another revelation of God, which I do not hesitate to say is far more startling than the former, especially when considered in the light thereof. "The Lord of hosts,..." and then suddenly, "the God of Jacob...." "The Lord of hosts,..." and as the phrase passes our lips we are amid the eternal expanse, the unfallen intelligences, the vision of any one of which would blind us were it granted to us at this moment. And suddenly, almost without warning, we move from the stellar spaces on to the earth. The stars grow dim until they are seen but as flecks and points of glory upon the darkling brow of night; the angels pass from our vision; and we are on one small planet, amid the hosts of heaven, in one small country upon that planet, looking into the face of one lonely man—Jacob. The psalmist says that the God Who is the God of all the hosts is the God of that man as surely and positively interested in that one speck of thinking life as in all the unfallen intelligences of the upper spaces; as surely and as positively committed to that man as to all the order of the infinite universe.

We have not yet reached the height and the depth of the mystery. We have not yet reached the word that is most startling of all in this consideration. Notice carefully what the psalmist says: "The God of Jacob...." I think we should not have been quite so startled if the psalmist had said the God of Israel. He says, "the God of Jacob...." I know only one man who is meaner than Jacob and that is Laban. The only comfort I ever got out of Jacob is that he was one too many for Laban. Of all men for astute, hard-driving meanness recommend me to Jacob. But God is "the God of Jacob...." Oh, my soul, here find thy comfort! I do not know whether it helps you, but it helps me. He is the God of Jacob, mean as Jacob was. This is the thing on which my faith fastens. "The Lord of hosts,..." yes; but "the God of Jacob!..." But was that man such a man as I? The longer I live the more astonished I am that God ever loved me at all. The longer I live the more astonished I am at that infinite grace which found me and loves me and keeps me. The meanness that lurks within, the possibilities of evil that I have discovered make me ask, "Will God look at me?" He is "the God of Jacob." He was his God and loved him notwithstanding all his meanness, enwrapped him with provision, led him, told him where to rest his head, and when he had laid that head upon the stone,

linked heaven and earth with a symbolic ladder to teach him His care for him even while he was Jacob. Infinite in His majesty, "The Lord of hosts..."; infinite in His mercy, "the God of Jacob...." Stupendous is His power, upholding all things by the word thereof, "the Lord of hosts..."; sublime in His pity, "the God of Jacob...."

This revelation moves me more than any other. The very distance of the other fact enables me to assume an erect posture in the presence of it. "The Lord of hosts..."—and I hear the music and rhythm of the eternal order amid stars and angels. "The God of Jacob..."—I thought He was far away, I hoped I might, perchance, see the glistening of His dazzling robe of glory among the everlasting spaces. But He is not far away, He is with Jacob! It is not only in immensity but in littleness that God is great. Mark the condescension of this figure of speech; note the beauty of it. Notwithstanding the failure and wreckage of this life, despite the fact that it is anything but what God meant it to be, that in its foolish attempts to create its own destiny and carve its own fortune it has led itself into the region where character is blighted and spoiled by the dwarfing influences of vain ambition, yet the inspiring word comes to me—"the God of Jacob...." He has created man, and man has broken all His laws; but He is his God still and broods over him tenderly, his folly notwithstanding.

Let us consider what the psalmist says concerning these facts. First, then, the declaration, "The Lord of hosts is with us...." May I make application of the truth by reminding you again what this phrase "of hosts" means? He is the God of the stars, the God of the angels, the God of men in multitudes and companies. The God of all these hosts is with us, and for our making, for the making of Jacob, He will press all hosts into service if necessary. "But," you say, "this is imagination. Do you mean to suggest that this God, Who is the God of the individual, of Jacob, will use the stars for our making?" I desire to tell you nothing that is not within the covers of the Bible. I have no commission to speculate or philosophize. I have a commission to preach the Word. Let me read some Old Testament words:

The kings came and fought,
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no gain of money.
They fought from heaven,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon....

And then we are not surprised that the writer of the historic fact in poetic language addresses his soul thus: "... Oh, my soul, march on with strength." "The Lord of hosts is with us...." The God of the stars is committed to me, and, if there be necessity for it, the very stars in their courses shall fight for me against the foes that hinder me as I climb upward toward the home of God. He will command the whole universe for the making of a soul. Do you doubt me there? Then let me

remind you that for the purchase of my soul and yours, for its reconciliation and redemption, He gave in one supreme gift that which was infinitely superior to all the stars—the One by Whose word they were made, and in Whose might they have consisted through the ages. He gave Him for the remaking of my broken, maimed, spoiled life. The stars, the hosts of God if need be, will be pressed into the service of the making of the saint, and into the service of the saint as he goes forth in toil for God.

But what of angels? Need I tarry to say anything about angels? I fear I must. This is a very Sadducean age. I am never quite sure whether there are more Sadducees or Pharisees in the world today. I do not mean in the accidentals of past manifestations but in the essentials. The Pharisee was the ritualist in his age. The Sadducee was the rationalist, and if you want to know the essentials, you can find it in one brief description in your New Testament. "... the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit...." And there are a great many Sadducees abroad today. They smile and they say, "You do not really believe this story that angels help us." I believe angels help us. I still believe with the psalmist that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him...." I still believe with the New Testament writer, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" Poetry, do you say? I know it is poetic statement, but it is fact that makes the poetry. I believe that what Jesus said once was true. I do not quite understand it, but I am sure it is true. Jesus said, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." I tell you honestly that I do not perfectly understand it. But there are certain things in it I am sure of. "My Father in heaven," the "little ones," and "their angels." How the angel beholds the face of the Father, or how the beholding of the angel saves the child I do not quite know; but I am sure of the Father and sure of the children, and sure of the angels. And men and women, I beseech you, doubt this Sadducean age that questions the ministry of the spirit and the ministries of the angels, and believe me, if we could see things as they are now, the Lord of hosts has His hosts of angels guarding the children, watching our way, preparing as we go.

Angels? The prophet Elisha was shut up in the city, and his servant was terribly anxious, and he said to him, "Master, what shall we do?" And the prophet said to God, "Lord,... open his eyes...."

And lo! to faith's enlightened sight

All the mountain flamed with light.

Jesus faced His passion, and when a blundering disciple smote His enemy with an old sword, He said: "... Put up again thy sword.... Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

But what about the hosts of men? Is Jehovah indeed with hosts of men? Yes, and not only is He Jehovah of hosts concerning the companies of His saints; Jehovah is the Lord of all hosts and of all the hosts of men. He is the Lord of all the armies in the world. Let no man misunderstand me for a moment. Let me say to you bluntly what is in my deepest soul. I hate all war as I hate hell, and I believe you can never justify it by Christian standards under any circumstances whatever. But if men will fight, God is the God of battles. He does not inspire the battle, but He governs its goings, and remember this, that no army ever marches across any path of this earth but in the check of

His strong hand. It may be a little difficult sometimes to understand what God is doing. I suppose there have been moments in the lives of all of us who know anything of what it is to love and serve Him when we have grumbled with Carlyle, "Yes, God is in His heaven, but doing nothing." He is always doing something.

You say, "What has this to do with me?" He will compel the march of men to contribute to the making of men. He will press into the service of turning Jacob into Israel whole armies as they come and go. Hosts of stars, hosts of angels, hosts of men, and the Lord of all of them is with us.

Oh, take heart, my brothers, my sisters! Is the burden pressing heavily, is the toil almost too great to be borne? Do you stand upon the brink of great enterprises, afraid because of the vested interests, because of the hosts of wickedness? I bring you a message full of heart, hope, and courage. God, by His Spirit, sing it as an anthem in your heart. "The Lord of hosts is with us,..." and while its music thrills my soul I dare go back to battle and suffering and to the defeat of half an hour because I know at last the victory will be won, and the Lord of hosts cannot be defeated.

A final word about the other fact—"... the God of Jacob is our refuge." What did He do for Jacob? Think of his history. See at what infinite pains God was to make something out of him. Oh, the patience of God! oh, the waiting! oh, the forces pressed into the making of a man! oh, the opened heavens and the ascending and descending angels! oh, the glimpse of hosts He gave him one day! He called the name of one place Mahanaim which means the place of hosts. He said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies." Jacob, you have to learn that none of them are your own, that the Lord of hosts possesses every last skin of your cattle, and there are other hosts besides. There is Esau's host. He is coming to meet you with armed men. Jacob, you have yet to learn that a man may march against you with armed men all to no purpose if God is on your side; It was in that day that he saw God's host. What he saw, who shall tell? The host of God passed him, and he said, "Mahanaim," it is the place of hosts.

And he went down over the Jabbok, and God met with him and crippled him to make him. It was a wonderful night, only do not let us misinterpret it. I beseech you, do not talk as though Jacob wrestled with God and overcame Him. It is not true. Do not recite Jacob's words in the wrong tone. You know perfectly well that you may say correct words so that the tone gives a lie to the meaning of the words you recite. Do not imagine he said, "... I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." If you want to know all go to the prophecy of Hosea. It is declared he was heard when with strong crying and tears, he said, "... I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." It was a voice choked with sorrow, the voice of a man being beaten, being crippled in the last agony of despair as he went down beneath the pressure of that mysterious hand. He won when he was beaten; he triumphed when he yielded; and God never let him alone until that night by crippling him He broke him.

And the day broke, and the people over the Jabbok saw him coming back again. Let us go and meet him. "Jacob, where have you been?" "Do not call me Jacob. My name is not Jacob. I was Jacob, a mere supplanter; but I am Israel, God-governed. Do not call me Jacob any more." I think I would have said, "Man, tell me, what is the matter? When I saw you last night, dividing up those bands to mollify Esau, you were erect, but now you are lame." "That limp will follow me to the end. It is the patent of my nobility; it is evidence of the fact that God has won at last." "... the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Oh, man, conscious of your own weakness! oh, brother, conscious of the evil within you, which baffles, beats and spoils you, "... the God of Jacob is our refuge." When the only pillow we have is a stone—a hard, unkind, unsympathetic stone—then will He open His heaven, so that His hosts may teach us that they with us are more than they that be against us; and if the God of Jacob be our refuge He will put His hands upon us, and, it may be, wound us, but the wounding is only for the deeper healing; it may be, cripple us, but the crippling is only for the stronger work that lies beyond; it may be, shatter all our cherished dreams, smiting the light of the mirage into nothingness; but it is in order that He may light the truer light and give to us the very nature of the sons of God.

I do not think any of us become Israels until we have been at the Jabbok. We never get to power until His hands have been upon us, and sometimes today as in the dim and distant past, God has to put the scar on the flesh and crippling on the life before He can do very much with us. Oh, dear heart, tried as by fire, sing while the fire burns, sing while the pain is hot. If you are trusting Him, He breaks to make, He cripples to crown. Then by God's grace we are going on; we are not thinking of resigning; we are not going to give this fight up, or anything up, except sin. "The Lord of hosts,..." marshaling all for our making, "... is with us; the God of Jacob,..." patient and strong and purposeful, "... is our refuge." We will follow, we will trust, we will fight—God helping us.

"... the God of Jacob is our refuge." Another word will convey the true meaning of this. The God of Jacob is "our high place"; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, The righteous runneth into it and is set on high (and is safe). Such is the real word: The God of Jacob is "our high place." What means it? We have come down from immensity to localized position, from hosts to individuality, from the magnificent outlook of the Divine movements to personal life. And what is the promise about the God of Jacob? That He will be our "high place"; that we may be set in Him above circumstances, above enemies, above self, and so we look to the future with all confidence and security, because "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

If this announcement engender within us confidence, rest, assurance, it must also produce consecration. If looking on at our work with its light and its possibilities of sorrow and joy, we are confident and glad and the tone of our voice has in it the ring of the triumphant hosanna, if we are confident by reason of these words, then let it be remembered they must also produce consecration.

How will the fact of the Divine presence be manifested to the world? By the effect it produces upon us. So. while we take our joy and comfort out of the blessed thought that: "the Lord of hosts is with us,..." we must not forget that: the eyes of men are fixed upon us to discover Him of Whom we speak, and they will not see Him in shining glory; but if "the Lord of hosts is with us," and "the God of Jacob is our refuge," in the quiet calm of our spirit, in the tenderness of our love, in the straightness of our dealings with each other, in all the growing beauty of our lives, men will see that the: Lord of hosts—of order, of precision, and magnificence—and the God of Jacob—of love, of care, and sympathy—is with us. Ours is the blessing, but ours is also the responsibility. Let us remember that the effects produced will be in proportion to our realization of the Divine presence, and our realization of the Divine presence will be in proportion to our yielding of ourselves to the will that is known, to the word that is spoken, that doing the will we may know the doctrine and may pass from glory into glory, the light and beauty of the Divine shining evermore upon our faces, and

in our lives, that others, too, may come to see the glory of the Lord of hosts, the patience of the God of Jacob.

Psalm 77:10 The True Focus

Psalm 77:10

The True Focus

And I said, This is my infirmity... the years of the right hand of the Most High.

Psalms 77:10

True focus is all important. This is known to every person who has looked upon a landscape through a field-glass or has seen its beauties gathered up in a camera. When the instrument is improperly adjusted, the images which it shows are blurred and indistinct; but when, by proper manipulation, the right focus is obtained, how clear, or, to use the technical word, how sharp the picture becomes, with every point clearly and properly defined! So is it with our survey of life. We must view our years from the proper point of vision, or mist and doubt will deceive us.

Reviewing our life, we may look at it in varied ways; but there is only one correct standpoint from which we may do so, and unless we find it there is no explanation of the enigma of life, no vision of things in their true proportion and perspective, nothing is sharp, true, and clearly defined. The life of any man, as he looks back upon it, is perhaps the greatest puzzle which his experience can furnish. His neighbor's life is not so bewildering to him as is his own until he has the right point of vision from which to view it. Sorrows and perplexities, the dispensations of Providence, the new and subtle forms of temptation perpetually appearing, the grief, the anguish, the agony of life, who shall explain these things? What explanation can be found for the mystery of pain, the problem of suffering, and the other dark enigmas which encompass us?

If I can say a word to help some soul who, looking back upon life, finds it shrouded in mist, unshapen and unmeaning; if I can lead that man to a point of vision from which everything shall be sharp, clear, and well defined—the purpose of this sermon will have been answered. In order to do that let me at once say that I believe the one true point of vision is that given in our text: "The years of the right hand of the Most High." For elucidation of this thought we must deal with the text in its context.

This psalm, written by Asaph, is a very remarkable one, and is most clearly divided, as I think the casual observer will have noticed, by the words of my text. The first part of the psalm is of an absolutely different character from the second. When the Psalmist reaches the point where he says, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," the picture is changed completely. The same man is looking at it, but he has suddenly found an adjustment of the lens by which everything comes into focus, and he sees things as they really are. We shall discover how this comes about if we examine the psalm more closely.

The first ten verses contain twenty-two personal references and eleven allusions to God. The personal pronoun I occurs ten times, my nine times, me once, mine twice—twenty-two personal references in all. The Divine name, or pronouns having reference to the Divine, occur eleven

times, namely, God four times, Jehovah twice, Thou once, He twice, and His twice.

This is not an unfair analysis of the psalm. A man's true condition of heart, mind, character, and position is never revealed by the creed (written by someone else) which he recites, but by his ordinary conversation, by the unmeasured words that pass over his lips. A man's real life is not revealed in carefully prepared utterances, but in those which fall from him without his knowledge, and upon which he would have put a check if he could. Thus doth Asaph, in the depth of a grief which is both personal and relative, pour out his complaint. As I hear him I wait for the little words of the speech, disregarding for the moment the great words that tell of his agony and pain, and, lo, personal pronouns come tumbling over each other until they double in number his reference to the Divine.

While the man is in this condition I notice also some of the phrases that fall from his lips. He says, "I will cry unto God with my voice; even unto God with my voice, and He will give ear unto me." Then the first nine verses contain a story of anguish without healing. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not; my soul refused to be comforted." He sought God in some way which brought no comfort to him. "I remember God, and am disquieted." The memory of God brought him no peace. "I complain, my spirit is overwhelmed." Complaint brings no relief. "Thou holdest mine eyes watching: I am so troubled that I cannot speak." He charges even his sleeplessness upon God. "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit made diligent search." Thus he goes back to past experiences; but even out of them he can get no comfort. This contemplation of his need issues in a series of questions which is almost a wail of despair. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

This is a picture of actual things, but it is out of focus. Asaph has not reached the true point of vision. He is trying to examine his sorrow by taking his stand in the midst of it. He is looking into the bitterness of his own heart, and from his own history he is recalling happy days, only to have the misery of present experience accentuated by the memory of past joyousness and brightness. Sorrow is overwhelming him; and he imagines, in the darkness of his present condition, that God has forgotten him. He asks in the bitterness of his spirit, "Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

Suddenly there is an adjustment of the lens, and how great is the difference! "I said, This is my infirmity," this condition of mind. The words, "But I will remember," do not occur in the original. The Psalmist really said, "This is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High!" He does not announce his intention to dwell upon them, but he announces the character of the years themselves. It is the suddenness of a quick appreciation of the true view of things.

Do you not know what it is suddenly to adjust a picture, by the slightest touch of the hand, so that the whole thing is seen in its true focus? Yes, you have gained the real point of view. So it is here. From the midst of a God-questioning disposition, in which hope is lost, he suddenly says, "This is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High!" Now what do you find? The second half of the psalm is the same picture in focus. Apply to it the same test that we used for the first half. How many personal references are found in the last half of the psalm? Three only: the pronoun I

thrice. How many references to God? Four and twenty: Jehovah once, Thy eleven times, the word God five times, Thou four times, Thee twice, and Thine once. In the first half the Divine is acknowledged, revered, believed in; but the man is overwhelmed with a sense of self and of present grief. In the second half God is the supreme thought in the mind of this man, and self has dropped into insignificance. In the second half of the psalm eight is the multiple of the man's speech concerning God as compared with his words about himself. I do not propose to enter upon a detailed comparison of the expressions in the second half with those of the first, but there is a remarkable change. In the beginning he said, "Hath God forgotten?" Now he says, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is a great god like unto God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast made known Thy strength among the peoples." This is the man who a moment ago was asking if God had ceased to be gracious, and if there were no more deliverance! You cannot take these two parts of the psalm and put them side by side without noticing the marvelous difference between them. One is all darkness, the other is all light; one is blurred and indistinct, the other is clear and sharp. One is characterized by disappointment, by the experience of a man who has almost lost his hold upon God; the other is the song of a man marching with God to victory against all opposition. How comes the difference? Everything depends upon our text. Suddenly in the midst of Asaph's wailing he is reminded, as we believe by the Holy Spirit, that "this is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High." Bearing in mind the necessity for omitting the words, "I will remember," we have, as I have said, a sudden adjustment of the picture of a man's life and condition; and that adjustment is brought about by his seeing that the years are from the right hand of the Most High.

The years are not the years of God—God has no years; but they are the years of man's own life. We necessarily and rightly mark off days into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years; but when you speak of God you speak of Him who is and has no years. He teaches us this by the words of inspiration. With Him a thousand of our years are as a day; and one day with Him is, in its infinite possibility, as a thousand years. God has no time.

The Psalmist, then, is here speaking of his own years, the measured portions of his existence. He counts them as they come—one, two, three, four, and on. What are these years? They are the years of the right hand of the Most High, the years that are held within the hand of God, the years that are molded, conditioned, and made by that hand. Nothing in the years of the Psalmist's own life is outside the hand of God. That is the force of the figure, which does not appear upon a first reading or upon the reading of the text in its isolation.

The old Hebrew thought concerning the right hand of God is full of meaning. In the song of Moses at the end of his life, as chronicled in Deuteronomy 33:2, he speaks of the right hand of God, saying, "From His right hand went a fiery law for the people," showing that the Hebrew mind thought of the right hand of God as a hand of law, of arrangement. In Psalms 48:10 the right hand of God is spoken of as being full of righteousness, so that here we have not merely law, but equity, law based upon that which is just and true. In Psalms 17:7 the psalmist refers to the right hand of God as a right hand of salvation. In Psalms 20:6 the right hand of God is spoken of as His right hand of strength. In Psalms 118:16 the right hand of God is spoken of as His right hand of action. When you come to the Song of Solomon (2:6), God's right hand is spoken of as an emblem of caressing and tender love. And in Psalms 16:11 you have that magnificent declaration, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The right hand is a symbol peculiar to Hebrew thought and literature, and is used perpetually to mark some great fact in the character and person of God. Law and righteousness, salvation and strength, action and love, and the deep, full satisfaction of every necessity of human life, in pleasures forevermore—all these things, to the mind of the Hebrew, were wrapped up in that magnificent figure of the right hand of the Most High. The years of my life, now says the Psalmist, are years conditioned in law and righteousness—years in which there is the perpetual outworking of salvation and the unceasing manifestation of strength; they are years in which God is active for me, years in which I am perpetually caressed by the love and tenderness of the Divine heart, years which, because they come from the hand of God, are years of the making of eternal and undying pleasure. It was a new light upon his own life, a new point of vision, a new outlook. From this new point of vision the things which had issued in his dirge of wailing and sorrow were suddenly seen to be working together for his good, thus giving a forecast of the New Testament statement. The man had caught a glimpse of the explanation of the mystery of today, a glimpse of the outworking into perfect patterns and absolute completeness of the intricacies of the present moment; he had heard his own wail ending in a song of triumph; and all this because he had discovered the fact that his years are from the right hand of the Most High.

Falling back upon our previous statement, that the first half of the psalm and the second are different, and that the difference is wrought by a new vision of life, may we not ask, Wherein does the difference consist?

First of all, self-consciousness is overwhelmed in the sense of God; again, personal suffering is forgotten in view of the divine achievements; and, yet once again, personality is lost in the sense of a God-redeemed society.

Self-consciousness is overwhelmed in a sense of God. One of the most tender, comforting, compassionate methods of God is that which I venture to say you and I never make use of for the comfort of a single broken heart, namely, the exhibition by God of His own overwhelming power and majesty. Again and again is this the way by which God comes with tenderest touch of healing upon broken and bruised hearts. When Job was at the utmost extremity of his pain and desolation God came to him with no word such as I would have attempted to give him, with no word which appeared to have in it the element of explanation or soothing. God came with a display of His own glory. He made His might and majesty to pass before the astonished gaze of the man who sat in the dust; and in that might and majesty of the Most High was the healing which Job so sorely needed. So here Asaph finds his healing and the forgetfulness of himself in a vision of the majesty of God.

Notice the marvelous figurative splendor of the description of the movements of God which you have in the closing verses of the psalm: thunder and lightning, the waters pained, as the Hebrew word expresses it, smitten into agony by the presence of God. This is a graphic picture of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt's bondage and from the waters of the Red Sea. It is the movement of God, the majesty of His march, the magnificence of His power; and as the wounded, broken spirit of Asaph comes face to face with that revelation of power his wounds are forgotten, his sorrow passes away, he is caught up into the excellent and healing glory of the majesty of the great King, and self-consciousness is overwhelmed in a sense of God. If we may but get this vision of the years that have passed from us there will be healing for wounds and solace for

sorrow in the forgetfulness of self because of an enlarged conception of the majesty of the Most High.

The mightiest influences of God are the most gentle in their touch, and the forces which are most full of majesty and power are the forces that come into contact with wounds and pain in order to heal them. In your knowledge and in mine there is nothing mightier than the sun. The old poetry we learned at school, so simple and quaint, told how the wind and the sun fought for mastery over man. That story of the sun gaining a victory which the wind could not gain has its perpetual philosophy and its undying meaning for the sons of men. The sun, presently smiting the earth upon which the rain and the snow have fallen, will be answered by the hoarded wealth which shall prove that same sun to be the most wondrous of natural forces. Into its light you bring the crushed and faded child which is being nursed back to life, and the kiss of the great sun upon the cheek of the little one makes it also blossom and bloom with beauty. Wounded men and women should not dwell upon their wounds and try to heal them, but should carry them into the sunlight of the majesty of God. They should say of the broken years, the years which are full of pain, the strange, mysterious years. These are the years of the Most High, and upon them shall come the healing of God's uprising in glory.

Notice also how personality is lost in the sense of a God-redeemed society. How different is the last verse of this psalm from the first! The first verse, what is it? "I will cry unto God with my voice; even unto God with my voice, and He will give ear unto me." It is a personal cry. The last verse, what is it? "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." To quote once more from the book of Job, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." How many an individual wound has been healed in this larger outlook upon life, which can come only as we learn that our years are the years of the right hand of the Most High! We look back upon a year that is past, and what is the picture? I cannot answer for you, nor can you do so for me. Shall we not, each for himself and for herself, think of it?

Are there not moments when, looking back upon the year and thinking of your own part in it, you are almost driven to cry out, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?" How many are saying these things in their hearts, if not with their lips! It is a source of great joy and comfort to know that if we feel these things we need not try to hide them from God. There are expressions with regard to your life which would appear almost blasphemous in the ears of your fellow Christian, but God understands them. I would not say a word to rebuke the anguish and grief that are swelling up in these verses. I dare not. I have no rebuke for such a man or woman, for the soul that has confessed to some awful anguish from which it cannot get away, and is asking, "Has God forgotten?" We must remember that the words of the Psalmist are questions, not affirmations. These words are the cry of a wounded, buffeted, and broken spirit, almost driven to despair by the perplexing facts and forces of life.

But there is something better than this, something beyond it. "The years of the right hand of the Most High." There is a point of vision from which we may look upon the selfsame things, and may catch on them already the light and gleam of morning, an overwhelming sorrow, saying, Yes, that happened, not upon such a day of such a month in such a year, but in one of the years of the right

hand of the Most High. It was a part of the fiery law, a method of the divine righteousness, a ministry of the divine love; it had within it the creation of joy forevermore. To-day we can say these things only by faith, not yet by sight, not yet by personal realization, but by faith. There is no agony of heart that we endure, if we know how to take it, that has not in it the element that shall make heaven.

"The years of the right hand of the Most High." I do not see the hand, I have only the years; but I know the hand is there. I know that somewhere beyond this, when the mists have rolled aside, and the life I am conscious of today shall have passed into fuller realization, then out of the darkness will the light come, and out of the agony of the moment will heaven's pleasure have been evolved. I hardly like to suggest how this comes about; but some of us are already doing so:

Ah, then what raptured greetings

On Canaan's happy shore!

What knitting severed friendships up,

Where partings are no more!

There is a sense in which, today I begin to spell this out, lisping the truth with stammering tongue.

This is but an illustration, but follow me patiently. The year 1894 was a year of His right hand, and there will be more than compensation in the morning of meeting for all the agony of waiting, for I shall see her again, not as a child, but as a fair maiden, in the Father's mansion, grown like Him; and in that transformation there will be all the sweetness which I have lost and missed through the years. The year 1907 was a year of His right hand. I shall see him again, and then the touch of old age will not be upon the brow, but the abiding strength of the age-abiding life. I can only believe it now; but I do believe it. All the years are "the years of the right hand of the Most High." Accidents? There are none. Catastrophes? The word is canceled in the vocabulary of faith. God's covenant is "ordered in all things, and sure." Oh, strange covenant: perplexing mystery of infinite love wrought out through the more perplexing mystery of pain.

May God teach us His lesson of being still and waiting amid the sorrow. All your affliction, all your sorrow, all your disappointment, in God's hand. Oh, the light of it, the glory of it! We do believe; God help our unbelief, teaching us to wait quietly amid the stress and strain of the darkness.

I cannot see His skies, above,

For autumn mists obscure the west;

But in the shelter of His love,

I fain would hush my heart to rest;

Though some bright hopes have tenderly

Been gathered to their last repose,

This sweet remembrance comforts me—

He knows.

For why the summer came—and went,
He shows not yet to me, His child;
But patience, richer than content,
Broods softly where the summer smiled;
And where the last bright leaf shall fall,
The last pale blossom find repose,
Is safe with Him Who loveth all—
He knows.

Amid the hush of finished things
He hears His children's feeblest prayer,
The tender shadowing of His wings
Extends beyond their utmost care;
And loss that ne'er on earth grows less,
With deep and holy meaning glows,
Since loss, and pain, and homelessness—
He knows.

I cannot tell if cross or crown
Lies next within His thought for me;
It matters not, since faith hath grown
So strong in His dear sympathy;
The clouds that o'er my pathway move,
The joys beyond its final close,
All rise from His deep heart of love—
He knows.

So farewell 1907, and let this 1908 bring with it what it may, two years among the many, which with all the rest are "the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Psalm 96:9. Worship, Beauty, Holiness.

Psalm 96:9.

Worship, Beauty, Holiness.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Psalms 96:9

The word that attracts our attention in this text is the word "beauty." "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Whether in application this word is of supreme importance may be another question. The very fact of its attractiveness compels us to consider its setting. In that consideration we shall discover its suggestiveness and importance.

The particular word translated "beauty" here is used only five times in the Scriptures: once in Proverbs 14:28, where it is translated in the Authorized Version "honour," and in the Revised Version "glory"; again in 1 Chronicles 16:29; in the psalm which was sung when the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom to its resting-place in the tent or tabernacle; again in II Chronicles, in the story of Jehoshaphat's arrangement of the singers who were to precede the army, who were charged in their singing to "praise the beauty of holiness"; again in Psalms 29, and in the text.

It is a somewhat rare word therefore. Our English word "beauty" does most perfectly express the real meaning of the word, of which it is a translation. It suggests honor, or glory, or beauty, not as a decoration, but as an intrinsic value, an inherent quality. The Revised Version suggests in its marginal reading in each case that we should read, "Worship the Lord in holy array." But this does not for a single moment interfere with the essential thought of the passage, for it cannot refer merely to material clothing, but to that outshining of inner character which is the true array of the soul in its approach to God in worship, that outshining of inner character which makes even sackcloth beautiful, and homespun a thing of ineffable glory. We do not forget that when our Lord was transfigured, that transfiguration was not the shining upon Him of a light from heaven, nor even, as I venture to believe, the outshining of His Deity, but rather the shining through of the essential glory and perfection of His human nature. Eye-witnesses tell us that His very raiment became white and glistening, and yet as we read the story we know that it was the appearance of the glory of a raiment due to the essential glory of His own character there manifested to them for their sakes rather than for His.

And so with our word "beauty" here the thought is that of an inherent quality, not a decoration, not something put on as from without, but something manifest to the eye, and appealing to the emotion and the mind, as being in itself glorious and beautiful, and yet belonging essentially to the fact with which we are brought into contact. The text is a cry, calling upon men to worship, and declaring what is the true condition of worship, and so incidentally revealing the true nature of worship. Only once does this particular word occur apart from the same kind of setting—in the

book of Proverbs. Everywhere else it is associated with worship, holiness. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

These words lie in the midst of language in which the psalmist is appealing to men to praise God, calling them to recognize His greatness, calling them to recognize His glory, calling them to think of His power and His majesty, and urging them to answer the things their eyes see, and their hearts feel, by offering praise to Him.

In this call so poetic and full of beauty there is a revelation of the deep meaning of worship, of its abiding condition, and glory. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The supreme thing is worship. But how is worship to be rendered? "In the beauty of holiness." Wherever you find beauty, it is the outcome of holiness. Wherever you find beauty as the outcome of holiness that beauty in itself is incense, is worship. To attempt to worship in any other way is to fail. To live the life of holiness is to live the life of beauty, and that is to worship.

What is worship? The essential and simple meaning of the word, and therefore the fundamental thought is that of prostration, of bowing down. Worship suggests that attitude which recognizes the throne, which recognizes superiority; that attitude of the life which takes the low place of absolute reverence in the presence of that which takes hold upon the life and compels it. It is a word full of force, which constrains us, and compels us to the attitude of reverence.

The word "worship" runs through the Bible, and the thought of worship is to be found from beginning to end. The thought of worship is on the part of man, the recognition of Divine sufficiency, the recognition of his absolute dependence upon the Divine sufficiency, the confession that all he needs in his own life he finds in the life of God. And the spoken answer to that conviction of the abandonment and surrender of the whole of man to God is worship. I worship in the presence of God as I recognize that in Him I find everything that my life demands, as I find that in myself I am incomplete everywhere, save as I am brought into relationship with Him. A sense of my need and His resource, a sense that all my life finds only its highest and its best, and fulfils itself in relation to Him, produces the act and the attitude of worship. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a subject bent before the King. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a child yielding all its love to its Father. The attitude of worship is the attitude of the sheep that follows the leading of the Shepherd, and is content in all that pasturage which He appoints. It is the attitude of saying Yes to everything that God says.

The height of worship is realized in expression in the use of two words which have never been translated, which remain upon the page of Holy Scripture, and in the common language of the Church, as they were in the language where they originated: "Hallelujah," and "Amen." When I have learned to say those two words with all my mind, and heart, and soul, and being, I have at once found the highest place of worship, and the fullest realization of my own life. "Let all the people praise the Lord, Let all the people say, Amen." And when I pass on presently to the end of the Divine Library, I hear in heaven, "a great multitude... saying, Hallelujah.... And a second time they say, Hallelujah"; and the great responsive answer is Amen. Amen to His will, and Hallelujah the offering of praise. I know it is but a simple symbol. I know it is but the saying of an old thing, but I address my own heart as much as any of you, my brethren, and I say, Oh, soul of mine, hast thou learned to say Amen to Him, and that upon the basis of a deep and profound conviction of all His absolute perfection in government, and method and providence? Canst thou say, not as the

boisterous shout of an unenlightened soul, but as the quiet expression of a heart resting in the perfection of God, Hallelujah and Amen? Then that is worship, that is life.

I am not going to stay to speak at all upon secondary worship, save to refer to it and recognize it. The outward acts are sacred. The songs of praise that tell of the goodness and the grace and the sufficiency of God, the prayer that pours out its burden because it is confident in God's resource to meet all human need, the quiet attention to the Word of God as we meditate upon it: these are the outward acts of worship, and behind the praise and the prayer, and the meditation upon His Word is this great consciousness that all I need is in Him, and that in proportion as my whole life is abandoned to Him, in that proportion my need will be met, and so my life itself, restful in God, powerful because of my relationship to Him, will be a song, a psalm, an anthem; or if I may go back and borrow the words, God's own poetry, God's own poem, the music that glorifies Him.

So, brethren, the outward acts are the least important parts of our worship. If I have not been worshiping God for the last six days, I cannot worship Him this morning. If there has been no song through my life to God, I am not prepared to sing His praise, and the reason why so often

Hosannas languish on our tongues

is because "our devotion dies." This is a pause in worship, and expresses a perpetual attitude. The worship of the sanctuary is wholly meaningless and valueless save as it is preceded by and prepared for by the worship of the life.

We may now press on to ask the meaning of the psalmist when he says, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Let us fix our attention in the most simple way upon the word "beauty," in our common use of it.

When Charles Kingsley lay dying, he said, among other things, "How beautiful God is!" We are almost startled by the word. We do not often think of it in that connection. We speak of His majesty. We speak of His might. We speak of His mercy. We speak of His holiness. We speak of His love. And yet, brethren, there is nothing of God which He has made more patent to men than the fact of His beauty. Every ultimate thought of God is beautiful. Every manifestation of God is full of beauty. I recently came across some old verses of Tupper's. They are quaint, and somewhat curious. He says:

For beauty hideth everywhere, that Reason's child may seek her,

And having found the gem of price, may set it in God's crown.

Beauty nestleth in the rosebud, or walketh the firmament with planets;

She is heard in the beetle's evening hymn, and shouteth in the matins of the sun;

The cheek of the peach is glowing with her smile, her splendor blazeth in the lightning;

She is the dryad of the woods, the naiad of the streams.

Her golden hair hath tapestried the silkworm's silent chamber,

And to her measured harmonies the wild waves beat in time;

With tinkling feet at eventide she danceth in the meadows,
Or, like a Titan, lieth stretched athwart the ridgy Alps;
She is rising in her veil of mist a Venus from the waters,—
Men gaze upon the loveliness,—and, lo, it is beautiful exceedingly:
She, with the might of a Briarens, is dragging down the clouds upon the mountains,—
Men look upon the grandeur,—and, lo, it is excellent in glory.
There is beauty in the rolling clouds, and placid shingle beach,
In feathery snows, and whistling winds, and dun electric skies;
There is beauty in the rounded woods, dank with heavy foliage,
In laughing fields, and dented hills, the valley and its lake;
There is beauty in the gullies, beauty on the cliffs, beauty in sun and shade,
In rocks and rivers, seas and plains,—the earth is drowned in beauty.
Beauty coileth with the water snake, and is cradled in the shrew-mouse's nest,
She flitteth out with evening bats, and the soft mole hid her in his tunnel;
The limpet is encamped upon the shore, and beauty not a stranger to his tent;
The silvery dace, and golden carp, thread the rushes with her;
She saileth into clouds with an eagle, she fluttereth into tulips with a hummingbird;
The pasturing kine are of her company, and she prowleth with the leopard in his jungle.
Go back to the first lines of it with me for a moment—
For beauty hideth everywhere, that Reason's child may seek her,
And having found the gem of price, may set it in God's crown.

That is the key to it. Tupper saw beauty in all these things. We are so blind, and seldom see beauty, but he saw God's handiwork, evidences of God's presence and God's power, and God's law operating in the blossom of a perfect beauty.

My brethren, these are commonplaces to us. Yet how often do we see them? I am not here to remind you of these things. I am here to take you back to the thought of the beauty of God, blossoming in the daisy on the sod, blazing in the starry heavens, to bring you back to my text, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," to remind you of the fact that every ultimate thought of God is beautiful, and that ugliness and deformity are never of God. All the beauty of flowers in form and color and perfume are of God. All the beauty of the seasons as they pass: spring and summer and autumn and winter, all that is beautiful in man physically, mentally, spiritually, and all that is beautiful in the interrelation between man and man, is of God.

To put this same truth for one moment from another standpoint, everything which is of God is beautiful. The marring of a flower which makes it ugly is not of God. That in a man which is repulsive is not of God. God is a God of might. God is a God of glory. God is a God of love. But He is also the God of beauty. It is well for us to think of it for a moment and remember it.

I remember staying, some years ago, while conducting some special services, with a friend in Devonshire. There came by the morning mail to him some roses wrought in silk by deft fingers here in London. And he put some of these roses wrought in silk by me, and said, "They are very beautiful." And holding them up in my folly and short-sightedness, I said, "They are perfect." He replied, "Are they, really?" And he brought his microscope, and put the rose beneath it, and the very silk itself became coarse as sackcloth. Then he brought from his greenhouse a spray of God's roses, and put them under the microscope, and the more closely I looked, the more perfect they were. The beauty of God as manifest in the tiniest cell of the flower as in its completion is manifest in the blossoming of the flower, as in the rhythmic order of the heavens about me. Brethren, God is very beautiful, and everything which is of God is essentially beautiful.

Therefore, do not let us be afraid of our text when we come to the subject of holiness. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." In God's works beauty is the expression of holiness.

The Beauty is His handiwork,

The Light glows from His face,

The perfume is His sweetness,

All Earth's beauty is His grace.

If God's ultimate thought is realized only along the line of His law, then the law is that which creates the beauty; and everywhere beauty is marred by the breaking of law. Holiness, then, is rectitude of character, the condition of beauty. What is "the beauty of holiness"? The realization of a Divine thought by abiding in the Divine law. That is the one and only condition of worship.

Let me illustrate again. The flowers that blossom on the sod are worshiping God. But how are they worshiping? They are worshiping by their beauty. And what is their beauty? The beauty is the result of the operation of the law of God; and in answer to the laws of their life, not by effort, not by garments other than the garments of essential glory wrought out from their inner life, they worship. They worship in beauty because they worship in holiness. They worship within the realm of law. "The trees of the Lord," said one of the ancient writers, "are full," and I often regret the addition in translation which imagines that the Hebrew method of expression is so imperfect that we must add to it to complete it. Our translators have written, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." They thought it was poetic. I think it was prosaic. I think they had been looking at a tree, and they thought there was nothing but sap. The Hebrew word is "full." Change the word "sap" to "beauty," and that would still be incomplete. There are things which are subtracted from by adding to. "The trees of the Lord are full," full of sap, full of beauty, full of health, full of poetry.

But let me introduce the word "beauty" here. "The trees of the Lord are full of beauty," and are they not? Oh, it is good to get away and stand among the trees. "The trees of the Lord are full." "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." What did the psalmist mean? He says, "The God of glory thundereth... the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon." The Word of God, the

enunciation of law is upon them, and they have heard, and have answered, and in the uprising of their life, they have blossomed into fulness of form and beauty. Did you ever see an ugly tree? I have, but it was a tree some fool of a man had tried to cut into the shape of a bird. But a tree is full of beauty. What is its beauty? It is the beauty of law. You spoil the law of the tree, and you will rob it of its beauty, and you will rob God of His worship.

You may climb higher. The cloud rises in the sky, and you with your incipient infidelity grumble because the sun is shut out from your patch of earth. Presently the cloud is giving itself away, flinging itself out upon the earth; and gradually it exhausts itself, and ceases to be. Every rain shower is the worshipping of a cloud, its fulfilment of the purpose of its being. It is its answer to the movement of God in the economy of life. And as the cloud pours itself out it worships, it worships in the beauty of holiness. The tides that come and go worship, and worship in beauty, worship in majesty, the deep diapason of their voice roaring around us, until we are deafened, but it is all an anthem of worship. But what is their beauty? The answer to law, the fulfilling of the purpose of God.

So we climb by these illustrations to man. When does a man worship. A man worships when he is what God meant him to be. I may sing every song in the hymnbook, and never worship. I may recite every creed that was ever prepared, and never worship. I may inflict all manner of scourging upon this body of mine, and never worship. I may kneel in long lonely vigils of the night, and never worship; and the song, and the sacrifice, and the prayer are nothing unless I am, in this one lonely individual life of mine, what God Almighty meant me to be. When I am that my whole life worships.

How can I be that? Only as I discover His law, only as I walk in His ways; and here is the difference between the flower and man. The supreme dignity, the tremendous and overwhelming majesty of your life and mine is that of our power to choose, to elect, to decide, to will. Consequently the worship of the soul that can choose and decide and elect and will is profounder, mightier, greater than any other worship could be. It is not in the antiphonal song of choirs, or in the chanting of music to which we listen, or even in our own singing; it is in taking hold of our individual life, and the putting of it into such relationship with God that it becomes what He means it should be.

I do not worship God by going to China as a missionary if God wants me to stay at home and do the work of a carpenter. I do not worship God by aspiring to some mighty and heroic thing for Him if the capacity He has given me is for doing the quiet thing, and the simple thing, and the hidden thing, and the unknown thing. It would be very foolish for the hummingbird, instead of entering the tulip, to try to beat back the air and combat with the eagle. It worships by staying where God puts it. It would be very wicked for the eagle to cultivate a mock modesty, and say that it preferred to remain among the tulips when it ought to be soaring sunwards.

So that if I have spoken to you about the fact that God has foreordained works, that we should walk in them, I now remind you that if you worship when you find God's appointment, and when you walk in the way God has appointed, you realize your own life. Worship consists in the finding of my own life, and the yielding of it wholly to God for the fulfilment of His purpose. That is worship! You say, Would you tell us to find our life? Did not Jesus say we must lose it? Yes, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," but He did not finish there: "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it," not another life, not a new life, not a new order of life, not an angel's life, for instance, but his own life.

The Cross is necessary, restraint is necessary, sacrifice is necessary, self-denial is necessary; but these things are all preliminary, and when Paul describes the Christian life at its fullest, he does not say, I am crucified. That is the wicket gate, that is the pathway that leads out, that is the beginning. "I have been crucified with Christ: yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God."

Or again, he says, speaking of Christ Himself, "It is Christ that died," but that is not the last thing, nor the final thing, "yea rather, that was raised from the dead." And so if the Cross be absolutely necessary, and it is—your cross, my cross, my individual dying to the ambitions of selfish desire, all that is necessary; but beyond it, life. What life? My life. The new birth is but the passing into the possibility of the first birth. The new creation is but the finding of the meaning of, and the fulfilment of the purposes of the first creation. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Discover His law, answer His law, walk in the way of His appointing. Let Him Who made you lead out all the facts of your life to the fulfilment of His purpose, and then your whole life is worship.

Then, brethren, you will see that worship does not begin when you come here. This is a very valuable part of worship, but it is secondary worship, symbolic worship. This is the day in which we cease the worship that perfectly glorifies Him in order that in song and praise and prayer we may remind ourselves of the perpetual and unending truth that life lived within His will, and according to His law, the life of holiness is the beauty that glorifies God. This service is but a pause in which in word and attitude we give expression to life's inner song. And if there be no such inner song, there is no worship here. Worship is the perpetual poetry of Divine power and Divine love expressed in human life.

Angels worship not merely when veiling their faces they sing of His holiness, but when ceasing their singing at His bidding, they fly to catch the live coal from the altar, and touch the lips of a penitent soul who sighs. It is true "they also serve who only stand and wait." But it is equally true that they also worship who serve, and serve perpetually. And it is in the service of a life, not specific acts done as apart from the life, not because I teach in the Sabbath school, or preach here, that I worship. I may preach here today, and never worship. But because my life is found in His law, is answering His call, responsive to His provision and arrangement, so almost, without knowing it, my life has become a song, a praise, an anthem. So I worship! I join the angels, and all Nature, in worship when I become what God intends I should be. And in that blossoming of His ideal we sing the song of His greatness and His love.

Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;

Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;

Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign;

All save the clouds of sin are Thine.

Grant us Thy Truth to make us free,

And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,

Till all Thy living altars claim

One holy Light, one heavenly flame.

And so I pray that when the service is over, and the Sabbath day has passed, we may go back to know that in the shop, in the office, in the home and market place, in all the toil of the commonplaces, we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Where there is holiness there is beauty. Where there is beauty there is worship. However ornate the worship may be in external things, if it lacks the beauty of holiness, it never reaches the inner sanctuary, and never glorifies God.

Psalm 102:13-14. The Set Time.

Psalm 102:13-14.

The Set Time.

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And have pity upon her dust.

Psalms 102:13-14

This psalm is peculiar, in that in the inscription to be found at its head we have a declaration of its character, and a revelation of the circumstances under which it may be used. That inscription reads thus:

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

It is a prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed. It is a prayer that is to be used when the afflicted and overwhelmed soul is in the presence of Jehovah. It is a psalm, therefore, which sets affliction in the light of the government of God.

It is impossible and unnecessary to find the date of the writing of this psalm. Hengstenberg earnestly maintained that it was Davidic, whereas Perowne shares the general opinion that it was written in exile, and that the set time referred to the end of Jeremiah's seventy years, when the exiled people were hoping for the dawn of a better day.

These are opinions only. The far more interesting fact is that the author of the letter to the Hebrews ignores altogether the question of human dating and human authorship, and ascribes some of the words of the psalm to Jehovah Himself. In the opening chapter of that letter he declares that God says of His Son,

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Thy hands:

They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure,

all of which is direct quotation from the latter part of this psalm.

Consequently, the New Testament would lead us to understand that the fulfilment of the psalm—that is, the filling to the full of its spiritual significance—is only discovered as it is interpreted by the experiences of our blessed Lord Himself. According to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, the psalm is pre-eminently and finally Messianic.

If that be accepted, let us at least pause long enough to notice the fact that it falls into three parts. In the first eleven verses we have nothing but the expression of overwhelming and desolating sorrow. At verse twenty-three the strain, broken in upon at verse eleven, is taken up again: "He

weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said: O, my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Again it is the plaintive note of an overwhelming grief. In the middle of that verse the tone changes, and we read, "Thy years are throughout all generations"; and we should certainly have read that as though it were still the appeal of the suffering one to God, were it not that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says that these are words in which God answers the cry of His suffering servant. When out of the midst of sorrow he cries, the answer of the Father is this: "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth." Therein, we have revealed the secret of the Messiah's strength and victory.

But in the paragraph which I have omitted, verses twelve to twenty-two, we have the great song of Zion—Zion personified, Zion afflicted, Zion expecting deliverance. And the text that I have chosen this morning lies at the center of that central section of this wonderful psalm. Its immediate application is to Zion:

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:

For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come.

Because thy servants take pleasure in her stones,

And have pity upon her dust.

That is, upon her very rubbish.

But if the immediate application, when the singer wrote his song, was an application to Zion, its principles are of much wider application. There is no solution suggested here of the problem of pain, or, to use the larger word, which indicates both cause and effect, there is no solution here of the universal problem of evil; but there is a revelation of the place of affliction in the economy of God for the men of faith. I am quite conscious that all about this text there is the atmosphere of Hebrew hope and expectation. I am quite conscious of how much there is in it that seems to belong wholly to the past; but I propose to turn aside from such things in order that we may discover two or three matters of supreme importance as they cast their light upon the afflictions of the men of faith. There is, I repeat therefore, a revelation here of the place of affliction in the economy of God. And I crave your patience while I tarry a moment longer, by way of introduction, to speak of the word affliction. I am not speaking here, neither is this the thought of the psalm, or the common thought of that word affliction, of certain phases of personal grief and sorrow, for the coming of which there is no responsibility resting upon the sufferers. That is an entirely different matter. Affliction here is chastisement, the dealing of God with a sinning people. Whether individually or nationally, or in a Church application, the principles are the same. And so I repeat, that in these wonderful verses of the ancient psalm, light is flung upon the economy of God in His method of afflicting His people on account of their sin.

I will first of all summarize these matters in three statements, which I shall then endeavor to lay before you by way of illustration and application.

These words, in the song of the psalmist, remind us first of all that there is a set time, a set time for deliverance out of affliction. "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come."

In the second place, this quotation from the song of the psalmist makes it perfectly evident that the set time for deliverance arrives when God arises. "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion."

Finally, the song teaches us that the attitude of His people in affliction determines the set time of His arising to deliver. The set time is come because, "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And have pity upon her dust."

Let me repeat even more briefly the threefold thought. First, there is a set time in the economy of God for deliverance out of affliction. Secondly, the set time arrives when God arises. Finally, God arises when His people have gained the value of affliction.

Perhaps now I ought to pause long enough to say, in the presence of this congregation, that which is especially upon my heart. During the past week, I have been present at a very remarkable meeting in London. On Friday evening last, it was my privilege to speak at St. James's Hall in company with Canon Hay Aitken and Mr. John McNeill at a meeting called for the purpose of praise and thanksgiving for the Revival of Religion fifty years ago. And I am bound to say to you this morning, speaking as I now do to my own people, and in the home of my own service, that I was variously impressed by that gathering. That it was a very remarkable one, no one who was present can possibly deny. To sit surrounded by so many of these men was to feel glad that so many of them tarried until this hour. To hear the story of what God then wrought was to fill the soul, even at this distance, with a great joy and a great gladness. But to be in that meeting was to be conscious of a grave peril, a peril that I think characterizes this hour peculiarly—the peril of persistent looking back instead of confident looking up. And growing out of that is another peril—that of desiring to imitate the methods of the past, to adopt the phrasing of the past, to compel this age to forgetfulness of the freedom and the freshness of the Spirit's activity, and to crowd it back into the methods of fifty years ago.

I was impressed, moreover, with the more insidious and graver peril of an undue haste to be away from the time of affliction. That this is a time of affliction in spiritual things, I suppose we are all ready to admit. There is a sense in which we do sigh for manifestations of bygone days, a sense in which we cannot help being appalled, first of all, at the apparent carelessness and overwhelming indifference of the masses of the people to spiritual things; and, secondly, at the growing selfishness of the most spiritually minded people in the Christian Church. First, I say at the carelessness and indifference of vast multitudes of men and women by whom we are surrounded. We need look no further afield than our own city. We need take in no wider period than that of this morning's service. We have but to remind ourselves of facts with which we are so familiar that they fail to appeal to us, that at this very hour the vast mass of London's population has no thought of God and no care for religion.

We have also to confess that there is a grave danger in this hour, that we should be guilty of that which James described, as asking in order that we may spend upon our own lusts. Remember, brethren, that passage has an application to us, and its profoundest application is not that which we usually make. The lust of spiritual selfishness is more devilish than the animal lust of the street. When a Christian man forever prays that God will bless him, and loses his passion for the lost and the ruined, he is denying Christ far more forcibly than the man who profanes openly upon the public highway; and the peril of all our Bible conferences and conventions is this, that vast crowds come together for their own spiritual enrichment.

I know that this is a day of dearth, a day of drought, a day of affliction; but I am growingly convinced that the thing we need to do is to discover, and yield to the principle revealed in this passage in the Psalms, the principle revealed through all the teaching of the Bible. We need to come to an understanding of the fact, that when we pray that God will end this state of things we may be very sincere; but we may be making a profound mistake, and God may be saying to us, in answer to our praying: "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." While we may be absolutely sincere as we cry, "Awake, awake; put on strength, O arm of the Lord," He may answer us as He answered His people in the ancient days: "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." It is as though, in answer to our cry to God for revival, He should say to us, I have never slept or slumbered. It is you who have slept and slumbered. In order that we may understand this matter, let us here consider these things in quiet and solemn meditation. I bring you this morning the message which God has spoken to my heart, a message not to you, beloved, first, but to me; and to be shared with you, because I believe it is the thing we need to hear in the presence of the widespread drought in spiritual things that characterizes our outlook.

Let us, then, remember that there is a set time, and mark the significance of the word—an appointed time, a set time for deliverance out of affliction. This is in itself a message full of comfort, full of encouragement. We must, however, consider it in its relationship to the other things to be said; but let us dwell upon the simple fact itself for two or three minutes. The people of God in the day of affliction are not abandoned by God. The verse preceding that which I have chosen as text has these words: "But Thou, O Lord, shalt abide forever." The marginal reading of the Revision surely helps us here. "But Thou, O Jehovah, sittest as King forever, And Thy memorial unto all generations." This was the consciousness out of which the song of the psalmist's confidence was born. God has not abandoned His people in the day that seems to be a day of drought, and a day of darkness, and a day of affliction. He is nigh when He seems absent. He is watching when He seems blind. He is active when He seems idle. Said Habbakuk, mystified by the drought and darkness, and the dread of the day in which he lived: "What is God doing? 'I cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save.'" He complained because of the sin of his age, and God seemed to make no response. In answer to that complaint, Jehovah declared: "I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." And then He told him—told him that He was girding Cyrus, a man outside the covenant, to do the work which was not being done by the people within the covenant. And Habbakuk, more amazed than ever, said: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak with me;" and the result of that patient waiting for God was that the prophecy ended with a great song:

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flocks shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls;

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

That is the true attitude of faith today. In the midst of the drought, in the midst of the failure, we dishonour God when we allow ourselves to give way to panic: "Thou, O Lord, sittest as King forever."

We are to remember also that deliverance is always closely related to affliction in the economy of God. Deliverance is the reason of affliction. He doth not willingly afflict. And wherever affliction comes, His purpose is deliverance; not from the affliction, but from that which was the reason of the coming of the affliction. Why does God afflict, withhold the evidences of His power, suffer the deadly drought to settle upon His people, until there is no flower and no fruit, and no realization of spiritual things? In order to correct some underlying evil, and therefore deliverance is the reason of the affliction. He afflicts in order to bring a deeper and profounder deliverance. We cry too often to be delivered from the punishment, instead of the sin that lies behind it. We are anxious to escape from the things that cause us pain rather than from the things that cause God pain. Deliverance is the reason of affliction, and deliverance, therefore, is the issue of affliction. And when it comes, it is the explanation of affliction. The Church of God has never yet passed through a period of affliction, but that, looking back, it has seen the reason of it; and the wonderful deliverance wrought has explained all the process of chastisement and of darkness.

And once again, therefore, affliction in the economy of God is beneficent. Read the song of Zion in this central paragraph to the end, and what do you find? "That men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem." The result, then, of affliction in the experience of the men of faith is the blessing of others.

All the days of darkness are in His economy. These principles have application to the individual; they have application to the nation; they have application to the Church of God.

I turn over in this wonderful Book of Psalms to the one hundred and nineteenth, and I find the value of affliction in the life of the individual recognized in these words. In verse sixty-seven: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe Thy word." In verse seventy-one: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted That I may learn Thy statutes." In verse seventy-five: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." How many saints there are in this congregation this morning who could add their testimony to the truth of these words! Delivered from affliction we see its infinite value, and we are able to say, It was good for us that we have been afflicted.

That also is true in national life. Without turning to it now, I pray you read most carefully at your leisure that awe-inspiring passage, the first chapter of Isaiah, in which all the bruising and wounding and affliction of Israel is revealed to be God's necessary method of restoring the nation to Himself.

Or, in illustration of the application of the principle to the Church, remember the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, which we read in our lesson: "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

By so much as the present darkness and the present drought is the act of God—and it must be His act, for He withholds—it is part of a process by which He is preparing for a great deliverance. Decreases! I am weary of the lament over them. They may most assuredly be evidences that God is at work, sifting among His people. I pick up all kinds of religious newspapers, and I read of decrease and of consequent lamentation. Nay, rather thank God if He will but sift our ranks, and make our numbers less, in order to make our forces greater, for then deliverance is at the doors. All the afflictions of God, if we set affliction in the light of His Throne of government, are beneficent.

But now mark the second thought. The set time of deliverance arrives when God arises. "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion," and that takes us back to the initial word, "But Thou, O Lord, sittest as King forever." There is no limitation of His knowledge. He understands the causes, watches the processes, and proceeds toward the issues. There is no limitation of His power, and mark how the psalmist explains this: "Thy memorial, Thy remembrance unto all generations." That is to declare that God's attitude always takes posterity into account; that whatever He does today, He is doing not only in the interest of today, but in the interest of tomorrow. His remembrance of the generations is a principle that we often forget when we revolt against Divine judgments; that when God visits in judgment it is not merely the moment of His visitation which is within His own infinite mind, but the next moment, and the following day, and the years that lie ahead, and the centuries and millenniums and ages of the future. The King Who sitteth enthroned forever is not acting in your life in the interest of the half-hour in which He acts, but in the interest of all the generations that lie ahead. Why should we attempt to hasten His movements? Why should we pray as though He had forgotten? Why should we express the agony of our hearts in the presence of present failure as though the blame of it lay upon God? He will arise, said the psalmist. When? At the right moment, at the set time, when trouble has done its work He ends it. When wrath has praised Him, He restrains it. When the forsaking for a season has resulted in a sense of need, He returns. Nothing can prevent Him; His remembrance never fails. It is not necessary that we should remind Him. His purpose never changes. It is useless that we should attempt to change it. His throne never trembles. It is not necessary that we should endeavor to hold it up. I speak out of my own heart when I say to you that I am convinced that what we need is a new vision of God and a new vision of His throne, in order to be delivered from the panic that fills our hearts within the Church about spiritual things, and within the nation about national things. These restless, feverish, godless, narrow thoughts sweeping over us are born of a dim vision of the throne of God, and of the God Who sits upon it.

Thou, O Jehovah, sittest as King forever,

And Thy memorial unto all generations.

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion;

and the heart that comes to consciousness of this twofold fact is delivered from panic, and is kept firm and steady.

But once again and finally, and this is the point of importance to us. The attitude of God's own people determines the set time of His arising to deliver.

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:

For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come.

Because Thy servants take pleasure in her stones,

And have pity upon her dust.

Place the psalm where you will in the history of the ancient people, it matters not: the principle is the same. Jerusalem in ruins, her stones in heaps, her beautiful places piles of rubbish; and the people have been careless and indifferent. But at last there comes a sense of shame and a sense of repentance and contrition, and they begin to mourn over the ruin. In that hour the set time is come. Not when amid the ruin the nation flings the blame of it upon God, but when amid the ruin the nation takes the shame of it into its own heart, and gets down in humiliation before God; that is the hour of hope. These are the tears which He gilds with the glory of a new day. This is the hour for God's arising. When the lesson is learned, and the wayward heart weeps over the ruin, the set time for deliverance has come. When—it may be through blood and desolation—the nation learns the value of righteousness, then the set time for deliverance is come.

Or, finally—and that is the main point of application now—when within the Christian Church the ineffectiveness of everything in the absence of God makes us pity the dust of Zion, the day of revival is dawning. The interpretation of that thought is to be found in the words of Christ to Laodicea. What Laodicea said, the Church is in danger of saying today: "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." The Divine estimate is otherwise: "Thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked." When the Church realizes the truth of that, and comes to the realization of the ineffectiveness of all she has, while Christ is excluded, having to seek admission to His own home, then the day is dawning, and the first breath of the wind of renewal may be felt sweeping over the garden of God.

I say to you solemnly this morning, it is utterly useless to meet and pray for revival. Let us rather humble ourselves before God, repent in dust and ashes, confess that numbers and wealth and statistics are nothing, that what we supremely need to recognize is our ruin and our rubbish. When we pity these, God will pity us. The set time of deliverance is determined by the attitude of His people.

This meditation, beloved, should produce two results. It should cure all panic, if our hearts are right with God. "He sitteth as King forever," and He will arise. And, strange and contradictory as this affirmation may seem, a paradox indeed, if this meditation should issue in the cure of panic, it will also become the inspiration of anxiety—anxiety to learn the lessons of our affliction, and anxiety to right the wrongs that exist within our own borders. We must be patient with God because He is patient with us. We must be impatient, not with Him, but with ourselves. The day of revival, the day of visitation, the day of new blessing, manifested perchance in a new way, entirely different from anything the past has ever seen, comes to the individual, to the nation, to the Church in that hour when he or it or she has learned the lessons of affliction.

We wait beneath the furnace blast

The pangs of transformation;

Not painlessly doth God recast,

And mould anew the nation

Where wrongs expire;

Nor spares the hand

That from the land

Uproots the ancient evil.

Then let the selfish lips be dumb,

And hushed the breath of sighing;

Before the joy of peace must come

The pains of purifying.

God give us grace, each in his place

To bear his lot;

And, murmuring not,

Endure and wait the labour.

In the midst of affliction, therefore, let us remember that God needs no persuasion to act, and that our anxiety should be that we come to such an attitude as will enable Him to do so.

Psalm 112:7. The Fixed Heart In The Day Of Frightfulness.

Psalm 112:7.

The Fixed Heart In The Day Of Frightfulness.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Psalms 112:7

The first part of the text describes a most desirable state of mind, that of being able to hear evil tidings without trembling and without panic. The second part of the text reveals the secret of such fearlessness. It is that of the fixed heart, and of the heart fixed because it has confidence in God.

This is supremely a day of evil tidings. Our newspapers are full of them. They contain nothing else. Their good news, the good news for which we look, and which comes to us ever and anon, is always laden with anguish. Battles won mean hearts broken. The tide of sorrow is rising higher and higher in the national life, and its dark waters are overflowing into every hamlet and every home. But they are especially emphatic, these newspapers of ours, about the tidings which are wholly evil. They tell us that the Government is incapable and weak, that politicians are blind, that generals are incapable, or, to summarize, that all the wise men are out of office. These are evil tidings, because for the most part they are untrue.

But there are other tidings coming to us day by day. The situation in the Balkans is critical, the position in Mesopotamia is uncertain, the peril of the sea is not over—perchance Germany is arming every ship in her fleet with seventeen-inch guns, and building submarine monitors; and the summer is to bring the Zeppelins perpetually! Well, these tidings are evil, because there is an element of truth, perchance, in the whole of them. These are the tidings that assault the soul, the mind, the heart, day by day.

Is it possible under such circumstances to be free from panic? Can broken hearts still be courageous? Can minds assaulted by panic-stricken rumor still be fearless? Can wills be dauntless in the presence of great perils? The answer of the text to these inquiries is that there is a man who is unafraid of evil tidings, and that the secret of that man's quietness is that "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Let us, first, look at his man; and then let us consider the secret of his fearlessness in the midst of circumstances that make for fear.

The whole of the psalm from which the text is taken is in celebration of this man; and it is closely related to the preceding one. Both are acrostic psalms in the Hebrew Bible; each has twenty-two lines, and each line in every case commences with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Their relationship is patent. Psalm 111 celebrates Jehovah. Psalms 112 celebrates the man who trusteth in Jehovah. A most interesting exercise is to read them together, that is, to read verse one of Psalms 111, then verse one in 112, and so on throughout. Such a reading will reveal that all the things of excellence and glory and beauty celebrated in Jehovah are found also in the man who

trusts in Him, and is obedient to Him. Observe the closing of the first of these psalms and the opening of the second; for there we have an immediate indication of relationship. The psalm that celebrates the glory of Jehovah ends in these words:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;

A good understanding have all they that do thereafter;

His praise endureth forever.

And the next psalm opens:

Praise ye the Lord.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

Psalms 112, then, is a character sketch; it is the revelation of a man. It is as beautiful as anything in literature. One wonders whether the writer knew some one man of whom he was thinking. Be that as it may, a man is in view, whether actual or ideal, and it is of this man that the words of our text are employed:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, we must see this man. Let me try to describe him as he is here described by the psalmist, but in other words.

The first thing I notice about him is the fact with which the singer opens. He is a God-fearing man.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

So reads the first verse of the psalm. My phrase is a much more modern one: he is a God-fearing man. He is a man whose first thought is Godward, a man whose whole life is lived under the mastery of the supreme and fundamental fact that he believes in God. This man may regularly, once or twice a week, or more often, say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty"; or he may hardly ever recite the creed in that particular form, but that is the truth about him. He is a God-fearing man.

The next thing I observe about him is that he is a home-making man.

His children shall be mighty upon earth:

The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in his house,

(Remember these qualities are often found, in the high sense of the words, in the cottage as well as in the castle.)

And his righteousness endureth forever.

His seed mighty in the earth, his generation blessed among the sons of men—wealth and riches in his house are set in relationship to righteousness. He is the home-making man, the man who, first believing in God, has realized, in the deepest of life, though it may be that he does not often talk about it, that God's first circle of human society is the home and the family. He is a home-making man.

The next thing I observe is that he is a helping man:

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

Let me say at once that this translation misses the point of the declaration, which really is that this man ariseth unto the upright as light in the darkness. He is a center from which light flashes out on the way of other men. Notice what follows: "He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." "He dealeth graciously and lendeth"; and yet again, presently,

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy;

His righteousness endureth forever.

He is a man who is helping other men.

Finally, I observe one other thing about him. He is a hated man:

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;

He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.

This, then, is the man; he is a God-fearing man, a home-making man, a man who is always helping other people, a man who is hated by wicked men. Of that man the psalmist says:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Let us watch him in the day of evil tidings. What will he do? He gets the news of battle and of death! His heart is stricken, but he does not tremble. He reads his newspaper, and then puts it down, and goes on with his duty. If that man should be destroyed in an air raid, it will be at his post, and he will meet death cheerfully. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed."

Whether this man was a man in the olden time on whom the psalmist looked, or whether he is the man you know, your father, perchance, he is a strong man, and all men know it. How is his strength to be accounted for?

And so we pass to consider the second part of the text, the revelation of the secret of this man's fearlessness:

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

First, "His heart is fixed." Men who are strong are always men who are fixed somewhere, who have a conviction from which they cannot be separated by argument, which cannot be changed, whatever the circumstances in the midst of which they live. Sometimes these men are very

narrow, but they are wonderfully strong; they are singularly obstinate, but they are splendidly dependable. Sometimes their convictions resolve themselves into two or three great fundamental truths, and they are never moved from them. Consequently, we always know where to find those men. The fixed heart is the secret of courage. Courage is an affair of the heart; courage is the consciousness of the heart that is fixed. The positive is sometimes best illuminated by the negative. Therefore, let me say that men not so fixed are weak men, however strong they may be. I cannot better illustrate here than by a quotation from old Jacob. When Jacob was dying, he looked out on all his sons, and described them. Mark particularly his description of Reuben, and do not begin where people generally begin, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." We must go further back. "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not have the excellency." Was there ever a more graphic picture of the failure of a strong man than that? Reuben, thou art the excellency of dignity, thou art the excellency of power, thou art the beginning of my strength; thou shalt not have the excellency, thou shalt not enter into the inheritance of thine own possession! Why? Thou art unstable as water! The man, who potentially was a great man, was weak, vacillating, because his heart was not fixed, he had laid hold on nothing that was eternal and positive! Such a man drifts, is moved by every wind that sweeps over the surface of the sea, is unstable as water. That man is afraid in the day of evil tidings; that man leaves his post of duty when he expects an air raid; that man talks in the railway train, and everywhere, about the failure of the Government and the failure of the politicians and the failure of the generals! Such a man is a menace to the State, and a hindrance to the purposes of God. His heart is not fixed; he has no central secret of power. He is dynamic, he is kinetic, but he is not static. He is full of power, full of activity in certain directions, but he lacks that secret strength that enables his power to operate to purpose and to victory, and that keeps him strong in the shock of battle, in tempest and hurricane.

We leave him, and by the contrast we see more clearly this old-fashioned man, this God-fearing man, this home-making man, this man who is always willing to help someone else, this man who is hated by evil men, and so is highly complimented. This man is not afraid of evil tidings, because his heart is fixed.

The supreme value of this declaration, however, is that the psalmist has defined the fixity, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." This man finds his strength in the fact that at all times he maintains in his thinking the central and fundamental relationships of his life; he is trusting in the Lord. Again, to use the negative method of illustration, his heart is not fixed, trusting in himself, but is fixed, trusting in the God Who explains what he is within himself, the God to Whom he himself is related. In a certain way this man has no confidence in himself at all. In another way this man is perfectly confident of his ability to do the thing that God has appointed he should do; and he will do it, whatever storms may sweep, yea, though the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea. He will not go on tour to watch them falling in the sea. He will stay where he is, and do his duty in the midst of the clash. He is trusting in the Lord, not in himself. And yet again, the fixity that characterizes the man described by the psalmist is not of confidence in circumstances. A man who is not confident in circumstances is careless about them. If a man sees only the things that are happening, then, if they are not going according to his idea, he is perturbed, filled with fear—evil tidings render him hopeless. But if a man sees that there is a God controlling all circumstances,

then, if circumstances are characterized by turmoil, so that nothing seems in place or in order, he is still unafraid, because he knows that circumstances are the arrangement of God. Therefore this man, trusting in God, knows that while he abides at his post, in the midst of the turmoil, the last word is not the word turmoil, but the word of the God Who is presiding over it. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

And so one is driven to inquire: Who is this Lord in Whom this man trusts? Who is the God Whom this man fears, and in the fear of Whom he makes strong his own home, holds out helping hands to all who need his help, and because of these things is hated of wickedness? We go back again to Psalms 111, and there we find no doctrine of God, so far as a declaration of the mystery of His Being is concerned, but He is celebrated in the things He does, and by these things He is made known. The psalmist says of Him, "The works of the Lord are great," and "His work is honor and majesty." Here are two words, the light and shadow of which we miss in our reading. Great are the things done! Majestic and honorable is the thing made! The psalmist says of Him that He "is gracious and full of compassion," that He is faithful to His covenants with His people; that He is true and just in all His deeds. Evil tidings come to the man who trusts in his God, tidings of death, tidings of disaster, tidings of difficulty; but the man knows by what he knows of God, not so much in character as in history, that God is overruling. The man knows that God is great in His doing, that He is majestic and stately in the things that He makes to be, that He is in Himself gracious and compassionate, that He is faithful to His covenants, that He is true and just in His deeds, and, therefore, the man is not afraid.

Come back again to the second of these psalms, and observe the effect of this knowledge on the character of the man. This fixity of heart results in fixity of character, and that fixity may be expressed in the two simplest phrases possible. This man is a man in whom there burns persistently a passion for righteousness and a pity for all need. "Holy and reverend is His name," sings the psalmist of the God in Whom the man trusts, and when he comes to write of the man who trusts in the Lord, the references to the righteousness of the man run throughout. The God in Whom this man believes is the God of unsullied and undeviating holiness, and, therefore, the passion of this man's life is a passion for truth, for righteousness. But the God in Whom this man believes is also a God full of compassion and tender mercy, and, therefore, the man who believes in Him becomes God's distributing center: he scattereth, distributeth, helpeth. His own heart fixed in the God of holiness, he stands for righteousness in human affairs. His own heart homed in the infinite compassion of Deity, he stands for pity and grace and tenderness in the sons of men. Consequently, he is not afraid of evil tidings.

Mark the reasonableness of his quietness, and observe the expression of it. There comes to that man the tidings of death. His own boy is gone! He is not callous. The wound is full of pain, but there is no panic, there is no trembling, there is no whining. He is not afraid, because he knows that death is not the final news, that beyond death, even in that tragic form, all the meaning of life is discovered. He will fold his arms for a moment, perchance ceasing his work while his bosom heaves, but he will say, "He shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

He also knows that the tidings of incompetence is not the last word. God has always had to deal with human incompetence, and he overrules it in order to arrive at His own goal, to realize the

destiny He purposes for humanity. Where have we as a nation ever arrived as the result of our own competence, tell me? We have arrived at wonderful places of power, and influence, and responsibility. What marvels our eyes have seen through these past nineteen months of the sons of the far-flung places of our empire coming to us in the hour of our anguish and travail! Have we won them by our competence? I hear that it is so, that we are a wonderful people for colonizing purposes. Yes, but if the Lord had not been on our side, now may Israel say we should have failed! If we will but read our history aright, we shall find it to be a story of the overruling of incompetence by God; and that it is this that has brought us to the position of power and influence we have occupied in the world, and shall still occupy if our feet are but turned back to the way of His commandments, and our heart becomes fixed, trusting in the Lord. This man says, there may be much incompetence, but the last word is God. His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

And so, finally, to this man the tidings of danger is not the only tidings. Like the ancient prophet, he has heard other tidings. Do you remember how Obadiah began that weird prophecy of the doom of Edom, the doom of the nation that trusted in its might and its frightfulness? Listen to this: "We have heard tidings from the Lord." Tidings from the Lord! These are the tidings which this man hears every morning. He read something before he read his newspaper—he has read his Bible. The man who is reading his newspaper and listening to the clamor of the voices speaking of failure and disaster and incapacity, and is not afraid is the man who listens in the morning for another Voice, and goes to his work in the halls of legislature, in the mine, in the training camp drilling, in the home toiling, in the battle fighting, and as he goes he says, "We have heard tidings from the Lord."

What are the tidings from the Lord? Well, this is what God said concerning Edom:

Behold, I have made thee small among the nations: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the cleft of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.

The man who has heard those tidings from the Lord goes out and does his work, and is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, let us take up our newspapers again, and what do we see? We see a combination of words that I hardly know how to read! The Casualty List. By a wonderful spiritual instinct, hardly conscious, but coming up out of the subconsciousness of our national life, even our newspapers are putting something else; instead of Casualty List, we read Roll of Honor. They fall, our sons, our brothers, our lovers, our friends! We mourn, we grieve, we sorrow. We read these evil rumors, but we have heard tidings from the Lord, and, consequently, we are not afraid. We hear of grave situations, of peoples still halted, not knowing whether to pass to the right or to the left, to take this side or that side. We hear of diplomacies attempting to capture them for one side or the other. But, in spite of all, we are not afraid. And why not? We can best express it in the language of Julia Ward Howe:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord....

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.

That, verily, is what He is doing. I am no prophet or the son of a prophet in the sense of predicting things to come; but I declare that when presently the war is over, and the conflict is done, we shall sit down quietly and see how these nations dropped into line, howsoever they may go, by virtue of what they were in their own heart and soul. God is compelling them to express themselves, and will do so to the end. If the only thing I see is what the diplomatists are doing, or not doing, then my heart is filled with fear; but when I see God sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat, then I continue with Julia Ward Howe, and I say:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him!

Be jubilant my feet!

Our God is marching on.

What, then, shall we do in the day of frightfulness? We will do our duty, the thing that lies nearest, the thing we have to do tomorrow morning. We will do that, and do it well, and do it cheerfully. We will leave the rest to God, the sorrow, the suffering, and the issues. What this nation needs just now as much as, and perhaps more than, anything else is the multiplication of strong, quiet souls who are not afraid of evil tidings, who will go quietly to rest, even though the Zeppelins may be coming, and will not add to the panic that demoralizes, but will do their work. The men and women who can do that on such a day are the men and women who have hearts fixed, trusting in Jehovah. May God make us such men and such women.

Psalm 115:8; 1 John 3:2. Like Gods Or Godlike.

Psalm 115:8; 1 John 3:2.

Like Gods Or Godlike.

They that make them shall be like unto them.

Psalms 115:8

We shall be like Him.

1 John 3:2

In the Chapter of "Conformity to Type" in his "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," Henry Drummond wrote:

The protoplasm in man has a something in addition to its instincts or its habits. It has a capacity for God. In this capacity for God lies its receptivity, for it is the very protoplasm that was necessary. The chamber is not only ready to receive the new Life, but the Guest is expected, and, till He comes, is missed. Till then the soul longs and yearns, wastes and pines, waving its tentacles piteously in the empty air feeling after God if so be that it may find Him. This is not peculiar to the protoplasm of the Christian's soul. In every land and in every age there have been altars to the Known or Unknown God. It is now agreed upon as a mere question of anthropology that the universal language of the human soul has always been "I perish with hunger."

What Drummond declared in that remarkable passage as "now agreed upon as a mere question of anthropology" I desire to emphasize in order that we may consider in the light of it these two passages of Scripture, which immediately suggest a somewhat remarkable and startling contrast.

There is a master passion in every human life, some one principle which at least professes to render the life consistent and cohesive, and drives it in some given direction. That truth may be stated in another form. Man cannot live without a God. The origin of the word "God" is etymologically obscure. The simplest use of the word, so far as we are able to trace it, is one which suggests a Supreme Being, and, consequently, a Supreme Authority over human life.

The term "God" has been applied to erroneous conceptions of Deity, as to nature, interest, power, and activity; but underneath all the mistakes the word "God" suggests a Being superior to men, a Supreme Being, who, therefore, whether His authority be exercised righteously or unrighteously, mercifully or cruelly, beneficently or tyrannically, yet has power over men.

The recognition of that essential and simple thought concerning God has produced very many different attitudes on the part of men toward God, attitudes depending on the conception of the character of God which they may have entertained.

There is no living man or woman or child who has come to years of understanding but that has, in some form, in some fashion, a God. They may decline to use the word "God"; but the fact remains, no human life can continue without some conception of a Supreme—we need not say "Being." We may say force, or power, or motive; but the supremacy is the quality of importance.

In the passage quoted, Drummond declared that this is because human nature is made from its very beginning with a capacity for a God, and consequently lives in the experience of a clamant cry after God. That I take to be the statement of a simple truth from which there can be no escape.

Out of that conscious necessity for God has arisen all forms of worship. If we go back to the old days of widespread idolatry, or if we examine the great systems of idolatry which still exist; though we have a thousand and one varied expressions of idolatry, we find on examination that they fall into three main divisions, which our Old Testament Scriptures deal with: the worship of Baal, the worship of Moloch, the worship of Mammon. We today may affect to smile at those old ideas, but they still exist. There are thousands of men worshiping Baal in London, thousands of people bowing at the shrine of Moloch in this city at this hour, and how many are worshiping Mammon?

What does it mean when a man worships Baal? It means that he must worship something. What does it mean when a man offers his sacrifice on the shrine of Moloch? It means that there is that in his nature which drives him to the activity of sacrifice. What does it mean when a man worships Mammon with all his heart and all his soul and all his mind and all his strength? It means that he must exercise heart and soul and mind and strength in one supreme and all-inclusive act of worship in some form. Man is by nature and instinctively, whether he will or not, religious. I did not say good. I did not say pious. I did not say holy. I did not say righteous. I said religious.

Religion is that which binds a man. Every man is bound somewhere, somehow, to a throne, to a government, to an authority, to something that is supreme, to something to which he offers sacrifice, and burns incense, and bends the knee. I glance back for a moment to those old systems, and I see men worshiping Baal, the god of nature; Moloch, the master of the emotions; Mammon, the deity of will power. Though the method of the worship has changed, and though the faces of the worshipers are others than those of old, and though the language of the worship is not what it was, the essence is the same, and the common fact of worship comes thrilling and thundering, vibrating and sounding through the ages, expressing itself in a thousand new ways with every new-born generation. Through all the long history of the human race men have worshiped. The common principle throughout all this great fact is that man has capacity for God, must have a god, must bow the knee in some form at the altar of his god.

In the light of that great underlying truth I return to our two passages of Scripture.

The psalmist was dealing with idolatry, boasting and vaunting in holy joy in the fact that Israel trusted Jehovah, and putting into contrast to that trust of Israel in Jehovah the trust of men in the idols that they had created for themselves. In a passage of fine scorn he spoke of these idols: mouths that speak not, eyes that never see, ears that hear nothing, noses that smell not, hands that never handle, feet that never travel, throats through which no speech comes. He was describing idolatry as it manifested itself in his day and in his age; and having described it, he said these idols were made by men, and they that made them were like them.

John was speaking in exquisite tenderness of the new relation between man and God, which is the result of the mission of Jesus; and the music of the whole passage thrills through the mind of every child of God who knows it. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him."

"They that make them shall be like unto them." "We shall be like Him." These two statements constitute a great contrast, but they contain a common principle. The common principle is that every man becomes like his God. You must have a God. You have a God. You are growing like Him! If your god is false, you are becoming false; if your God is true, you are growing in truth; if your god is hard, you are becoming hard; if your God is tender, you are becoming compassionate. The principle is described in these two passages as working in two opposite directions to two opposite results. Insensate gods create insensate men. The one living and eternal and loving God makes men living and eternal and loving.

Let us look at these things carefully by taking these texts and examining them a little more closely. We will consider first, the men who become like their gods; and, second, the men who become Godlike.

First, then, the men who become like their gods. And here we need not refer to the idolatry of the past save as it reveals perpetual principles. I have no care to attack and denounce and combat the idolatry of Eastern lands. Henceforward I refer only to the idolatry described by the psalmist as manifest in his day, that we may discover that though the garb is changed and the language altered, the essence is the same in our day and in our land as it was in Syria. The very essentials of idolatry which expressed themselves in strange and crude forms in days long gone exist in our own days.

The worship of Baal was the worship of nature, and when man begins to worship nature he finally enters into the holy of holies of nature to its most mystic center, to its most mysterious realm; and consequently the worship of Baal in those olden days finally became a worship which expressed itself in ways that must be nameless in the congregation of the saints. We still have this deification of the intellect in the days in which we live. Men who own no allegiance to the throne of our God enthroned in His place human intellect, indulge in philosophies, follow speculations, are given, as the apostle said in writing to Timothy, to "fables and endless genealogies," consult together concerning the long-continued and perpetual emanation of life, attempt to knock at the door of the deepest heart of Nature and fathom its profoundest secret, ask for the solution of the riddle of the universe. That is idolatry. It is the deification of intellect, and when a man says, I will refuse to worship or believe or bow the knee in the presence of anything that does not come within the grasp of my own mind, and that cannot be encompassed in the reach of my own thinking, that is Baal worship.

There are other men who deify their emotional nature, and strange as it may be, the idolatry that deifies the emotional nature always descends to a lower plane than the idolatry that deifies the intellect. Not that the emotional nature is lower than the intellect, but that it is higher, and the higher the faculty the lower its sweep if you degrade it. It has often been said, and I for one feel that it is true, that a woman is capable of a far deeper degradation than a man; and that is not to reflect upon womanhood but to say that the finer fabric, when once thickened and coarsened, becomes more vulgar than the texture of that which is coarser in itself. And what is true by way of

illustration is true in this matter. When man burns incense to his emotional nature the outcome is lust, in the most debased sense of that word. Love is the true deity of the emotion; but if a man lets emotion master him lust is the result. And careful as I would be to make reference to such subjects here, there are times when the prophet must speak. On every street men are worshipping Moloch, and it eventuates in the most awful cruelty that it is possible for the heart of man to conceive. Love prostituted becomes hatred. Adoration debased becomes loathing. You have but to have eyes lit with God's love, and hearts tender with His compassion, to see the most awful and devilish cruelty being practiced in the glare of the London streets every day that you live.

There are also those who worship Mammon, moved by the passion for power that makes a man want to possess wealth. Men who desire to possess wealth simply for its own sake are very few and far between, and they are always men who have lost their reason. That is not the worship of Mammon. I have a pity for the man that piles up golden sovereigns and puts his fingers into them. But there is another man who grinds and drives and schemes and plans for the same gold, not in order that he may put his fingers into its yellow glitter, but that he may drive men and make them serve him and obey him. Infinitely more cruel than the worship of the intellect or the worship of the emotion is will worship. Jesus said once to men, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The devil of the Middle Ages was painted with horns and hoofs and a tail and fire coming from his mouth. That devil is dead, because he never really existed. The devil today enthrones himself most often behind Mammon, the greed for power, the lust for possession that deadens and hardens every aspect of human life. The love of money is a more terrible thing than the drink traffic. Kill the love of money and you will sweep the drink traffic out in six months. This worship of Mammon is a more terrible thing than the awful prostitution of our streets. If only I could burn up the love of money in the hearts of landlords I would close all the houses of ill fame. It is not the girl on the street with whom I am angry. It is the man who is behind the business and makes possible the continuance of the vaunted and flaunting sin by reason of his damnable love of gold. That is the worship of Mammon. And it is everywhere. I never walk down London streets without seeing an altar besprinkled with blood, a worshiper debased and degraded!

Yet look again, oh, look again, and see this: the horror of the whole thing is due to the fact that the capacity which prostituted works ruin is a Divine capacity. The thing in the man that drives him to the deification of his intellect, to the enthronement of his own emotion, to the love of power, what is it? Oh, God, open our eyes to see it. It is the cry of the soul after God with parched lip, and breaking heart, and throbbing brow. Though he does not understand his own language, he is saying everywhere, "When shall I appear before God? Oh that I knew where I might find Him."

But pass on. When a man makes a god for himself he always constructs his god on the pattern of himself. Take the older forms of idolatry, or the more recent forms to which I have been referring, and what is man doing when he worships? He is making a god on the pattern of himself. You cannot find me a single idol in the world today but that if you will come back from that deity and narrow the lines that enclose it you will find the man who made it. Every deity that a man makes for himself he makes on the pattern of himself.

I will imagine that I am back among the old idolators whom the psalmist described. I must have a god, I must have something that represents to me the thought of authority, of supremacy. I will make my god of gold, of silver, or out of a tree; and I set to work with carving instruments to make

my god. How shall I make it? I must give him a mouth. Why? Because I have one. I must give him ears. Why? Because I have ears and can hear. And so through all the gamut of the senses, whenever a man makes a god he makes it on the pattern of himself. "They that make them" make them on the pattern of their own personality.

So today. The moment you see a man deifying his intelligence you say, What does he know of intelligence. He knows that he knows, and he deifies the capacity for knowledge. He lifts a part of himself out of himself, and he says, That is supreme. I worship that. Or a man is deifying his emotion, and you say, What does he know of emotion? He says, I can love, I can hate. That is the greatest thing. I will worship love and hate. I will give free rein to the sweep and the thrill and the throb of myself. It is always himself enlarged that he worships. And when a man worships Mammon, what is it he worships? His own will power. He says, That is the thing, to be able to will, and see it done; to wish, and to achieve; to decide, and see it carried out. It is a true instinct, and it is part of the man, and he enlarges it and worships it. Every man makes his god on the pattern of himself. That is the first thing.

Look once again. Whenever a man makes a god on the pattern of himself he makes something less than himself. A man says, I will create a god. I will give to this god a mouth and eyes and ears and nose and hands and feet and throat, all greater than I. A mouth that can utter a more authoritative speech. Eyes that can see greater distances. Ears that can hear minuter sounds, more feeble vibrations. A nose that can scent with a more remarkable accuracy. Hands that can encompass more work. Feet that can travel greater distances and more swiftly. A throat out of which the thunders roll instead of the puny speech that is in my throat. And see, he says, now I have made something greater than myself.

Yet he has not done so! Let the psalmist interpret the result. Listen to his fine scorn. A mouth, greater? Infinitely less, it cannot speak. Eyes, greater? Infinitely less, they cannot see. When a man builds a god on the pattern of himself he makes something less than himself.

Bring the thought into our present age, and what have you? A man deifies intelligence, but what is this that man deifies? He deifies his own capacity, and he says the ultimate knowledge is the great thing. And where does he end? In agnosticism. And what is agnosticism? A confession of ignorance. I start to worship the ultimate knowledge, and when I have worshiped ultimate knowledge long enough I say, I cannot find it. I am an agnostic. I am ignorant. I went after the ultimate, and all I found was its hollow laugh of mockery as it evaded me through the mysterious door of the protoplasmic germ. That is the end of it.

Or a man deifies his emotion, and he says emotion is the great thing, a thrill, a throb, a passion, an excitement, and he worships it. How does it end? He built up something in himself that was real, and when he had constructed it, and went to worship it, he found what? Did I say lust? I will repeat it. What is lust? Hunger. A man set out along the line of the worship of an enlarged capacity for mere emotional satisfaction, and he found the opposite of satisfaction—hunger, panting desire, and no water; perpetual craving, and no bread. And here again I speak carefully, if you will bring down that one fearsome illustration of the worship of Moloch that I have more than once referred to, it is a patent commonplace, almost too shocking to mention, but awfully true, that the end is the same awful desire that can never be met, and that is hell begun ere hell is reached.

Or if a man shall deify Mammon because he would worship his will, what is he doing? Constructing something less than himself. He has a will. It is a divine power. He can choose, he can elect; and, in order to elevate it and deify it, and reach out after larger things, he comes at last to a night dark with clouds, lit with the glare of the vivid lightning, and he hears the voice which says: "Thou foolish one! This night is thy soul required of thee!" and the hand that grasped unloosens, and nothing is there, and the will that mastered bends to the blind fate of oncoming death. He has worshiped something he thought higher, and finds it infinitely lower.

But all this is not finality, nor is it the most terrible thing. The most terrible thing is that, when a man deifies something he thought higher, in the moment he discovers it lower he finds he has dragged himself down to the level which he discovers it occupies. The man who worships an insensate god becomes insensate; the man who worships something that looks and never sees, himself presently looks and never sees, listens and never hears.

The worship of anything less than God blinds and blasts and burns to cinders every distinctive excellency in man, until life itself becomes an unutterable weariness. Do not laugh at the man who talks about killing time. Next to killing the Son of God, or killing my fellow man, killing time is the most awful guilt and the direst tragedy. Do you want to kill time? You have lost your power to see. Give me that little child for a minute or two. I will put that little child down in a one-acre field, with nothing but green grass and buttercups and daisies, and the child will weave garlands and make crowns and play at kingdoms, and see everything; and you trot over Europe and sweep round the world and see nothing. You have become like your god. Your worship has degraded you. You may have pored over the musty tomes in your search after intellectual crowning, you may have followed every new call of emotional temptation, you may have planned and schemed to grasp power by the worship of Mammon, but these things give you nothing except their own emptiness, their own inability, and, at last, alas! too late, you will find that all you have gathered is vanity. You may live in a soft, miserable age that does not like the preacher who thunders to you about hell, but I tell you you are lighting the fires for it yourself if you are worshiping a false deity.

But let me pass to the other side. "We shall be like Him." I ought to say it with bowed head. I ought to say it with reverent demeanor. I ought to say it in tones that thrill with a great sense of the infinite Grace. I think that when John wrote it his pen throbbed with the sense of the infinite mystery.

"We shall be like Him." Like whom? A careful exegesis of this text must refer the pronoun "Him" to the Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not"—that is God. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He"—God—"shall be manifested, we shall be like Him"—God. The reference is to the Father. Jesus said one day to an inquiring man, "Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Yes, we shall be like the Son, and, being like the Son, we shall be like the Father.

Notice first the fundamental change of suggestion. The other men were men who made gods; these people are people whom God has remade by new birth. The primal capacities are redeemed, intelligence is illuminated, emotion is inspired, will is dominated. So instead of saying that when men make gods they make them like themselves; I have to change the whole position

and say, When God makes men He makes them like Himself.

Moreover, when men make gods they make them less than themselves; when God makes men He makes them greater than themselves. Man was never perfected on the earth, even when he stood in Eden's perfection, and now John has to write, "We are the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." There is something more, there is something grander. The intelligence has been illuminated, and we have seen into the heart of the riddle of the universe; we have not found the protoplasmic germ—we have found God. The emotion has been enkindled, and we do not worship it; but it fastens on the eternal Love, and is hungry never more. We worship will, but we are not foolish enough to worship our own; instead, we sing with sweet old Faber:—

I worship Thee, sweet will of God,

And all Thy ways adore;

And every day I live I seem

To love Thee more and more.'

These are present realizations, but John says this is not all. There is something else. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." We are not at the end of the process. We are just beginning. We are learning the alphabet. We do not know all, but we know something. "We shall be like Him." Much as I love the work of exposition, I have no exposition for that. That defies the expositor, that makes the exegete bow in worship. That is the cry of a heart resting in God. That is the language of the soul in whom the wilderness ends, and the eternal morning flames and flashes with glory. There is neither hunger nor thirst, there is no unsatisfied desire. "Like Him," walking in light with Him who dwells in light—that is the highest function of intelligence. "Like Him," acting in love with Him who is essential love—that is the highest possibility of the emotional nature. "Like Him," operating in power under Him who is essential life, and whose will is therefore perfect in its goings—that is the final action of human will.

Oh that I could speak to you one by one. What would I say? I would say this: Who is your god? Who is your god, young man? Who is your god, young maiden? That is your first question. It is the supreme question, but I beseech you, find your answer quickly, and find it truly. Who is your god?

Today only can you answer that question; tomorrow we shall all know. How shall we know? We shall see the likeness to your god in you. Already it is manifesting itself!

I know that man's God. Who is it? The one only living God. How do you know? See the love in his eyes, the light on his life, see his likeness to the infinite order, see the sweet certainty and peace that make him sing the song of triumph, when the tempests are sweeping round him. I know your God, sir, I can see Him in you.

I know your god also! His marks are already on you. I meet you on the highway, and look into your face, and as God is my witness, my heart often goes out in compassion for you. The brand is there, the shadow of death is on your face, the vacuous stare is there. You are becoming like your god, man! Already it is beginning to be seen.

Listen for a minute, not to me; listen, man, listen to the voice that is speaking within you. Can you hear it? I will tell you what is being said in your heart now: "Show us the Father." That is it. Whatever the desire that is operating in your heart at this minute, that is what it means. You are going back to the thrill of a shameless sin, and the thing you really want is God. The clamant cry that you are trying to answer in a wrong way is the cry of your being after God. There are some who say, Yes, it is true; what shall we do? I have the answer to that cry in your heart. They are not my words, but I am here by holy ordination, the ordination of the pierced hand on my head to utter them for my Master. Do not hear them as mine, hear them as His. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Crown Him and find God. Find God and grow like Him. God helps you now to answer His call and find all that your heart needs.

Proverbs 3:6. How To Succeed In Life.

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How To Succeed In Life.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:6

This text has a peculiar place in my heart. It has been with me day by day for three-and-thirty years. It was on the morning when I was first leaving home for school that my father said to me as his last word, I want to give you a text for school and for life; and this was the text. He gave it to me without note or comment, save the note and comment of his own godly life. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths.

I have not always been obedient to the injunction. I have often forgotten Him, often failed in the acknowledgment commanded, but so far as I have been obedient, I have proved the promise true. He has directed my paths.

In order that we may understand the message of the text, let us first consider one or two simple facts. Within the consciousness of man there exists a dual sense; that of possibility, and that of limitation. Every man is conscious that he is able to do. Every man is conscious of limitation in that ability. Every youth and every maiden, in that golden age when the light is forever flashing upon the eastern sky, comes to this twofold consciousness. In youth, this dual consciousness causes perpetual delight. The limitation is opportunity. The possibility is equipment. In old age, when the life has been wasted, the dual consciousness abides, but it is that of despair. The limitation becomes everything, and the possibility is gone. Dreadful indeed is such old age. There is, however, an old age of the youthful heart, in which expectation is still busy painting pictures of coming victories. When life has been well and truly lived the dual consciousness abides, but the proportion is very different. The limitation is growing less with every passing hour, and the possibility is growing more.

I sat yesterday by the side of an old man whose years have reached four-score and five, and he said two things to me which profoundly impressed me. He said first: "As I lie here and think, and listen, that of the world which most profoundly impresses me is its sin." Then, with a new light in his eye, he said: "I want to be away, to be with Christ in God."

My brothers and sisters with the flush of youth upon your faces, and the light of hope in your eyes, I tell you his dreams were more wonderful than your visions; his expectations more wonderful than your hopes. The life well and truly lived has come to age, but the light that never was on land or sea is resting upon his brow. Limitation is growing less, and the consciousness of the possibilities of his own being is growing more.

It is out of my strong desire that your present hopefulness may never grow less, but burn more brightly when the long day's journey is done; and that when the sun goes westering and the shadows are flung across the landscape, new light may break upon you; thus I bring you the message of my text.

It is certainly a Divine arrangement that the young should see visions; that they should build their castles in the air; that they should aspire after success.

Let no embittered and disappointed man check the enthusiasm of youth, and that for two reasons.

First, because my brother, embittered and disappointed though you be, I question whether you have any right so to be. I feel almost as though I would like to stay and preach to the old man for a moment. You tell me, looking back, that you dreamed your dreams, and built your castles in the air, and have failed. I ask you, How do you know you have failed? If according to your light, and in the measure of the opportunity which has come to you, you have been true to God, then just beyond the limit where the infinite sky kisses the finite earth, you will discover that the commonplaces of your life are transfigured into part of God's great whole of perfect work. I would hearten you, rather than that you should discourage others.

Also, because it is within the Divine intention for youth that it should dream dreams, and build castles, and see visions, and be ambitious to succeed, I say to you, never dishearten, never check, or attempt to kill the enthusiasm of youth.

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams,

With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!

Book of beginnings, story without end,

Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!

Aladdin's lamp, and Fortunatus' purse,

That holds the treasures of the universe!

All possibilities are in its hands,

No danger daunts it, and no foe withstands;

In its sublime audacity of faith,

"Be thou removed," it to the mountain saith,

And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,

Ascends the ladder, leaning on the cloud.

Youth is forever looking to the distant. The vision is always of things ahead. The boy who stands by his mother, and tells her what he is going to be, is the symbol of all that of which I speak.

Sometimes the height is never reached, success is never achieved. The gleaming glory seen afar fades and passes, and there is nought but darkness and disappointment. The reason is that while the glory was true in possibility, the true path to the mountain heights has not been discovered.

There in the distance is the alpine height, but if we do not know the way, the end will be in the valley, in the place of disaster, in the place of defeat. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths."

That within us which makes us desire victory, the passion for perfection, the determination to achieve, is all of God; and if we can but discover His way, His plan, His thought, and follow His direction, then we shall come to fulfilment even though it be through battle and through strife, through conflict and through tears, through apparent disaster and defeat.

My appeal is made to those who have the goal insight, and it declares the abiding condition upon which the pathways which lead to the goal may be discovered. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths." The whole text conditions life in the present, and so conditions it for progress to consummation.

Let us then take the text in these two parts; first, the injunction, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," And secondly, the promise, "And He shall direct thy paths."

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him," are comprehensive words, recalling us at every point of our lives from atheism. I have used the word atheism quite carefully, in order that I may arrest your thought, that I may even startle you into consciousness of the insidious peril which threatens us every day and everywhere. There is a very practical and widespread atheism which would very much resent the term. There are a great many atheists who would be very angry if we called them such. What is an atheist? One who is without God. Atheism is not merely intellectual. There is a volitional atheism, which may recite the creed and imagine it believes it, while through all the busy days it violates and denies it. The Apostle Paul connects atheism with the death of that principle which is the supreme charm and value of youth. "Atheists and without hope." These two things are forever closely associated. The proportion in which a man is without God is the proportion in which light is fading from the sky, shadows are settling upon his way, darkness is overtaking him. Godlessness, I repeat, is infinitely more than intellectual disquietude, questioning, and unbelief. Godlessness is life lived without reference to God. That is the peril against which this text warns us. That is the danger from which it seeks to deliver us.

The first idea of the word "acknowledge" is that of vision. It is as though the Preacher had said, In all thy ways see God. It calls us to recognition of the fact of the presence of God at every point of our lives. It reminds us that in all our ways, God is. It denies the heresy that God is in the sanctuary, and not in the market place. It denies the heresy that God is interested in the central spiritual fact of human life, and has no relationship with the mental and the physical. See God everywhere. The word thus calls us to a recognition of His existence, which must produce fear, not slavish fear but that solemn awe of the soul which holds life in balance and proportion. That awe which the age lacks disastrously. It is absent largely from the life of today. Man is standing altogether too erect in the presence of high heaven; challenging the wisdom of God, or laughing at the ancient conceptions of His majesty; abandoning the figures of speech by which the prophets, seers, and psalmists of bygone generations attempted to bring men into subjection, and with the abandonment of the figures, forgetting the facts.

I am not pleading for a solemn and awful dread which will banish all brightness. I do desire to recall youth to that awe in the presence of the ever-present God which delivers from the flippancy

and frivolity which curse, and spoil, and mar life.

Such recognition of His existence will issue in acceptance of His claim, and produce obedience.

Such obedience will strengthen belief in His interest, and issue in prayer.

Yet, I think there is another meaning in this word "acknowledge." To acknowledge Him, is to use His gifts in the sphere of His will, recognizing that they are His gifts, and that we are responsible to Him for them.

There are some words of Jesus which I think we often interpret altogether too narrowly, if not with absolute inaccuracy. In the Sermon on the Mount, that great Manifesto of the King, Christ said to His disciples, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And again, "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?"

Our Lord did not for a single moment mean that as the lilies are clothed, without toiling and without spinning, we are to expect to be clothed without toiling. Neither did He mean, that if He provides for the birds of the air without their forethought, we are to neglect forethought. He meant rather that if the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, unable to plan and arrange, are cared for, how much more will God provide for those to whom He has given reason, and ability to plan.

Let no man think that he can come to the fulfilment of his life by prayer alone. Let him understand in this respect also that "faith without works is dead." We have another figure of Christ, that of the mountain removed by faith. We say mountains are never removed by faith today. Yet is this true? At this hour in different parts of the world, mountains are being removed and cast into the seas. We say, "That is a great engineering triumph." What lies behind the work of the engineer? The faith of the engineer. No mountain has ever been leveled or tunneled, and no highway has ever been flung up by humanity, save by works preceded by faith. There is first the vision of the possibility, and then the action which realizes the vision.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him," does not merely mean see Him, believe Him, pray to Him, fear Him; it means also, take the forces which He has placed in your personality and use them under His government. Do not expect that He will ever bring you to the mountain height unless you climb. Do not imagine that you will ever come to fulfilment of your own life unless you toil. Do not for a moment think that to acknowledge God means that if you are a member of the Christian Church He will make your life full and beautiful and rich if you are lazy in the matter of your daily avocation.

I want to save young life in this age from the idea that godliness consists wholly in singing hymns and going to prayer-meetings. What is the capacity within you? Is it mechanical? Then you are not merely to pray, you are to work out to perfection the forces which God has placed within you. You are to neglect no single side of your nature which He has created. When you have discovered what your calling in life is to be, you are to remember that you can only come to fulfilment thereof by consecrated toil under the government of God.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Let us take one or two illustrative applications of the principle.

In your home life. In the home in which for a while you sojourn, the home of your childhood which as yet it may be, you have not left. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Recognize His goodness, recognize the authority over you as representing His authority. Jesus went down and was subject unto his parents. He had first said, "I must be about My Father's business."

In your thinking about the homes which you will presently make for yourselves, in that whole sacred and wonderful matter of the birth of love within your nature, acknowledge Him. I may be allowed to say from this Christian pulpit, and as a Christian minister, that I am weary to death of a great deal of flippant, foolish joking on the subject of love between youth and maiden. Sacred, high, holy, and beautiful, is all such love when heaven born; but it tends to hell when it is not tested in the light of the love of God. I have seen the daughters of the King, the fairest and most beautiful, full of promise, robbed of their beauty by alliance with men who lack recognition of God. I have seen young manhood, enthusiastic for the Kingdom, full of force, paralyzed by alliance with those who have no such vision. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." I pray you remember, that unless you can test your love by the light of heaven's pure love, it is going to be the most unutterable curse that ever came into your life.

Take another application at which I have already hinted, that of your business. What are you going to be in the world? Someone said to me but today, Are you going to make all your boys preachers? I said, God forbid. What did I mean? As God is my witness, nothing would gladden my heart more than to see all of them preachers, but I cannot make them preachers, and I have no intention of suggesting to one of them that such should be the work of his life. I take that illustration simply to lead me to say this. You have no right to choose what you will be. Seek Divine guidance. Pray about it, but do not end with praying. For remember this, in every human life there is some power which God needs, not merely for the supply of all that is necessary to the life possessing it, but for the commonwealth. It is for every man to discover in God's presence, and in fellowship with Him, what that power is; and then to take hold of it and develop, and use it, as in the will of God.

I would say to those of you who have already discovered the line of your life in this world; master it in every detail, be restless until you are able to do the thing you have set out to do, so that when done you can hold it up to God, and say, Here is this piece of work.

Very reverently I pause to illustrate that, from the wonderful carpenter's shop. Jesus Christ, as a carpenter, made yokes in which the oxen ploughed the plains of Bethshan. Jesus Christ as a carpenter constructed those single-share ploughs with which the farmer drove the furrow through his field. I affirm, without one moment's hesitation, that when Jesus Christ made a yoke it was one that heaven itself would have accepted. When He had finished the plough it was true to the measurement of eternity. Presently, He left the carpenter's shop and came to His preaching, and He borrowed the things of His toil to illustrate His preaching. "My yoke is easy." He knew what He was talking about. He had made yokes, and so made them that they never galled the neck of the oxen that wore them. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom." Note the masterly assumption. He did not suggest that the furrow could be crooked because the plough was wrong. It is the man who must be wrong, when He has made the plough.

Put your godliness into your business. Let all your religion be seen in the letter you have to write for your employer, in the piece of work you have to do for him. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

In your recreations also, let this be true. What does that mean? That you can have no recreation which dulls your perception of God. However harmless it may be to you, if to me it raises a mist through which I cannot see clearly the face of my Father, then I must have none of it. However harmless it may be to me, if you, seeking recreation in the same way, lose your keenness of scent in the fear of the Lord, then you are to have no such recreation. That is the test.

I am told that today the question of amusements is a very difficult one. By no means. It is a very simple one. That is its test. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." You say, I am very doubtful about—. That settles it forever! If you are doubtful, you dare not. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Remember, God is God not only of your life, but of your brother's life, and you cannot seek recreation in that which ministers harm to other people. I leave you to apply the principle. Any recreation, though it may not be harmful to me, which can only be gained by harming the man who provides it, I cannot, if I acknowledge God, indulge in.

Forgive the illustrations. I think sometimes illustrations do but minimise the value of the whole. Listen to the whole word of the preacher. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Not the ways of Sunday only, but of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Not the days of the Lenten season only, but the three hundred and twenty-five days remaining after Lent is over. Not the ways that are public to the gaze of others, but the inner secret ways of which men can know nothing. Acknowledge Him, see Him, in the dark as well as in the light; in the shop as well as in the sanctuary; in the valley as well as on the mountain height; at play as well as at work. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

In a brief, concluding word hear the promise. "He shall direct thy paths." That promise calls for the exercise of faith. Our one responsibility is that of obedience to the condition of which I have been trying to speak. Yet let me say this, the truth of the promise is discoverable in all retrospection. Perhaps that is the most difficult thing for youth. It is so hard to look back. There is so little to look back at. Hear then the testimony of those who look back after long pilgrimages and arduous days. The testimony of the whole of them is that as they have acknowledged Him in all their ways, He has directed the paths.

He has many ways of directing. He directs by obstacles placed across the way which I cannot overcome, and which drive me into a new way. He directs by clearing obstacles away, which I thought could not be moved. He directs by delay, keeping me waiting long after I have heard His call to service. He directs by immediateness, flinging me out into a new position, wherein I must seek His guidance. He directs by opposition; the Spirit hindered Paul. He directs by encouragement, by whispers in the soul, which make a man dare, when all men tell him his daring is of no avail. He directs by disappointing, or by realizing our dreams. I state these contradictory things in order to throw you back upon this profound conviction; not from me nor from any man, must you take your rule of His direction. You must discover the rule for yourself in immediate relationship with Him. I say this now out of profound conviction, God help me to say it as it ought to be said. No youth or maiden has ever yet bared their soul to God, desiring to be led of Him and determined to follow, but that He has led, He has directed.

I love the personality suggested by the pronoun in the text: "He shall direct thy paths." Behind the "He" of the ancient preacher is the God of the Bible. Because that is so, the "He" trembles with the tenderness of the Father's love. No evil can baffle if He direct the path. No enemy can prevent the

final realization of His purpose. No obstacles can hinder if He lead. No opposition can overcome if He direct. No exigencies can overwhelm the wisdom of God, no surprises prevent Him. Oh, the safety of being in the will of God. "He shall direct thy paths."

Not always in easy or pleasant paths, but always in right paths. Not always in those I would have chosen, but always in paths which lead to success. There may be the vastest difference between success and fame.

"He shall direct thy paths." The paths that He directs lead always, through mist and mystery, through battle and through bruising, to the fulfilment of the meaning of life.

How much that is called success is dire and disastrous failure. I believe that these conditions may put limitations upon material success. It may be you could make a far larger fortune if you forgot God. But that is a very material thing to say. I have used the word fortune in its debased sense. I have used it as though it only applied to those material things which you can grasp and state in figures. The man who would lay up treasure for eternity cannot forget God. The man who would make to himself friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness must acknowledge God in all his ways.

The final test of life is beyond the things of time and sense. It will be a test of fire; only that which cannot be destroyed will remain. In the light of that final test if we would make our lives successful we must begin right. What is the first step. Surrender. What the plan of life, the pathway to the end? Obedience. Confronting everyone of us tonight, God in Christ asks for our lives.

I pray for you that you may realize your ambitions, and fulfil your dreamings. In order that when the eternal morning flushes the eastern sky, you may come to fulfilment. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 9:10. The Problem Of How To Begin.

Proverbs 9:10.

The Problem Of How To Begin.

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom....

Proverbs 9:10

There are hours which suggest new beginnings. At the dawn of the year, on our birthdays, when we leave school or college and enter upon life's business, we find ourselves almost invariably and inevitably beginning again. To use the very old and familiar figure of speech, we turn over a new leaf. The figure is poetical and it is warranted. In our life story we turn the page and begin a new chapter; and it is impossible to do it, if we have any moral sense and any spiritual sense, without wanting to begin all over again. We are conscious at such times that in very many regards our lives have been characterized by folly, and we desire that they should be governed by wisdom. We look back along the pathway and see the mistakes we have made, sometimes ignorantly but often wilfully, and at the parting of the ways, we earnestly desire that in the days that lie before us there should be fewer mistakes made either ignorantly or in waywardness. We have turned over a new leaf, and we desire that the writing upon the new page shall be more legible, more worthy of the great Master, having fewer erasures necessary, fewer spoilings of the meaning by indistinctness, more of truth, more of beauty, more of glory.

How are we to begin? That is the supreme question of such hours. It is not a simple question. The measure of our honesty is the measure of our perplexity. The measure of our sincerity is the measure of our fear. May I venture to add to these statements another; the number of our years is the measure of our fearfulness. We are more afraid than we used to be of new resolutions and new beginnings by reason of the many failures of the past. Still we desire to begin again. How are we to begin?

In my text is the answer. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...." In the last of the set discourses on wisdom in this Book of Proverbs, the preacher made that declaration. It is not to be confused with an earlier statement. I open the Book of Proverbs and I read, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel." The introductory words run on to verse six, constituting a preface. Then the preacher summarized the whole intention of his discourses on wisdom and of the proverbs which he had collected, and the summary is found in these words, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge;..." In the last of the discourses we have the words of our text, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...."

The difference to which I want to draw attention is not the difference between the words "knowledge" and "wisdom," but a difference between two words which are the same in our translation but which are not the same in the Hebrew; "The beginning of knowledge" and "the beginning of wisdom." The word translated "beginning" in the first declaration is a word which

means first, but not in time alone; it means first in order of time, of place, of rank, of value; first in importance. You will observe that the revisers have suggested an alteration in the margin so that the first of these verses should read, "The fear of the Lord is the chief part of knowledge." The thought of the first declaration is that the fear of the Lord is the supreme value in wisdom. Of course in that larger declaration, the thought of the text is included. We are now dealing with beginnings, and that is the exact meaning of the word of my text, the beginning as the starting point, the commencement. The fear of the Lord is the starting point in wisdom, is the commencement of wisdom. The commencement of the way of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, for the fear of the Lord is the abiding secret of the way of wisdom.

Let us first consider generally this subject of beginning. In doing so I would remind you first that a beginning is not a beginning. There is always a past. There is always something that has preceded what we call a beginning. I might summarily dismiss this by saying that a new beginning is impossible. A beginning is never a beginning. We may illustrate the truth in any sphere of life. What is the beginning of a tree? There is no beginning that is not related to a past history. The young tree that we plant in our garden; that is the beginning of the tree there, but it is not the beginning of the tree. If we plant an acorn, that is not the beginning of the oak tree; the beginning of the tree which will come from the acorn is the tree from which the acorn came. We travel back until we discover that every tree is related to mysteries as infinite and far-extending as is the mystery of our own life. Take the beginning of a bird. Some of the older men and women will remember the great days when Hastings lectured on Christian evidences and that curious and interesting question which he perpetually propounded to those who held contest with him; which was first, the hen or the egg? We begin our backward journey, and there is no beginning. A beginning is not a beginning. Enough of illustration on the lower level. There is no moral beginning either of sinning or of doing righteousness. You did not begin to sin when you sinned. Behind that beginning to sin was the thought, the conception, and behind the thinking and the conception, tendencies assaulting the soul; that mystic stuff of which thoughts and dreams are made lay behind. There is no beginning. There is no beginning for the doing of right. Behind the deed is the thought, and behind the thought is the will, that infinite majesty of personality. I am less and less surprised as the years run on, and I know better, to find that I cannot know myself. I am less surprised that the psalmist said of God, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." And then added: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain unto it." There is no beginning. Being has no beginning. The only beginning is that of form; the form of being may have a beginning; but that which takes the new form existed before in some other form. The new form is but a resultant of things that lay behind it. It always has to do with a past. I will turn over a new leaf, and I will begin again. I cannot. All the past is there. The new leaf is in the one volume and must constitute a part of the one story. The way of wisdom must take into account that past. It was this tremendous sense of the past that made Nicodemus look into the eyes of Jesus in the night and ask the question that was neither rude, flippant, nor irrelevant, "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." It was not a foolish question. It was a question coming up out of the deepest sense of personality, the essential, the elemental. It was a question of the soul. "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." What of those years that have run? How can I begin? If we are to discover the secret of wisdom, we must take the past into account, for a beginning is not a beginning.

In the second place, I remark that a beginning is not lonely, independent, self-contained. Whatever may seem to begin, begins in the midst of environment, in the midst of surrounding forces that touch it and will claim its attention. There is nothing which begins and which, in its beginning, is separated from all the forces that are outside itself. Every beginning is made in the midst of forces which are destructive and constructive. The tree begins its growth and its development; and there are evil things waiting to fasten upon it and destroy it, and there are great and generous forces waiting to give it new strength and enable it to come to perfection of being. To those forces, that which is begun will respond, rejecting sometimes, receiving sometimes; rejecting the evil things and receiving the good sometimes; sometimes rejecting the beneficent things and receiving the evil things. These are the mysteries of life. If we leave that lower realm of illustration and climb to the higher, we shall immediately see how true all this is. We make our new beginnings in the midst of forces destructive and constructive. They are in waiting for us tomorrow; no, they are right here in the sanctuary! Some of the most disastrous moral and spiritual catastrophes have happened in the sanctuary of God in the hour of vision and light and glory. When we turn over the new leaf and decide we will begin again, we must begin remembering that we cannot begin alone or independently; a beginning is not self-contained. Beating through the air, advancing upon us, are forces destructive and constructive, and the whole activity of a new beginning is concentrated at that point. A new beginning in the moral and spiritual realm is the readjustment of life to forces that surround, both constructive and destructive; the opening of the soul to the constructive, and the shutting of the doors of the soul to the destructive. The way of wisdom must take into account the forces which surround the life. There is another question, one which Nicodemus did not ask but which is quite as pertinent; how can a man live his own life in the midst of these forces? When I have turned over this new leaf and begun again, how am I going to realize my own personality in the presence of these forces? Any answer to the question of how to begin must take in this great fact of environment.

I have one other thing to say about the beginning. A beginning is a beginning. We do start new things when we begin. Being has no beginning, but its form and its expression have, and in the creation of a new form, a new expression, new forces are sent out, the issue of which no man can see. Whenever a man makes a new start, a new beginning, he is starting something that will run on from the propulsion of that beginning, whether good or bad. This fact creates the supreme responsibility of life. In that hour when we turn aside to the thing that is base, and low, and mean; beginning that from which we had previously turned away, we are starting things, the ultimate issue of which we cannot see. Equally is it true that when we form resolutions on the side of good, in that hour we start forces for good, the ultimate of which will be known in the future and never perfectly here. Every new beginning is in that sense a beginning, and the things that follow will take direction and shape from that beginning.

In the new beginning of which we are now thinking, the new moral and spiritual beginning, that new direction is supremely in mind. What do we mean by turning over a new leaf? That the order of our life is to take a new shape, a new form, a new color, a new tone. We are looking ahead. When a man desires to walk the way of wisdom, he must take tomorrow into account, for the way of wisdom is supremely a passion for tomorrow. Here then we have another question that we ask; how can a man give the right direction, the true form and fashion and shape to the future? Every beginning must take into account three things, the past, the present, and the future. How then shall

we begin?

That brings us to the declaration of the text, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...." The supreme thing in every hour of new beginning in moral and spiritual life is that of some principle of action which will set us in right relationship with the past, with the forces that lie about us in the present and with the future. That principle must be more than intellectual orthodoxy. It must be vitally actual. It must be a principle which, being observed, brings us into the place of moral and spiritual power. We must find some principle which deals with all these facts not merely ideally, but dynamically, not merely from the standpoint of revealing to us a philosophy, but from the standpoint of communicating to us potentiality, which shall be sufficient for this terrible mystery and fact of the past, for these tremendous powers of the present, and for that weird and yet alluring mystery of the future.

When I pondered this text and had come to this part of my message and my burden, I said to my soul, "It is so old a statement, how can you deal with it?" I then asked two questions, and I will now ask them aloud. They are the questions of a man who presumably had never heard the statement before; the questions of a little child. First, "Who is the Lord?" And second, "What is it to fear the Lord?"

Who is the Lord? I have no answer to this inquiry other than that of biblical and Christian revelation. That answer is a threefold one as I understand it. He is the Creator and therefore the One Who knows perfectly that which He has created. He is the Preserver of all such as He has created and therefore the One Who cares for that which He has created. Finally, He is the Redeemer and therefore the One Who must love that which He has created and which He has preserved. There is nothing new in all that, but if some of us can put our lives into right relationship with it all, that will be something new; that will be a true beginning.

He is the Creator, therefore knowing. Already in my sermon I have made a quotation which I want to use again, from that wonderful, classic psalm than which there is nothing finer in the Bible in this regard and nothing approaching it outside the Bible:

O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me,

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.

Thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,

And art acquainted with all my ways.

"... Thou understandest my thought afar off." Thought is the most wonderful thing in my personality, mystic, strange, the thing that supremely puzzles me; it is the vehicle through which temptation assaults me, and I cannot help its assault; it is the vehicle through which high aspirations come to me, and I cannot help their coming. "... Thou understandest my thought afar off." The Lord is the Creator, and I am the created, a realized thought of God. He thought me, planned me, and fashioned me. He distanced Himself from that which is physical in me by the distance of my parenthood. He kept Himself near to me in the essential mystery of my being which is spiritual. For in me, as in all other men, He breathed the breath of life. Therefore He knows me

perfectly.

O the comfort of it? Did you expect me to say the terror of it? By no means; the comfort of it! "Thou God seest me." In the olden days they printed those words, framed them, hung them up in the nursery, and too often interpreted them so as to suggest that God is a sort of moral policeman. Print it again, frame it, bedeck it with flowers, and then sing it to the children: "Thou God seest me." He watches over us as the master Workman, Who, according to the ancient history, when He had completed man saw that His work was very good. The Lord is my Creator, understanding the mystic mechanism of my being. As to physical powers, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. More marvelous still are my mental capacities. The supreme, august, majestic dignity is that spiritual life which is akin to Deity, offspring of the Most High. I do not know myself; Thou Lord, knowest me perfectly. Then indeed, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...."

He is Preserver also, caring for all that His hands have made. Here we approach a statement where there are difficulties, but let us think carefully, let us think broadly, let us come to no hasty conclusion. There are men and women in London tonight for whom it seems as though God did not care. There are little children in London tonight for whom it is very hard to understand that God cares. But we must remember that the plane of human suffering which is unrelieved by Deity is a plane from which God is excluded by man's rebellion. The blame of such suffering is not upon God's provision but upon man's dealing with God's provision. There is in this world of ours such plenty that there need be no crying out in the streets and no poverty; but when man forgets God and breaks His law, then suffering follows. In the provision of God there is perfect supply for the preservation of humanity. Remember further, that disease and suffering are not in the economy of God; they are overruled within that economy, mastered within it, held in the grip of the Divine government, but they are not the will of God. Let us talk no blasphemy about disease being the will of God. Disease is never the will of God. The Lord is the One that preserveth the life which He has created. He created the morning for us, He created the darkness for us, giving His beloved sleep and in sleep giving to His beloved; making season follow upon season for man's well-being. We often measure Him by our own incompetence, and we imagine that several wet weeks in succession demonstrate the fact that the throne of God is vacant and that humanity is to be ruined. It is not so, and those who know God never blaspheme Him by criticizing His weather. He preserveth the life of man and beast! He is the Preserver of such as He has made.

Finally, He is the Redeemer. I am not going to discuss the problem. There is a problem, the problem of evil, of sin. The fact that man has lost his vision of this God, and the consciousness of this God, and relationship to this God, and that rivers of evil surge through the centuries destroying human life; the fierce fires of wrong persist in human history and permeate humanity, blasting, scorching, destroying. We have to face the fact that man, most mystic and mysterious in his being, is a rebel, and that thus revelling against God, he is banished from consciousness of God and fellowship with God. What then? God has not left humanity; God has not abandoned humanity! God has found a way by which His banished ones may return, because His is love which alters not when it alteration finds. God's is the love that follows and associates itself with sinning souls in comradeship in order that such may be healed and restored, and that at infinite cost; cost so marvelous that we cannot attempt to speak of it in any terms that are current in the common speech of humanity. The Lord is the Redeemer.

What then is His fear? Subjectively, it is recognition of His might and of His holiness. It is admission of the righteousness of the claim He makes upon the human soul. It is reverence for Him and a desire for conformity to His will. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him...." The fear of the Lord subjectively is that acknowledgment of God, that recognizing of Himself and of His claims, and that desire for such adjustment to that central infinite truth of all the universe and of all life which shall be for the glory of Him Who is at once Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. It follows that objectively the fear of the Lord is submission, adjustment, obedience. I do not mean that fear of the Lord is acceptance of truths about Him, or subscription to creeds which men have written. I am not undervaluing either the one or the other, but there may be both without the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord, I repeat, is first of all recognition of Himself and admission of His claim, reverence for Him; and then the answer to it that comes out of the volitional center of the life, the answer to that of which the soul is convinced.

Here someone will say in his or her heart, "This is all in the realm of mystery; let us get back to the realm of simplicity." Then I inquire, "Do you believe in God in any form, do you believe in Him in any manner?" Then the fear of the Lord is the answer of your life to that which you believe; it is the taking of your life and putting it into true adjustment to that of which you are convinced. Is He Creator? Then I venture to say in the name of common sense, if on no higher ground, your business is to find His thought for you and to obey it. Is He Preserver? Then I affirm that the supreme business of your life is that of worship and of faithfulness in recognition and in response. Is He Redeemer? Then the supreme business of your life is that of yielding yourself to that redemption, the handing over of the soul to the Redeemer. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...."

I claim, in conclusion, that this declaration of the ancient preacher is justified, philosophically, historically and experimentally. It is justified philosophically. Note the relation of Jehovah to the things which we said at the commencement must be taken into account in the way of wisdom; the past, the present, and the future. As to the past. What relation has the Lord to the past? Let the whole business be stated briefly once again by declaring whatever your past, or mine, He antedates it. Let me speak now to those who may not agree with all my attitudes towards the Bible. I want to ask you before you take my Bible and tear out its first page, to make up your minds what you propose to substitute for that page. We were among the trees a little while ago, tracing them back, and we lost our way. We were among the birds following them back, and there also we lost our way. Follow the pathways again; then take the Bible up and read; "In the beginning God created...." If some other cosmogony satisfies you, I have no right to dictate to you; but so help me God, nothing else can satisfy me, but that does satisfy me. "In the beginning God..." I do not mind which way you travel; it may be you will say that the birds came after the trees and that something preceded the trees, and you travel back until you come to primordial protoplasmic germs. I will go with you, but now what is at the back of that? "In the beginning God created...." He antedates all your pasts and can control your past.

What of the present? What of the forces that assault the soul, luring it both to good and evil? He encompasses the whole of them and can control them. Nothing is out of His grasp. Not heaven alone but hell also is within His government. The Book of Job, that wonderful Book, teaches us how the Adversary of man is compelled to tell the sum of his devilry before God before he is permitted to exercise his power against man. That is always so. Milton when he made Lucifer, son

of the morning, say, "It is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven," made Lucifer express not his badness only, but his madness also, for Lucifer cannot reign in hell. God reigns in hell. "Though hell be nigh, yet God is nigher, Circling us with hosts of fire." All the forces in the midst of which we make our new beginnings are atmosphere in Deity and are controlled by God on behalf of all such as fear Him.

What of the future? He possesses it and can order it. He sees the end from the beginning. The final consummation, in one gleam of gold the New Testament has revealed and in one only, when Paul having climbed to the greatest height of all his apostolic thinking, said, "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." That is the great and wonderful consummation about which the Bible has said so little that we dare say but little. That is made sure by the government of God. The future is His.

Where then shall I begin? "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...." There is my past, "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." God stands between me and my past. Around me are the forces of today; How can I deal with them? God will deal with them, so I can deal with them in fellowship with Him. There is the future, what am I to do with tomorrow? There is hope in God for that also is His. Faith in God about the past; fellowship with God about the present; hope in God about the future. "Being... justified by faith,..." that is the backward look. "... We have peace with God..."; that is the present. "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; that is the future.

In proportion as our lives are put into right relationship with Him, we mount His chariot and ride triumphantly toward the goal of the ages and if the wheels be sometimes splashed with blood and the conflict leave scars upon the man who fights, what does it matter! Life is not feeble, frail; it is mighty, mysterious. The way of wisdom is the way of infinite, glorious victory, and the beginning is the fear of the Lord.

The declaration is justified historically in the experience of all the souls who have known the fear of the Lord. Hear me again—it is a sentence I would like to elaborate, but I will not—in the history of all the nations that have feared the Lord, the declaration of the text is vindicated.

Finally, it is vindicated experimentally. At this moment, the answer of the soul intelligently to the declaration vindicates its accuracy, and the experience of the soul in obedience vindicates its accuracy. By which I mean that we know full well that to fear the Lord is to walk in the way of wisdom. We know full well that if we will act in the fear of the Lord, we shall have found the highway at the end of which is the perfected life and the city and the home of God.

Proverbs 11:30. Winning Souls.

Proverbs 11:30.

Winning Souls.

He that is wise winneth souls.

Proverbs 11:30

The slight difference between the Authorized Version and the Revised Version in the translation of this text suggests two different meanings. The Authorized Version reads, "He that winneth souls is wise," and that seems to mean quite simply that it is a wise thing to win souls. The Revised Version reads, "He that is wise winneth souls," and that seems to mean quite as simply that the condition for winning souls is wisdom; winning souls is a wise business; a man must be wise if he is to win souls. When the two ideas are thus suggested we realize that each translation may convey both meanings. The Authorized Version declares, "He that winneth souls is wise," that is, in himself and in his deed. The Revised Version reads, "He that is wise winneth souls," that is, wisdom is the condition for the work, and when that condition is fulfilled, the winning of souls is the inevitable issue. I feel, therefore, that we are justified in treating this text in both ways, as conveying both ideas. Whichever translation we take, whichever idea may appeal most strongly, we recognize that one subject is suggested, that of winning souls, whatever the declaration with regard to it may be. The declaration we shall treat as twofold; first, that wisdom is necessary to the work, and, second, that the accomplishment of the work is demonstration of wisdom.

Let these be the lines of our consideration: first, the subject referred to, winning souls; second, the wisdom which is necessary to do the work; and, third, the wisdom of the work done.

First, then, as to the winning of souls. The phrase is an old one. I do not mean merely by the fact of its presence in the Divine oracles, but by the fact of its use. I think we are compelled to admit that we do not hear so much about it now as some of us did in our boyhood days; but it is still being used, and is by no means unfamiliar to Christian people. Herein lies a difficulty, not insuperable, but quite definite; the difficulty of familiarity with a phrase, and the consequent difficulty of prejudice as to what the phrase may really mean. Here, therefore, we must clear our ground, or we may be lead into false speculations and certainly into misunderstandings of the enterprise which is suggested by this phrase of the Old Testament, a phrase illuminated, transfigured, and glorified by all the revelation contained in the New Testament.

What, then, is meant by winning souls? To proceed carefully with our investigation brings us immediately to another question, What are souls? When we have answered that, we may proceed to inquire, What is it to win them?

What, then, are souls? We have no right to take the word as it is in common use today and read into it either the interpretation of that common use, or the interpretation of our own conception of its meaning. We want to know what this man meant when he wrote the word. What did he mean by

"souls"? I can answer the question only by looking carefully at the word and seeing its place in these Old Testament Scriptures. Let me immediately say, it is one of the commonest words to be found in these writings. Someone who has had the time to count tells us that the Hebrew word occurs 754 times in the writings of the Old Testament. Of those 754 times, the word is translated "souls" 472 times; on 282 occasions the Hebrew word is translated in forty ways, so that altogether the same Hebrew word is translated in forty-one ways. The predominating translation, however, is the one that we find in our text. If, then, this word was thus variously translated, and evidently as variously used, it is important that we discover its real intention. The word means simply a breathing creature. Its first occurrence, interestingly enough, is in the twenty-first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, which says that "God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth," living creature meaning breathing creature. As I take my way through the Bible and observe its use, I discover that it became almost constantly and exclusively used of man himself. To take this Hebrew word *nephesh*, and trace it through the Old Testament and tabulate the results carefully, is to have a remarkable aid to the study of the psychology and theology of the ancient Hebrew people. It is used over and over again of man as a person, of man as a being whose existence is due to the fact of life. Thus the word does not refer to the spirit of a man alone, it does not refer to the mind of man only, and it certainly does not refer to the body of man alone; but the word in its common use excludes neither body nor mind, nor that which is essential, spirit; it includes all of them. "He that is wise winneth souls." Here the word "souls" does not mean the spiritual side of man's nature only, or the mental capacities of a man alone; certainly not his bodily powers only. It means the whole man, and man is not a disembodied spirit. The essential in man is spirit, but no man is man in his spiritual nature alone. This old-time writer, having much less of light and less understanding of the value of human life, and less understanding of God's estimate of the grandeur and glory of human life than we have today, said, "He that is wise winneth men"—using the word genetically.

Now we may ask our second question, What is it to win men? Here again the word employed arrests us. I like the word "winneth" and yet there is a sense in which while certainly valuable as it reveals the best method of doing the work, it is not quite accurate as a revelation of the thought of the writer. "Winneth" is a very beautiful word, for it is by the note that woos and wins that men are most often helped; but the Hebrew word here is to take, to catch, and that in the widest variety of applications. Here again a little illumination may come to us if we remind ourselves of how this word is rendered in our versions. It is translated elsewhere, to accept, to bring, to buy, to draw, to infold. I would not be at all afraid of taking any one of these words and putting it into my text. He that is wise accepteth souls. He that is wise bringeth souls. He that is wise buyeth souls. He that is wise draweth souls. He that is wise infoldeth souls. That suggests all sorts of methods for doing the work, and every word seems to have some of the music of the gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and some revelation of the beauty of His methods with men. But the simple meaning is, to take alive. We may get some New Testament light on this in the story of the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5:1-11). Jesus said to Peter on that occasion, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." That is exactly the thought of my text. "He that is wise catcheth men." Looking at the story in Luke again, I am constrained to say that our translation misses something. What did Jesus really say to Peter? "From henceforth thou shalt catch men alive." The value of what Jesus said did not consist in the similarity of the work these men were called to do, but in the disparity between the work they had been doing and what they would do henceforth. Henceforth you shall

catch men alive. They had toiled all night and had not taken anything. Jesus instructed them where they should cast their net, and they cast it, and caught a great multitude of fish. When they caught those fish they took them from the element of life into that of death. Jesus said, Henceforth you shall catch men alive, that is, you shall do for men, the exact opposite to what you have been doing in the case of fish. Those fish you have brought from the element of their life to the element of death. You shall bring men from the element of death unto life. You shall catch men, take them alive; you shall lead them into life; you shall bring them to Me, and so bring them unto life; you shall buy them by putting out your own strength and energy in service and sacrifice to bring them into life; you shall draw them in your fellowship with Me from death unto life; you shall infold them in the bundle of life.

That is the real thought of my text. Let us go back to Proverbs and think of it as a whole. First of all, we have a series of parental discourses on wisdom by a father to his son, then a collection of proverbs made by Solomon during his lifetime, then a collection of proverbs made in the time of Hezekiah, finally, certain speeches by men unknown to us. The whole book is unified by its perpetual contrast of two ideals of life, two methods of life, two conditions in which men live: the way of wisdom and the way of folly, the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness, the way of godliness and the way of godlessness, the way of life and the way of death. In my contrasts I have introduced only one word that is not in the book of Proverbs, the word "Godlessness." All the rest are there, and that is plainly inferred. In the discourses on wisdom, and in the Proverbs these things are put into contrast: wisdom and folly, rightness and wickedness, godliness and godlessness, life and death. Right here, in the heart of the book, the preacher says, "He that is wise winneth souls," that is catcheth men, leading them from folly to wisdom, from wickedness to rightness, from godlessness to godliness, from death to life. This is also what Jesus said, "Henceforth you shall catch men alive," winning them from the element of death and bringing them into the element of life, wherein all the meaning of their personalities will be fulfilled to the uttermost. The work is winning, not spirits alone, not minds only, not bodies simply, but men.

I submit to you—broad, hurried, and necessarily brief as this outlook is on a great subject—that it is a great enterprise to win souls, to capture men and bring them from darkness into light, from death to life. It is a worthy enterprise, that is, it is worth while. There is no enterprise that confronts a man when he stands in the bloom of his young manhood that ought to appeal to him like this. There is no enterprise that presents itself to a girl in the beauty and freshness of her youth that ought to capture her dear heart like this. To win souls, to lead human beings out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of paralysis and failure and heartbreak into power and victory and joy, is a worthy enterprise. I submit to you, it is an enterprise which brings more satisfaction and delight to the soul than any other. I say to you, my Christian brothers and sisters who have never yet given yourselves to this work, you do not yet know the joy of life. There is no joy in the world like the joy of seeing a broken, soiled, spoiled man or woman healed, cleansed, renewed; to observe the haunting fear in the eyes as first we saw them changed into dancing joy when they have come to Christ and to life. To win souls, to catch men, women, and children, to take them alive, out of the element of death into the element of life—that is a worthy enterprise, a satisfying enterprise, a delightful enterprise.

In his proverb the preacher said, "He that is wise winneth souls." What is the wisdom that is necessary for this enterprise, for doing this work? What did he mean by wisdom? All the book of

Proverbs reveals what he meant. The other wisdom book, which came from the same pen, the book of Ecclesiastes, will show what he meant. The third wisdom book of the Old Testament, with which in all likelihood this man was familiar, for it is probably the most ancient of all the Old Testament books, the book of Job, will show what he meant. Wisdom, in the sense in which these books are designated wisdom books, meant simply what we mean by philosophy. In these books we find the philosophy of the Hebrew religion. There is a distinction between the philosophy as discovered to us in these wisdom books and all other philosophies which I will only mention now. The Hebrew philosophy began with the affirmation of God. All others begin with Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Do not misunderstand that passing illustration. I am not criticizing the method of the question, but reminding you that the Hebrew philosophers did not begin with that question. They affirmed God, and proceeded on the presupposition that God is all-wise, that wisdom could be perfectly predicated only of God, that apart from Him there is no wisdom, that in Him all wisdom dwells. From that presupposition they deduced their doctrine of human wisdom. I go back to the beginning of this wonderful book of Proverbs and find a definition. The preface is in the first seven verses of the first chapter; then the writer gives his definition of wisdom:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

These Hebrew philosophers believed that wisdom in man was the result of man's right relationship to God. God is the fountain of all wisdom, and in proportion as man submits himself to His law and seeks His knowledge and His guidance and direction, in that proportion man is wise. I am inclined to say, in spite of all the centuries that have passed since these wisdom books were written, that it was a very sound philosophy.

I turn to the New Testament and I do not find that conception of wisdom altered. I do find it is illuminated, that a new light is breaking out, because there is a new revelation of God. In the letter to the Romans Paul comes to a point where he breaks out into a great doxology; "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!" That is the Hebrew conception of God as the All-wise, but it follows the great apostolic teaching concerning salvation. I turn from that to the Corinthian letter and I find the same man writing to people who are being darkened in understanding by false philosophies in the Corinthian city, and he tells them that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to bring to nought the wise things of the world, until at last he reaches the culmination of his teaching when he declares that Christ Jesus "was made unto us wisdom from God." Then he analyzes the wisdom, declaring it to be "both righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Thus the New Testament doctrine of wisdom is that it exists in God, that man is wise only as he comes into right relationship with God, and that wisdom has manifested itself in a method by which men, blind and foolish and far away and in darkness, may see and return and be enabled. Paul declares that for humanity in its sin and shame the ultimate unveiling of the wisdom of God is in the redemption that He has provided for man in Christ Jesus.

Then I turn to James—the supremely ethical writer of the New Testament, whose very letter is saturated with the Sermon on the Mount, and with Proverbs and the wisdom books of the Old Testament—and I find that he gives us a description of what wisdom is when it is at work: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy."

In this passage we have a perfect description of the man who wins souls. If, then, I am to be engaged in this great enterprise I must have the wisdom that cometh down from above. There is a wisdom, says James, that does not come down from above, it is earthly, sensual, devilish, and so he dismisses it. He then describes the wisdom that cometh down from above, and so shows us the wise man as God sees him. This is the man who is able to catch men and lead them from darkness to light. Let us then observe what James says about the wisdom that cometh from above, not in its widest applications, but with our minds fastened on this one subject of the capacity for winning souls. In this declaration three little words must be carefully observed which are not descriptive words but which mark a method: "First, pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy." My emphasis has brought out the words I ask you to observe: "First... then... without." "First," that which is fundamental in this wisdom; "then," the attitudes of mind that result; "without," the things that are excluded. What is fundamental? Purity. What are the things that result? "Peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." What are the things that are excluded when this wisdom masters the life? "Variance, hypocrisy."

The first word needs no comment; the wise man must be "pure." Then the attitudes of mind. "Peaceable" means not merely that the wise man is in himself a man who loves peace, but that he is pacific, that he makes for peace. Immediately the word of Jesus comes to our minds, the word from the great Manifesto, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The next word, translated "gentle," really means patient. The next word, "easy to be entreated," is a great word and certainly admits of two interpretations. This translation is the interpretation of the revisers, and I do not agree with it. "Easy to be entreated," suggests a man who can be approached easily, but I believe it means more, it means persuasive. "Full of mercy," that is, full of compassion. "Full... of good fruits," that is, full of the very things these needy people are waiting for. All these things lie within wisdom. They may be remembered by simple alliteration: pure, pacific, patient, persuasive, potential. These are the very qualities that are necessary if we are to win men.

First, pure. I cannot win men from impurity to purity if I am impure. I cannot catch men from the element of death and bring them into life if I myself am abiding in the element of death. I cannot lure men to walk the sunlit path if I hug the place where shadows lie and the darkness is thick. "First, pure." The man who attracts other men to holiness is the pure man. The reason why many people are utterly incapacitated for winning souls is that within their life is harbored, permitted, entertained, something that is impure and unholy. First, pure.

Then peaceable, pacific, making peace. Then patient. Ah, me, how often much patience is needed for winning souls! How they disappoint us, how they break out again and again into the same old sins, and how we are tempted to say, We will wash our hands of them! Never! The wisdom that is from above never washes its hands of the most hopeless, failing souls. Love never faileth. Love is at the heart of the wisdom of God. Then persuasive, knowing how to deal with men so as to lead them to the light. Then potential, replete with compassion, which is the desire to give good fruits, which are the very gifts for which men wait.

This wisdom that is from above excludes variance. Here I deliberately go back to the Authorized Version, and prefer its rendering, "partiality." God is no respecter of persons, we are told. That is not so. He is a respecter of persons. The Bible does not say that He is not. The Bible says God is

no respecter of faces, and the word was spoken to Jews, who thought that their very faces won them the respect of God! That quality of impartiality is necessary if we are to win souls. We so often have respect for faces; we do have hope of this man, but not of that other man. We look at certain people and come to the conclusion that they are not salvable. Such a conclusion is always a lie, a blasphemy. There is no man on whom Grace cannot work God's perfect will if he can be brought into right relationship therewith.

Again, without hypocrisy, that is, without pretense. In the mystery of the common human mind there is a most remarkable detection of any kind of hypocrisy or cant in a man who is trying to talk about religion. All our influence is killed if our attempt to draw a man to religion is mere pretense.

This is the wisdom that cometh down from above. This is the wisdom that is needed if we are to win men. This winning of souls is not a mechanical business which we can go to school to learn; it is not an easy arrangement which can be taken up by people when they have read a certain number of books dealing with the subject. The capacity for dealing with souls is that wisdom which cometh from above, which is, first, pure, then contains within itself these great and gracious qualities, and excludes partiality and hypocrisy. The capacity to win souls lies in life homed in the will of God, responsive to the grace of God, incarnating the very life of the Christ of God. "He that winneth souls is wise." "He that is wise winneth souls."

It seems to me that I need take no time with the third line of thought, save briefly to refer to it. I need not argue the wisdom of the work. Why is it wise to win souls? Because this satisfies God. God is against the spoiling of human lives and the wanderings of men into the paths that run out into pathlessness. Catch them, catch them alive, bring them back, turn them again into the way of peace, and God is gladdened. It is wise to win souls, for it satisfies God.

It is wise to win souls, for it glorifies man, and that in the true sense. Oh, the wasted wealth of humanity, the powers and capacities and potentialities blighted, spoiled, ruined! Oh, the agony of it! Win them, catch them, renew them! This is great, gracious, and glorious work. To see that which was out of the way turn into the way, that on which rested the cankerworm and the mildew and blight, breaking out into blossom and beauty and flowers and fruit. To see that man whose very face had become the awful sign manual of his lust being transformed into a man whose face is a revelation of the love of God. To see that girl whose eyes, naturally full of life and love, had become hard and scornful and devilish transformed, until from them flashes the glorious light of the eyes of Christ. It is great work, this! It is wise to win souls.

It is wise to win souls, moreover, because by winning souls we hasten the coming of the day of God.

Are we winning souls? Are we catching men? If not, why not? Is it that we have never seen the glory of the enterprise? Or is it that we lack the wisdom necessary? If it be that we have never been winners of souls because we have never seen the glory of the enterprise, then let us get near to Christ, really near to Him, spiritually near to Him. Resolutely forgetting and putting right out of our lives for one short hour all the influences of friends and others, and getting near to Him, and looking from His viewpoint, what shall we see? We shall see the extreme glory of humanity as we have never seen it. We shall see as He sees, that when God in the counsel of His great wisdom said, "Let us make man," He said a great thing. We shall see the consequent tragedy of human

undoing as we have never seen it. The man who sees only the ruin of humanity has never seen the ruin of humanity. That man who is impressed only by the foolishness he finds in human nature does not know the tragedy of human undoing. But if behind the face bruised, marred, scarred, and battered, bloated, blasted, we can see the potential image of God, then we shall begin to know the tragedy of sin. Jesus looked through the mask (more than a mask), through the disfigurements of sin to the potential that lay behind. Thus He saw the tragedy of the leprosy. If we can see with Him, then the master passion of life will be to win souls, to have some share in the glorious enterprise of realizing the latent possibilities of humanity, in order to glorify that humanity and in order to glorify the God Who thought it and made it.

If we know the glory of the enterprise and fain would be winners of souls, but are conscious of our lack of the wisdom necessary, then let us return to an earlier word of James in this same letter: "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not."

I lack the wisdom, God knows how I lack it, and how I feel I lack it, the wisdom that is first pure, then peaceable, pacific, patient, persuasive, potential, and without partiality or pretense. I lack it, but I am going to ask for it, and when I do so, ashamed that I am so lacking, He does not upbraid me, and He will give it. I, even I, can have it! I can have this wisdom. I also may become a winner of souls.

Shall we not presently get away somewhere quietly and put ourselves at His disposal, that in the power of the wisdom that cometh from above we may share the high and holy enterprise?

Proverbs 18:10. The Strength Of The Name.

Proverbs 18:10.

The Strength Of The Name.

The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Proverbs 18:10

Life is full of strain and stress. Sooner or later we all come to the consciousness of this fact. The illustrative figures of the inspired Scriptures all remind us of this fact.

Life is described as a race, for the running of which it is necessary that we should lay aside all weights, and forgetting the things we pass, as soon as they are passed, with eyes earnestly fixed upon the goal, so run that we may obtain.

Or life is described as a voyage, and the suggestion is that of the need the mariner has for skill and constant watchfulness, that he may escape the perils of rocks and sand-banks and shoals.

Or life is described as a battle in which the warrior must be fully panoplied and prepared to stand, and to withstand, in order that, having done all, he may stand.

Or life is considered as a great problem, full of perplexity, in which every day brings its new amazement, and all the way is a way in which the pilgrim passes through mystery and into mystery.

All these figures suggest the strain and stress of life.

There come to every one of us, sooner or later, days when strength is weakened. These are the days of disaster or victory in human life, the days in which we find that of ourselves and in ourselves we are unequal to navigating the vessel, to prosecuting the battle to finality, to discovering the way along which we should walk, and to continuing therein in spite of difficulty. The day when we have to say we cannot is a day of disaster or a day of victory, and whether it be disaster or victory depends entirely upon whether or not we believe our text of the morning, and have entered into the full meaning of its profound and comforting suggestiveness. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is set on high."

Shall we first remind ourselves of the forces that are against us, in order that we may then consider what this text suggests as to the place of safety, in order that we may finally consider the proofs of safety.

Of the forces that have been and still are against us, the first are mystic and strange, and not perfectly understood; they are spiritual antagonisms. We have been conscious in the midst of life of the sudden assaults of evil. We deny absolutely that they came from within. They were not part of ourselves. We do not believe that they came from God, but we are quite sure of the assaults.

Over and over again we are made conscious, whatever our philosophy may be, that there are spiritual forces, insidious and subtle, which suggest evil; and we are appalled by the overwhelming strength of these spiritual antagonisms.

Or, to speak of these things as they are personified according to Scripture, we have to take our way through life perpetually antagonized by one who has been described as "seeking whom he may devour," one who finds his way, if Scripture be true, into the immediate presence of God, there to slander and to ask permission to test us that he may sift us as wheat. The revelation of the antagonism of this evil spirit flames into supreme revelation in the Book of Job, and especially in one very remarkable sentence in that Book, where it is said that God inquires of him, "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" "Hast thou considered?" The question reveals an enemy who is patiently watching—watching for the weakest place in the chain, that there he may attempt to break it; watching for the least guarded door in the citadel of man-soul, that there he may force an entrance.

But there are other forces against us. The age in which we live is full of things that hinder us in our attempt to live the godly life. Let me name one or two of them. First, there is the fact that men are so eminently successful without God. That may sound a strange thing to say. The preacher is always denying it, and there is a sense in which we shall still continue to deny it. But it is impossible for the man of business, who is attempting to be a godly man, to look out upon his age without seeing how marvelously well men seem to get on without God.

Or, there is the problem of the long continued victory of evil in the world, the fact that time after time, when it seems as though morning were breaking, it suddenly darkens into midnight.

Then there is the problem of universal pain, the problem that floods me with letters, which I am always in amazed difficulty as to how to answer.

These are among the things that make life strenuous, and create the sense of strain, and demand some place of quietness and some place of peace.

Or, again, we have to do with the persistence of the self-life. I often feel that the enemy I dread most is not the devil, not the problems by which I am surrounded, but myself. The reappearance of the self-life is perpetual. Immediately a man thinks he has gained a victory over it, mastered it, it garbs itself in other vestments, and appears anew.

And then, there are the sorrows of life, the bereavements that come to us, the empty places in the home, the hope deferred that makes the heart sick, the disappointments that crush the spirit in personal friendships, the hour in which a man has to say:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat my bread,

Hath lifted up his heel against me.

These are some of the forces against us. Individually they defeat us; united they destroy us.

Now what are we to do? It is in the midst of a Book that is full of the revelation of these contrary forces, a Book that recognizes the spiritual antagonisms, that this wonderful verse flames out. It seems to be very much alone in this chapter of Proverbs. Yet, there is a wonderful fitness that this

verse is put down into the midst of words that seem to have no connection with it. Into the chaos it comes with its suggestion of cosmos, into the darkness with its flaming light, into a sob and a sigh with its song. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Let us attempt to interpret the meaning of this text by the Book, because the name of Jehovah is related to the whole of the old economy. I pray you remember the use these Hebrew people made of that name, the fact that they never pronounced it as we pronounce it, the fact that they never wrote it in fulness, so that they have created for us unto this hour a difficulty as to what the full name really was. On all the pages of their ancient Scriptures this particular name, to which the preacher now refers, stands revealed by four consonants, with no vowels, indicating a reverent reticence in the pronunciation of a name so full of rich suggestiveness. And remember, moreover, that as you study these Old Testament Scriptures, you never find this name linked with any qualifying or distinguishing adjective. You never read, the Jehovah, or my Jehovah, or the living Jehovah. The Adonahy, the Lord; my Elohim, my God; the living Elohim, the living God; but never the, my, or the living Jehovah. It always stands alone as the tetragrammaton, four consonants from which the light seems to break. There was a singular reverence and reticence in the use of the name, and yet, it was the very center of the Hebrew religion, and the measure in which these people rose to any height of religious life was the measure in which they saw the light of that name, and took their refuge in its signification, and were made strong by all it said to them.

I know the difficulty of interpretation, but I do not hesitate to adopt the interpretation that it means the Becoming One—that is, the One Who becomes to His people all they need. It suggests the adaptation of Infinite Being to finite being, in order to bring about the strengthening of finite being with all the strength of Infinite Being. If it is difficult to follow that line, and to discover the mystery of the tetragrammaton, then let us turn to the name as it is illustrated for us in the Old Testament, in five pictures.

The first is that of Abraham on a mountain with Isaac. The second is of Moses on a mountain. In the valley are the hosts that he has led from Egypt's slavery engaged in deadly conflict with Amalek. Moses' hands are lifted in prayer, and while they are so lifted Israel prevails, and when they faint and droop Amalek prevails. The third is the picture of Gideon, the peaceful farmer, suddenly called to national service, commanded to gather an army and to strike a blow that shall break the power of Midian. The fourth is a picture of a prophet in prison—Jeremiah, exercising a ministry in which there is no gleam of hope as to immediate result; knowing this from the commencement, and becoming more profoundly conscious of it as he continues, until at last he is in prison, and in the prison house he is singing a song of hope. And the last is the picture of yet another prophet, an exile from his own land, by the River Chebar—Ezekiel, looking through all the clouds and the darkness by which he is surrounded, ever through and through until there breaks upon his astonished vision the ultimate realization of all for which he has long hoped.

We know the pictures: Abraham on Moriah; Moses on the mountain, with hands uplifted while Amalek fights Israel; Gideon acting to set his people free from Midianitish oppression; Jeremiah in the midst of utter failure, the prophet of failure; and Ezekiel in exile by the river banks.

Now all these men knew the meaning of my text, and knew it in one particular way in each case. In connection with these five pictures I find the name illustrated. Abraham on Moriah said, "Jehovah-Jireh." Moses on the mountain said, "Jehovah-Nissi." Gideon facing the conflict said,

"Jehovah-Shalom." Jeremiah in the dungeon heard the word, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu." And Ezekiel by the river said as the last thing in his prophecy, "Jehovah-Shammah."

Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will see and provide. Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord our banner. Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord our peace. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

In these pictures, I find an interpretation of the meaning of my text which is full of value. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

In the case of Abraham, we have an illustration of the obedience of faith in extremity. And by extremity I mean that he had come to the last test of his faith. Faith had been tried and tested and proved through all the years, but this was the final test. "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac." All the promises of God were to be fulfilled in and through Isaac, and there was no other way in sight. Nevertheless, this man, in the hour of faith's stern and awful and overwhelming extremity, found the tower of refuge a place of strength, a high rock pinnacle where he was set above the stress and strain. "Jehovah-Jireh" means, quite literally, the Lord will see; but inferentially, and by intention, the Lord will provide. There is not a great distance between seeing and providing, vision and provision. Provision is the outcome of vision; and this man, when the command was given, and the altar was prepared, and he was at the end of everything upon which he had been learning, did not say, "I cannot see"; but he said, "God can see"; and thus he ran into the tower of refuge. The Divine vision and provision was the place of strength to a man when his faith was obedient to the very last extremity of its testing.

Again, the picture of Moses upon the mountain is that of the conflict of faith. The hour had come when the men of faith, who had been redeemed because of their belief in him who had endured having seen Him Who is invisible, were gathered in conflict; and in the conflict Moses knew that everything depended not upon the strength of their fighting, but upon the presence and the power of God. In that hour he uttered these great words, "Jehovah-Nissi," the Lord our banner. I like to imagine the picture from Moses' standpoint. There in the valley are the hosts of Amalek—cruel, overwhelming hosts. And there also is this little company of fighting Israelites. But what did Moses say that day when, conscious of the stress of the conflict, he ran into the name of the Lord? Like a banner floating and fluttering in the breeze he saw that name, and knew that victory depended upon God's presence with them. The name of the Lord to him was a strong tower, to which he ran and was set on high.

Or Gideon yonder is seen shrinking from service; and I have no criticism for him. I have already said that he was a farmer, a man of simple tastes, unused to the things of war. This man was apprehended, and appointed in the midst of his toil to be the deliverer of the people from long and brutal and cruel oppression. Oh, how he shrank, afraid even of the vision of the angel that had come to him for his commissioning. He said, I have seen the angel of the Lord, and I shall die. It was then that the great word came, "Jehovah-Shalom," the Lord send peace. And he went into the name of God, and was set on high above his own fears, above his own anxieties; and in that moment he became the intrepid leader who presently was content to fight with three hundred rather than thirty-two thousand, because such was the revealed will and method and purpose of God.

Or, I go once more to that dungeon, and see Jeremiah therein—a man who is the witness of faith in the midst of the most hopeless circumstances, and what is his hope? He says, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu," the Lord our righteousness. He knows perfectly well that there can be no civic strength that is not based on righteousness, no national restoration and uplifting that is not founded upon righteousness. And where is righteousness? Absent from the counsels of kings, absent from the policies of the men who were ruling, absent from the national leaders at that moment. Then he entered into the name of the Lord, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu," and was certain that because He was righteous the victory must be won; and he sang the song of the certainty thereof.

And, finally, Ezekiel by the Chebar, seeing his visions of God, was a man of faith in the hour of exile, when all upon which human hope had been set was broken to a thousand pieces; and he saw through the mists and through the clouds, and as he looked to the ultimate, that on which he finally dwelt was not the glory of a temple or the prosperity of a people, but the presence of God. Ezekiel saw Jehovah present in the process, and consequently, present finally in the fulfilment of purpose. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower."

I leave those illustrations, and I ask you for a moment to think with me of the proofs of safety. My brethren, all these I have referred to are in themselves proofs of how safe men are when they enter into this name. Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; you notice that the illustrations coincide with the history of the nation. The whole history of Israel is in these illustrations. Abraham, the father and founder; Moses, the law-giver and leader; Gideon, the leader at a particular time of peril; Jeremiah, the prophet of failure; Ezekiel amid the failure. All these men were able to sing the song of victory, and to achieve a present victory, and pass its power on to coming days because they knew the strength of this great name. In every case these men were set on high above the tumult and the stress, entering into the place of peace even in the midst of conflict.

The Bible abounds with illustrations. Daniel knew conflict; he was persecuted, and they took him and put him in the den of lions. But if you tell me that Daniel was in the den of lions you have discovered only the most superficial truth. Where then was Daniel? In the name of Jehovah, in the den of lions; and when the king in the morning said, "O, Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, Whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O, king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." He went into the tower, and was set on high.

Or Job, who came to the fulfilment of his own life when he found his way through the flaming glory of the Theophany into the secret place of the name, and rested therein.

Or David, if indeed the psalm we read this morning was David's psalm. Did you notice the growth of experience and the growth of the sense of safety? At the beginning of the psalm he said, "I shall not be greatly moved," but before the song was done he said, "I shall not be moved." And how did he climb from trembling confidence to matchless assurance? Read the psalm again, and it will be seen that it is the psalm of God and the song of the name of the Lord—the song of a soul gathering courage and heroism in the secret place.

We need not confine ourselves to Biblical illustration. "Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs," who passed through conflicts as severe, if not severer, than we can ever know, put their trust in this

name, and found it safe. Or may I not appeal to some of you who are in the midst of conflict to prove the assertion of the text by the memory of things you have known in the lives of your loved ones? Will you let me help you by an illustration? I remember, seven and thirty years ago, when God took from my side—the side of an only boy—his one playmate, his sister. Do not ever indulge in the heresy that a child is incapable of sorrow. I remember coming back one morning—only a lad as I then was—from the grave where I had sat in loneliness, and I found in the house my father and mother. And, boy as I was, I crept up to where they were sitting together, and, if you like the heathenism of the word, it happened—there is a better word than that—my father's hand was resting on his Bible, and I looked at where his finger rested, and I saw these words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." And, boy as I was, I knew there was a connection between that verse and the light I saw on the faces of father and mother; and I never lost the impression of it. And, twenty-four years after, when my own first girlie was taken out of my own home, I got the Bible and turned up the same verse, and laid my hand where my father had laid his hand. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is set on high."

The proof is scattered through the experience of the saints in all the ages, and is as near to you as father and mother's trust in God. Nay, verily, brethren, have you not yourselves proved it?

Of the supreme onslaught and victory, we have the story in the New Testament. Jesus knew the conflict of life as none other has ever known it. He knew the forces of spiritual antagonism. He lived in the midst of the problems that vex us. And the subtle forms of temptation with which we are familiar, He knew them and entered deeply and profoundly into them. He knew the sorrows of bereavement and difficulty; He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And how did He overcome them? To Him the name of the Lord was a strong tower into which He passed and was set on high. The supreme secret of all His victory over sin and sorrow is contained in His own confession, "I and My Father are one." In fellowship with Him He overcame. But there is a deeper signification in that story of Jesus. The name Jesus in itself is composed of the ancient name Jehovah, and yet another word that speaks of salvation. The name Jesus essentially means Jehovah is salvation. The name Jesus is Joshua. Now let my young friends take their Bibles and find out when the name was made. The Son of Nun did not bear it first. It was given to him. The significance is that of Jehovah and salvation interwoven, making the name Joshua, which is our name Jesus; and into that name finally we may run and be set on high.

Jesus, name of sweetness,

Jesus, sound of love,

Cheering exiles onward

To their rest above.

My brethren, what is the conflict to you this morning? Are you at the extremity of faith? Are you asked to walk a pathway that seems as though it must end in disaster? Are you sure it is God's will? Then, in comradeship with this Christ, Who walked the *via dolorosa*, and walked the way to victory, take your way along that pathway. Are you in conflict with foes in the valley that are against faith and against God? Let your hands be uplifted, and in that name Jesus there is a banner of Jehovah, and victory must come as you follow Him. Are you commissioned to some

work from which you shrink, as did Gideon of old? In Jesus is the fulfilment of the great word "Jehovah-Shalom," for He is our peace; and we may enter into all service in perfect peace in Him. Are you feeling, rightly or wrongly, that you are strangely in company with Jeremiah, that all the foundations are breaking down around you, and that the national outlook is of the darkest? I pray you, in your dungeon, look higher and see "Jehovah-Tsidkenu." Or, if you would translate it into modern language, sing this: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run." And if today the thickening battle and the darkening gloom overwhelm you, stay a little by the river, and look far enough and earnestly enough, and beyond all the mystery of the hour you will see the glory of God's victory; and its chief word is this, "Jehovah-Shammah," the Lord is there. The crowned Christ, having won the kingdoms of the world, will make them His own to the glory of God.

Proverbs 18:24. My Friend.

Proverbs 18:24.

My Friend.

He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction; but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24

Those of you who are familiar with the rendering of this text in the Authorized Version must notice the very striking change of the revision in the first part of the verse. In the King James Version it reads: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." There is no doubt that the rendering as we have it now is true to the original. The Authorized Version was due to a mistake made by confusing two words which are very nearly alike, and yet have totally different meanings. In the new rendering we see that which was most certainly in the mind of the Preacher. He is speaking to young people on the subject of friendship, and he warns them that the man of many acquaintances is in danger, but that there is a kind of friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

I am perfectly well aware that at the first my text has no application such as I propose to make of it this evening. You would at once be conscious when I read such a text that I am going to talk about my Friend, my one Friend. But when these words were written that Friend was not in view save as a great ideal. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew words used here for friend are quite distinct, and carry two meanings. The word translated "friends" in the first part of my text simply means associates or acquaintances. That translated "friend" is different, and may with all accuracy be translated "lover," and that conception harmonizes perfectly with an earlier proverb. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." The true quality of friendship is love, and the one expression of perfect friendship is that of adherence, loyalty, or, again in the somewhat rough and striking translation of both versions, a friend is one who "sticketh closer than a brother."

The heart of man is forever craving friendship. Let every man beware of the crowd of acquaintances. Let every man value at the very highest the friend who is a true lover. It is a little difficult in June days to distinguish between the acquaintance and the friend. We have to wait for November and December. It is not easy to know your friends when the sea is smooth and reflects heaven's blue. You will find them when the sky is overcast and Euroclydon beats the deep into fury, and you are in peril. It is not quite easy to distinguish between acquaintances and friends in your days of prosperity. "A brother is born for adversity." You discover him only then. Friendship is tested by tempest. May we not say that the difference between acquaintances and friends is the difference between the reeds that grow by the river side and the rough, gnarled old oak stick when you are contemplating climbing hills. If I have a rough hill to climb give me one rugged old oak stick to lean on rather than a hundred reeds that grow in perpetual green by the river bank. If I have difficulty to face and burdens to bear and tempests to weather, give me my friend—he may be very

rough, quite a curious specimen of humanity, but he loves me, and he sticks—rather than a hundred butterflies who are round me while the sun shines and are gone when storms lower. That was the Preacher's meaning. It was a valuable meaning. It is a great philosophy of friendship, and we do well to consider it.

Interesting as the theme may be, I do not intend to discuss this subject of friendship on the level of the ordinary friendship of these passing days. When the Preacher said, "There is a lover that sticketh closer than a brother," he stated a high ideal of friendship, the very highest and the very best that his eyes had seen or his heart had conceived. In the process of the centuries He appeared, incarnate, the one true Friend of all men.

This evening I want to introduce you to my Friend. I have found this One of whom the Preacher spoke so long ago. I know Him personally, intimately, though not yet fully. I am not going to discuss the philosophy of friendship. I am not going to portray the ideal of friendship. I want to talk to you about my Friend, to tell you some things about Him, and then how you also, if you will, may come into the circle of His friendship, among those to whom He says in infinite tenderness and love, "No longer do I call you servants... I have called you friends."

Therefore, you will understand that I am speaking tonight, as I sometimes say, not as an advocate, but as a witness. With all reverent familiarity I want to tell you what I have found this Friend to be. You say, "Why do you come with this message?" This message, like those of recent Sunday evenings, has grown out of the necessity of the hour. I attempted to speak last Sunday night of the way in which men and women in conflict with evil may hope to be successful. I directed them to that philosophy of conflict contained in the words of James, "Submit to God; resist the devil." In the course of my message I referred to the loneliness of many in this great London, and once again I have been dealing all the week, by correspondence or in other way, with those who found that word touch a chord in their hearts. There are a great many lonely men and women in London. If before I turn to my real subject I say some word or two about them, I crave the patience of those who are not feeling lonely. There are so many lonely souls all about us. There are young people in business houses in this district who are awfully alone. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, nine in the morning till nine at night; Friday the same; Saturday, nine till eleven; Thursday, nine till five, and then—no friend! The home far away in some country place. The loved ones who understand best, not nigh at hand. It may be no home worth the name, no lovers, no friends who really care. I do not think I can say tonight all that ought to be said and all I want to say about such a condition of things. I think I shall have a good deal to say about it before long. I want to talk to those who are in such places. Perhaps there are some even more lonely. I have not described your situation, but you are awfully alone. Hundreds of people on the streets as you walk along, but no one who knows you. The most lonely moment I ever had in my life was in 1896, when I first landed in New York. I stepped from the great steamboat on to the wharf, and there were hundreds of people meeting friends, but no one meeting me. Not a voice I knew, not a face that was familiar, and I stood for a few moments feeling desolately lonely. I am never lonely now when I go there, but I was lonely for that first hour. And that was a mere nothing, because I could find my way to friends, and presently I did; but, oh, these men and women in London who are alone! I would like to say in passing that it is part of the work of Jesus Christ to see to it that such hours as I have named cease once and for all. Until that work is accomplished it is the work of Jesus Christ to find these lonely people and introduce them to a circle of living, warm, loverlike affection. God help us to do

it. We are going to try.

There is something needed beyond anything we can do on such lines. For the rest of this evening I want to speak to the lonely hearts in this great crowd. All the rest of you be patient. Thank God if you are not alone, and pray that I may so speak of my Friend Who never leaves me utterly alone, that I may win these lonely hearts to Him, and introduce them to a comradeship absolute in its perfection.

My Friend is first of all a lover. He fulfills that fundamental condition of friendship which the Preacher of long ago described. To my unutterable surprise, He says He loves me. The Bible, treat it as you will, speak of it from whatever standpoint you will, have all the difficulties you may concerning its construction, is His love letter to me. And whereas it says many things I have not yet understood, the one message ringing through it from beginning to end is the message of love. The Friend Who drew near to men nineteen hundred years ago in such warm and tender nearness that they could touch and handle and see Him is the Eternal Friend of men, closer than breathing in spiritual presence forevermore, and always saying to me that He loves them. The one great message of this Letter is a love message. I take it up and read it, and the thing that comes home to my heart startling me, surprising me, is that the pure, white, holy God loves me notwithstanding my sin, notwithstanding my pollution and my failure. My Friend loves me in spite of all my degradation.

More than that, He has demonstrated His love so as to bring conviction to my heart. Whether I have responded or not is not the question for the moment. I simply state the fact. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He explains that in His own words, for He rises to the highest conception possible to the mind of man when He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is your greatest conception of love; you cannot climb higher than this. There is no supream proof of love than that a man should lay down his life for his friends. But my Friend died for me while I was yet a sinner, while all the set of my life was against His true and holy purpose, while all the influences and forces of my being were running counter to the influences and forces of His holiness and tenderness. Even then my Friend died for me. He laid down His life for me. Not only is it true that my Friend tells me of His love. It is also true that He has demonstrated His love to my heart's deepest and profoundest conviction. My Friend is a lover. Out of that come all the other things. Because my Friend is a lover He is faithful. He is true. He is tender. He is strong.

He is faithful to me, never deserting, never tiring of me. It was Shakespeare who sang, "Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds." Like that of the Preacher of old, that high ideal has had its perfect fulfillment in the case of my Friend. One of the pictures which I think I love to dwell upon almost more than any other in this connection is the picture of Jesus standing upon the mountain and leaving His loved ones. He gives them their great commission, and tells them what they are to do. Then with hands stretched out in blessing He vanishes out of their sight and the heavens receive Him. The question that comes to me is this, Will He, having left the pathway of human sorrow and need, be unmindful of the men He has left behind, for this is how I have been disappointed in human friendships. The man that was my friend when we trod the same rough path together—or seemed to be my friend—when he escaped from the roughness, and found the place of ease, forgot the man with whom he tramped the rough pathway. There is a whole philosophy in a word of the Old Testament, "The butler forgot Joseph." As I once heard Thomas

Champlness say, "His name is not always Butler." This Man is going, will He forget them? The next thing that happens, to their unutterable surprise, is the coming out of the mystery of the all-encompassing heaven of God of two men in white, who stand by them and say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." I have not quoted that to discuss the meaning of what they said, but to bring you face to face with the fact of their coming. He loved them, this wondrous Man, this more than Man, this mystery of Being, so warm that they had touched Him, so distant that they had never comprehended Him. He has left them, and, call it imagination if you will, when He left them and the heavens enfolded Him, His first thought was for the men He had left behind Him. The glorified Man of Nazareth, even in heaven's own light, called two messengers, ministers of the presence of God, and said, "Go, comfort the men I have left, and tell them I am coming again." My Friend never forgets me, never deserts me. He does not find any in high heaven in whom He takes a greater interest than He takes in me.

His faithfulness is of another pattern also. He is my Advocate against slanderers. He stands forevermore pleading my cause in the presence of God against all the lies that can be invented against my soul.

My Friend is true as well as faithful. My Friend rebukes me. He tells me in my deepest heart when I am wrong. I do not always like His rebuke. I shrink from it and try to excuse the thing He rebukes; but He is persistent. Hear the paradox and know its truth. With pitiless pity He refuses to make peace with any evil thing in my nature, in my habit, in my life. My Friend is true to me. When He sees that my thinking and acting are likely to lead me astray from the path that leads to ultimate victory He rebukes me, and His rebuke is severe. If you would know how severe, listen to His answer when one of His friends said to Him in seeming pity about the cross, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." Jesus, looking into the face of Peter, said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." It was harsh, but it was very tender. It seemed unkind, but it was real friendship.

Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false Friend He would be

If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see.

It is also true that He praises me. It is a great proof of friendship to be able to do that. I have known people in this world who have come to me and said, "I am your friend, and now I am going to be faithful to you." I always try to escape. That may be a confession of weakness, but it is true. The true friend will rebuke, but he will also praise. Some people seem to think that my Friend will never say, "Well done," until we stand before His throne. It is a mistake. At the risk of being misunderstood, I tell you this, He often says, "Well done," even now. At eventide, when the shadows are lengthening and the day's work is over, and the heart is sore and sad that it has done so ill, in quiet communion He comes and says, "Well done." I am always surprised when He says it, but He says it. He does not postpone His tender caresses to the moment when the infinite light shall be about us. He comes with me all the way, and I am often surprised to hear the accents of His voice saying, "Well done." You know it is true. There are more than a thousand witnesses in this house upon whom I could call, and they would tell you it is true. Yesterday I was tempted. I resisted, almost to blood, and I won, although I was wounded in the winning, and I heard Him in my deepest heart say, "Well done." He is a true friend. He rebukes me for my wandering. He praises me for every victory. He knows how to save me by the severity of His reproof, and how to

help me by the tender faithfulness of His praise.

This Friend is tender beyond all telling, in my sorrows always sympathetic. We have all had, or shall have, some sorrows into which our nearest and dearest earthly friend cannot come. I have never yet had a day of sorrow in which I did not find my Friend at hand. Sometimes He is quite silent, never a word, nor a touch of His hand, and I have thought I was alone; but in the moment when my heart has said, Where is my Friend?—not perhaps by word, but by a sudden mystic consciousness of His love—I have known He was there, silent, and in the silence gathering into His own dear heart of infinite love all my sorrow. He is, moreover, gentle with all my weakness. Two or three years ago I found what gentleness is, and that in a definition. It is not often we learn things from a definition, but George Matheson defined gentleness for me, and now I know what it is. He said, "Gentleness is strength held in check." I cannot quote his actual words here, but only his thought. One speaks of the gentleness of the brook. There is no gentleness in the brook. It rushes and presses, laughs and roars, and does all it can with its puny strength. There is no gentleness there. But if you will stand by the mighty ocean when there is such a tide as "moving seems asleep," and the great waters kiss the shore, and your little one paddles upon its edge, and is kissed by the crest of the wave, that is gentleness. With one great uprising the sea might engulf the child, but its strength is held in check. My Friend is so gentle. He might crush me even by the inflow of His strength. He might blind me by the very vision of His glory, but He does not. He bends over me and says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He is waiting for me. He has been waiting all my life to say some things, but He has not said them yet, because I cannot bear them. My Friend is tender with a great gentleness that waits for my weakness.

Yet my Friend is strong, so strong that He can overcome sin, and Satan, and self. Sin overcomes me even yet. Satan overcomes me yet. Self-uprising blots the sun out of the heavens for me even yet, but it is always because I try my strength against sin, or Satan, or self, and forget my Friend. I never hand self over to Him but that He puts His cooling hand on the pulses of desire, and self is conquered. I never remit to Him the conflict with the foe but that the Lion of Judah overcomes the Lion who roars, seeking to destroy. I never hand over sin to Him in any of its hundred forms but that "He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free." My Friend is strong on my behalf against all the foes that oppose themselves, and He is strong in my weakness. If He is gentle with my weakness He is also strong. To that wicket gate somewhere in the castle of Man-soul that I do not know how to guard, and in trying to guard which I have failed, and the enemy has broken in, my Friend will come and make it the mightiest in all the castle. That is but another way of saying what Paul said. I repeat it, out of an experience far off from his it may be, yet real to me, "He hath said unto me... My power is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak, then am I strong."

Then my Friend is rich. He owns the whole earth. All the keys hang at His girdle. When in resurrection glory He appeared to one of His friends in the olden days He named some of the keys, but not all. He said, "I am... the Living One;... and I have the keys of death and of Hades." But there are other keys upon His girdle; they are all there—the keys of knowledge and wisdom, the keys of light and of love. My Friend can admit me into the mystic meaning of the daisy and lift this poor frail life of mine into fellowship with the rhythmic order of the infinite universe of God. This world is His. There is never a bank of flowers but that they exist through His power. There is never

a glorious sunset that flames upon my vision but that His hand has painted it. There is no music worth the name but that He presided over its first thinking. There is no color but that is an expression of my Friend's beauty. I am seeing Him increasingly as the days go by in all the colors of life, and in all the grays moreover, and in the somberness. My Friend owns the world, and I am finding out that you cannot introduce me to anything that is in itself essentially beautiful but that at its heart my Friend is sitting as King. You cannot bring me to anything that is worth having in the world of things, moral or mental, of music or literature, but that I find my Friend will lead me a little deeper and swing the door a little wider, and fling the horizon a little further back. All the world belongs to Him, and more than that. If it be true that there are many keys at His girdle and He is Lord of the world, then He is Lord of the heavens, and there are many diadems upon His brow. When this soul of mine thinks beyond dust into the realm of deity, my Friend is still on the throne. When this life of mine, chained for the moment to the things of time and sense, flings itself out to the infinite and eternal, I find that in the midst of the glory is my Friend, and heaven is already familiar ground to me, for my Friend has gone to prepare an abiding place for me, and He whispers in my heart as I tramp the dusty road, "Where I am there you may be also." My Friend is Lord and Master of Time and Eternity, of this world and the next.

Once again—and now what word shall I use? I must use a commonplace for lack of something finer—my Friend is generous. He gives me all I need, and infinitely more, for He shares with me all He has. His very life He makes my life. His very resurrection glory is my inheritance.

If these things are too high and too far and too distant, let us get back again to the things of time and sense. He gives me the world that belongs to Him. This world is mine tonight, in its every spear of emerald green, in all the music of the thundering sea, in all the healthfulness of its blowing winds. They are all mine. You may put up a notice, "Trespassers are not allowed," but because my Friend holds all the earth I can look over your hedge and possess what you only own, and there is an infinite difference between the two things. He has given me Himself, and with Himself all things.

"Are you never lonely?" you ask me. Well, dear heart, never perhaps quite as you are, for today my path lies differently, and I have my home and my loved ones, but I have been alone as you are in the days gone by. I have been in a city where there was no one who seemed to know or care, and even today there are lonely hours. Even today there are moments when even my dearest and nearest—and how near and dear they are only my heart knows—are excluded, hours of mystery and questioning, hours when the heart grows faint; but I never have an hour now in which I cannot find my Friend if I will. In the midst of the city, right there in the place of business, He is close at hand, a lover "Who sticketh closer than a brother." How shall I say it? I cannot say it as it ought to be said. May God the Holy Spirit sing it into your heart tonight as the very Evangel of hope.

How may all lonely souls come into His circle of friends? It is quite easy for you to enter the circle, because this Friend is your Friend long before you are His, and He wants your friendship. The advance is on His side, not on yours. Listen to the tender and strong words He spoke to the first group of His earthly friends, "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you." That is still true. Is your heart turning toward Him in its loneliness? Are you crying out for His comradeship? He has been seeking yours for a long, long time. There is the first message of hope I bring you in answer to your question. Let Him speak again if you would desire to know how to enter the circle of His

friendship. This is what He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." You say that is difficult. Listen to the first thing He commands you to do. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Begin there, and He numbers you at once amongst His friends, and all the rest of the commandments He will give you one by one as you are able to bear.

You need not understand the mystery of His Person, you need not be able to formulate a theory of His Atonement, but you are to come to Him and give yourself to Him. You are to say, "Is this the Friend who seeks my friendship? I will be His." And then, bending over you, He will say to you, "No longer do I call you servants... I have called you friends."

Behold, a Stranger at the door!

He gently knocks, has knocked before;

Has waited long; is waiting still:

You use no other friend so ill.

But will He prove a friend indeed?

He will: the very friend you need;

The friend of sinners, yes, 'tis He,

With garments dyed at Calvary.

O lovely attitude! He stands

With melting heart and open hands;

O matchless kindness! and He shows

This matchless kindness to His foes.

Admit Him, ere His anger burn,

Lest He depart and ne'er return:

Admit Him, or the hour's at hand

When at His door denied you'll stand.

Admit Him, for the human breast

Ne'er entertained so kind a guest:

No mortal tongue their joys can tell,

With whom He condescends to dwell.

Sov'reign of souls! Thou Prince of Peace!

O may thy gentle reign increase:

Throw wide the door, each willing mind;

And be His empire all mankind!

Proverbs 22:6. The Training Of Our Children.

Proverbs 22:6.

The Training Of Our Children.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

One is inclined to commence this morning by asking in the presence of this text a somewhat startling question. The question would be whether Christian people generally today believe the Bible to be true. A great many who would quite readily answer the inquiry in the affirmative would nevertheless halt, and attempt to qualify, and so begin to indulge in their own peculiar method of criticism in the presence of this particular text.

"In the beginning God created"—yes! "And God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—certainly true! "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"—there can be no question about that! "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it"—well, that is open to question; we are not quite sure about it. This text is not so often preached from, nor so often quoted today, as in olden days; and that is because people are not quite sure whether it is true.

New methods and new ideals concerning children have made men question the absolute accuracy of this Old Testament word, the word of the preacher of long ago. Indeed, you will find sometimes that if this truth be insisted upon with anything like vehement emphasis there will be an equally vehement protest. Whether in conversation among friends, or in general discussion, or even in preaching, you insist upon it today that if a child be trained aright, it must end right, people begin to question, and I have heard personally a most angry protest against the statement of this truth on the part of Christian people whose own children have gone wrong. Ah, there you touch the secret reason why this text is not believed as it was believed, or is questioned more today than it was in the past.

Well, my brethren, this morning at any rate I intend to treat it as an inspired statement, as a declaration of truth, as something which the preacher was inspired of the Spirit of God to write because it is essential truth, and to which there are no exceptions.

Believing this I shall ask you to consider in the simplest way first the condition, "Train up a child according to his way"; and, second, the promise, or perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of it as the sequence, the necessary result, the inevitable issue, "and even when he is old he will not depart from it." In dealing with the condition, the word that arrests us necessarily is the first word of the verse, "train." "Train up a child." I want to say two or three of the simplest things about this question of the training of children. I speak with more doubt about it than I should have done seventeen years ago, but I speak out of personal conviction, and in all tenderness and love to my brothers and sisters who have the charge of children in their own homes, and especially in the

hearing of those of you who have charge of children in the Sabbath school, or Day school. To all such as are privileged to touch child life, and to be in any way responsible for it, I desire to speak.

And the first is that training involves an ideal. There can be no training save to some goal. A result must be desired, and training simply means working toward that result. There can be nothing capricious or haphazard about true training. Unless there be some goal toward which we are moving, some ideal that we desire to realize, some great purpose ahead, there can be no training, and we shall never train the children of our own home as they ought to be trained, neither shall we train the children of our Sunday schools except we have some underlying conception of an ultimate for them. Training means going in a direction toward an ultimate. It means a great deal more than that, but that is the first thing.

And we are living in an age, brethren, when I am afraid in the Christian Church—and I have no message in this respect to the men and women who are outside the Christian fact; my first word to all such is, You must be born again; I have no ethic for the man who has not been born again, because he is absolutely unable to obey; he is dead in trespasses and sins—but within the Christian fact, within the circle of such as accept Christ as King and Saviour, and share His common life, I am afraid today that the ideals that we have for our children are often very low; and it is because our ideal for the child is a low ideal, that our training is a false training, and so much of the ruin and disaster that appals us constantly in the case of Christian people results from this fact.

Too often our ideal for our boys is that they shall be educated, gain a position for themselves, and, alas, to use the phrase that so constantly is upon the lips, even of Christian people, "get on in the world." Too often for our girls we have the ideal that they shall be also educated, and refined, and accomplished, and presently, again to use a phrase which if I could I would cancel absolutely from the thinking of Christian parents, "get settled." Well, brethren, these as ideals are anti-Christian and pagan. I am not undervaluing education. It is the duty of every man to give to every child he has the best education that he possibly can. I am not undervaluing position. Let every lad be ambitious to be the best carpenter, the best doctor, the best lawyer, in the whole district. Let our girls in very deed and very truth be educated and cultured and refined, but if these are the ultimate, then what are we removed from pagans? This is not the ideal with which we must start in the training of the child. What then is that ideal? I might put it in many ways. Let me take one of a hundred. That the child shall realize Jesus Christ's estimate of greatness. By realize it I do not mean theoretically merely, but practically. What is Jesus Christ's estimate of greatness? That a man is great in proportion as his character is what it ought to be. In the great Manifesto of the King, that wonderful enunciation of the ethic of the Kingdom of God, never a single blessing is pronounced upon having, never a blessing pronounced upon doing. All the blessings are upon being. And the true ideal toward which we are to move, and for which we are to train our children, must be the realization of the character upon which Jesus Christ has set the sevenfold chaplet of His benediction. That the boy may be a Godly man, that the girl may be one of the King's daughters all glorious within, that first. Everything after, but that first. To neglect that as the ultimate, to lose sight of that as the goal is to ruin our children by love which is false love, is to harm them by the very method in which we attempt to serve. Simply to take your boy, my Christian brother, and desire that he shall be a successful merchant and business man and make money, I am not sure that it would not be kinder for you to shut your front door upon him, and let him fight

his way through slum and up. To take your daughter, Christian father and mother, and simply desire that she shall shine in human society, with never a thought in your mind of how she appears in the palaces of the King, is cruel and dastardly, and not kind. Training means moving toward an ultimate, and the first thing in the training of the child is that we should see to it that the ultimate upon which our eyes are set is the true ultimate.

And now a second thing. The training of a child involves personal discipline. And as God is my witness I preach to my own heart this morning. What I want my child to be, I must be. I should like to bring that a little closer home to my heart and yours by stating it thus. What I want my child to be, that I am. Some man says, Not that; I want my boy to be better than that, truer, higher, nobler, purer! No, sir, you do not, or if you do, you desire a thing that can never be, by your influence at least. For remember this, you will make your boy what you are, and not what you tell him to be. How constantly Emerson's thought comes back to the mind when one thinks or talks of character. He says in thought, not in actual word, I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are. That is what your boys are saying about you this morning. You say to your boy, Be good, and you are not good! He will be what you are, and not what you say. You say to your boy as he starts out on his life, Be pure, and in your own heart there is impurity. Your boy will answer what you are, and not what you say. And this is not merely the thought of a preacher, it is the science of life. If you are going to train anyone to anything, you must yourself be that, or able to be that toward which you are attempting to train. There was a gymnastic display here last night. I was sorry I could not be present; but I am quite sure they are not going to appoint me the trainer for next year. And if you saw me on parallel bars, you would know why. I cannot train the lads to gymnastic excellence. Would that I could, but I cannot do it. It is too late. There are things I think I could help a boy to do, but not that. Why not? Because I am not an athlete. Now lift your thinking back. You cannot expect your boy to be a Christian athlete if you are weak and anemic in your Christianity. If you neglect prayer, and if the family altar is a thing you can lightly lay aside, your boy will never erect it in his home presently. I can make my child only what I am myself. Dear teachers, remember it. God bless you and help you this morning. Do not forget that, as you gather your class around you Sunday by Sunday, you influence them only by what you are in yourself. It is true of the preaching. God help me to remember it. I cannot influence any congregation by what I say, unless behind it there is the mystic force of a life true to the preaching. Thank God for the children in our homes, not merely for the privilege of training them, but for the fact that they train us. And how they train us! There is something in my own make-up which is perhaps mischievously independent, and if a man tells me I should not do this or that, I always feel like saying, Mind your own business. But if a man says, How will this thing that you do influence your boy? I am alert and listening.

And I must answer that conviction of personal necessity for discipline. If I am to train my child I must see the goal toward which I desire the child to press, but I must go that way too. I cannot persuade the children of my home to set their faces toward the King's city and Kingdom if I am a rebel.

Then, brethren, again, training involves a recognition of certain facts about the child, and that thought is enough to take our whole morning. I am going to deal with it only briefly, and yet attempt to say two or three things which seem to me to be important in this connection. I think there are two things we need to remember when we look into the face of every little child, and they are: first,

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child"; second, that child has upon it the mystic sign of the Master's Cross. There is no child for which He did not live, for which He did not die. And as I look into the faces of the children about my feet, in my own home, in this church on Sunday, in our Sabbath school, I must remember if I would help them and serve them these two things. First of all, account for it as you will, I care very little about the philosophy, but I care a great deal about the fact, that there is enough of iniquity in the heart of every child to work the ruin of a race if you let it work itself out. But I remember this also, that there is not a child born that is not born to the inheritance of the Christ of God, and that is far mightier than the forces which are against them. So I have these two things to remember in the training of every child, that there is in the child, first of all, the capacity for evil, but beneath it, deeper than it, truer than it, is the capacity for good, and at the disposal of the child for the realization of the good as against the evil is all the grace of God. These things being remembered—and, my brethren, you see how much one would care to say about these things, but I pass them—these things being remembered, now I come to the main message of my text. "Train up a child according to his way." And here is where the home is important, and where neither Sabbath school, nor Day school, can ever take its place. I suppose it is necessary in these days that we should teach children in crowds. Would to God we could escape from it. But at least we can in the home, and it is of the home I am principally thinking this morning. Every child is a lonely personality, a special individuality. You know the phrase that is often made use of concerning remarkable men. I have heard it said, and I doubt not you have too, that God made Oliver Cromwell, or John Wesley, or Abraham Lincoln, as the case may be, and He broke the mold. That is one of those curious sayings which have in them so much of truth and of falsehood. It is perfectly true that God made Abraham Lincoln and broke the mold, but what do you mean when you say that? Do you mean to infer that was the lonely and exceptional method, that occasionally God makes one man and breaks the mold so that there may be no other like him? I tell you, that is God's regular method. God made you, and broke the mold. He made every child in my home and broke the mold, and there are no two alike. Those blessed with children in the home know how true it is. They contradict each other, and disagree, and conflict in that sense is not always evil. You cannot find me two children in your own home alike. Listen, train up your family of two, or three, or four, or five, on exactly the same lines, and you may hit the goal in the case of one, and miss it in all the rest. No, you must specialize. Every child you have demands special consideration, and lonely attention. "Train up a child according to his way." You must discover what the child is if you would train the child. I think we have suffered in every way, socially, may I say, politically, and most certainly religiously, by the habit of imagining that we can deal with children in crowds, and treat them all the same way. It cannot be done. For the teaching of certain things that they must know it is necessary. But not when you are going to train a child, educate a child—not instruct a child. There is all the difference in the world between instructing and educating. To instruct is to build in. To educate is to draw out. But when you are going to train a child, to educate a child, you must find out what the child is. Let me give you one or two illustrations.

Here is a child of sanguine temperament, always hoping, never to be suppressed. Now the one business of the trainer is to put the hand upon that child, and see to it that the child is humbled. No, I did not say "snubbed." And don't you misread the English language so far as to imagine that humbling means that. The child must be kept humble, or else the child will break its own heart, when presently some morning which dawned brightly becomes a day gray and ashen. The child

must be treated with such judicial care as shall save it from following the gleam that is not light at all, but which leads to darkness.

Here is a child despondent. You have tried to treat them both alike, and when it has been necessary not to encourage the sanguine child overmuch, you have nearly broken the heart of the despondent child with your lack of appreciation. That despondent child needs to be praised for every good deed done. There should be for such words of helpfulness.

Here is a child skeptical, forever asking questions, an agnostic from birth, a child who will ask you more theological questions in the course of one day than you will be able to answer in a lifetime. What are you to do? Are you to tell the child that asking of questions is an evil thing? Certainly not. You must reason, and answer the questions, and take time to do it.

Here is another child, brother of the other, or sister, it may be, who is credulous, and believes all things without inquiry. Your business with that child is to ask it questions, to show it that there is a necessity for testing the spirits, and being perfectly sure of things.

Here is another child born, as scientific men are very fond of telling us, with a religious temperament. Guard that child carefully. Be afraid lest the temperament should lead to fanaticism.

Here is a child born with an irreligious temperament, with no leanings toward spiritual things. Then that child must be led into the light, the interest must be awakened, and that by showing the child that all the things of dust, which it most loves, are allied to Deity.

The illustrations are imperfect. I trust the philosophy is clear. You cannot take half a dozen boys and girls and treat them all in the same way. You must take them child by child. "Train up a child according to his way," and the business of parents supremely is that of attempting to discover what God has put within every child, in order that it may be led out to fulfilment.

I think therefore that the training must be twofold. First of all, it must be positive. The children must be taught that they belong to Christ, and led to the point of recognizing this fact and yielding themselves thereto. In the second place, the children must be taught that sin is their enemy, and therefore God's enemy, and it is therefore to be fought perpetually. It is the old-fashioned method of the Sunday school that we need to get back to, and not away from. Did I say "method"? Perhaps you will let me change the word. It is the old-fashioned passion of the Sunday-school teacher we need to get back to. I have read with great interest during the last days a book entitled Bible Teaching by Modern Methods, containing papers and reports of discussions at the Round Table Conference recently held in connection with our Sunday School Union. If you have time for nothing else, borrow the book—not mine, because I want it—and read the first and last lectures, Dr. Davison's lecture, in which he again emphasizes what indeed is the true aim of Sunday-school work; and Dr. Adeney's lecture, in which he emphasizes the fact that our teachers must be trained, and the work must devolve upon the ministry. Our first business is to bring the child into a recognition of its actual relationship to Christ, and a personal yielding thereto. Let it be done easily and naturally. Do not be anxious, if indeed your home is a Christian home, that your child should pass through any volcanic experience; but as soon as possible the little one should be able to say, Yes, I love Him and I will be His. It is as simple as the kiss of morning upon the brow of the hill, as the distilling of the moisture in the dew, or it ought to be. Thank God for men who, having wandered far away, have come back by volcanic methods, but thank God for the little ones who

have been led to the point of yielding and finding their Lord before any other lord has had dominion over them. Training should be toward that. Every child is called of God to specific work in the world, and the specific work ought to be discovered by those who train them; and when the capacity is found, then let a child be trained toward it.

Now one or two words concerning the text's declaration of sequence. "Train up a child according to his way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." I desire in this connection, first of all, to observe that only upon the fulfilment of the conditions enunciated have we any right to expect a fulfilment of the promise made. I have no business to expect that my child will fulfil the true purpose and intention of its own life if I neglect the training of the early days. I want to say also in this connection that this whole text answers objections. For instance, you may say to me in the presence of the text, and of my insistence upon this training, Then the untrained must go wrong. If I fail to train my child, the child must go wrong. No, not necessarily. I say that with reserve, and yet I am compelled to say it. You may neglect your child in your own home, and some Godly Sunday-school teacher may do the work you have neglected. Then you say to me again, Then the wrongly trained must go wrong. Not necessarily. It is not always so. There are children wrongly trained at home, who yet at last have found life and its great fulfilment. But what I want to say to you is this, that the man or the woman who finds the child, and really trains it up to the high ultimate, will possess the child in the ages to come, for we still believe that the things of time are finally the things of the eternities, and that the relationships of time can be the relationships of eternity only as they are fulfilled in the power of the eternal things. I want to put that, if I may, more superlatively, although I shall not enlarge upon it. I hear people sometimes who have been very careless about their children, very careless about their training, very careless about their Godliness, who thought of all the things except these things, when their children are taken from the world, speak of their hope that their little ones will meet them when they also cross the border line. Well, I do not know. Yes, perchance, but remember, your child if you fed it and clothed it, and educated it, and neglected its relation to God, will be more eager to meet the Sunday-school teacher who led it to God than you. Spiritual relationships, after all, are the final relationships. No, you and I have no right to infer negative conclusions from the text, although we should take solemn warning from the fact that we cannot infer conclusions. The promise is a positive one, and we stand by it. It does not say if we do not train our children our children must lose their way. But it does say, "Train up a child according to his way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." That is, he will fulfil his life, he will fulfil God's thought for him, and purpose for him, and intention for him, the intention that lies within him as a prophecy and a potentiality. The promise is the declaration of a sequence. It is not a capricious word spoken to men, but the unveiling of a law which operates, and from which there is no escape. And I make an appeal. With such an ideal, and such a training, and such a promise, the only fear we need have about our children is fear for ourselves. You tell me in answer to all this, Ah, but there have been such failures. Well, why? And who am I that I should judge? You know how constantly it is being said that the children of ministers so often turn out ill. Why? Well, I do not know, but I will make you these suggestions. Children turn out ill from Christian homes sometimes because of the laxity which imagines that a child's happiness consists in self-pleasing, imagines that for the child to be perfectly happy it must have its own will. There is all the difference between letting a child have its own will and its own way. To train a child in its own way crosses the ill sometimes. But never do it with passion. Passion burns to destruction. Reason fires to construction, and we must always make this careful

differentiation. You mean well by your child. Are you too gentle, too tender? Have you an anemic conception of love?

Or, on the other hand, it may be and I give you this as a personal conviction, it is more often due to, the sternness which forgets the needs of young life. How often I have seen it. You talk to me of a Puritan home and upbringing, and you know the sternness of the moral policeman regime, and the moment the boy crosses the threshold, with a sigh of abandonment he is into every excess of evil. Said a man to me some years ago, "How is it I have lost my children?" And I said to him, "I do not see you have lost your children, they are sitting round your board, most of them, and you do not seem to have lost them. They respect you, and look up to you." "Oh, yes," he said, "but there is not a boy round my board who trusts me." And I said to him, more for the instruction of my own heart than to imagine that I could help him. "What do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "there is not one of them makes a confidant of me." And I looked the man in the face and said, "Did you ever play marbles with them when they were little?" And he said at once, "Oh, certainly not." And I said, "That is why you lost them." My brethren, this thing is a burden on my heart. I am not talking pleasantries. We do not lose our children when they are seventeen. We lose them when they are seven. I am not talking to mothers. I never do! And that is not a flippant remark. I would like to hand all the bairns over to mothers for their theology. It is the fathers of the Christian Church who have failed with their children. You are a good man, and a hard man, and your children know it, and they respect you, but they do not trust you, and you lose them. There may be a laxity that is too gentle, a love that is anemic. There may be too much iron in your blood, too much sternness.

How shall I find the happy medium? Be very much and very constantly in comradeship with Jesus Christ. That is the last thing I have to say. If I am going to be so severe as to be true, and so tender as to hold, I must know Him, the Man Who could look right into the soul of a Pharisee and scorch it with His look, and into the eye of a little child and make the child want to come and play with Him. Oh, I must be much with Christ if I am to be with children. In God's name, if you do not know Christ, keep your hands off the bairns. You cannot train the boy to be a carpenter unless you are a Christian man and in fellowship with Him constantly. The parents' responsibility cannot be relegated to Sunday-school teacher, or Day-school teacher. To do that will injure me and place my child in great danger. I have tried to talk to you. God knows how much I have talked to myself, and all I can do in the presence of the old affirmation of ancient scripture which is fresh in its application today is to pray that my Father will keep me so near to Himself that I may know how to be a father to my children.

Proverbs 29:18. The Value Of Vision.

Proverbs 29:18.

The Value Of Vision.

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.

Proverbs 29:18

This is among the "proverbs of solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." It is the crystallization into a brief sentence of a national principle of the first importance. It must be interpreted in the atmosphere in which it was written, and its terms must be explained therefore by what they signified to those who made use of them.

The central word is most evidently the word "vision." The word means, quite simply and literally, sight, and refers both to the thing seen and to the power to see it. "Where there is no vision," the thing seen; "Where there is no vision," the power to see, "the people cast off restraint."

But the word had a particular value in the Hebrew economy, referring perpetually to a definite and specific revelation of God to the people. In the days of Samuel's childhood "there was no frequent vision." The word of God was precious in the sense of being rare, and the declaration that the word of God was rare is immediately explained by the affirmation that there was no frequent vision, and it is thus evident that the word was used of some definite revelation of God made to His people. Let us bear in mind that value.

The Hebrew word which is translated "cast off restraint" in the Revised Version, and "perish" in the Authorized Version, means very literally to loosen, to dissolve, to separate, to break up, or as I like to say, using a very simple colloquialism, to go to pieces. "Where there is no vision the people go to pieces." The Revised Version has simply given us a symptom of the disease, not the malady itself. One of the symptoms of the disease assuredly is anarchy, "The people cast off restraint." That which causes anarchy is that the people themselves are dissolved, loosened, broken up, have gone to pieces.

If we take these words in the atmosphere of the times in which they were written, with all reverence we may change out text into words far less beautiful, and used only for the sake of interpretation: Where there is no direct revelation of God to men, the people go to pieces, break up, perish. Where the people lack clear vision of God, that is, are ignorant of His revelation, unacquainted with His will as it is declared, they lack the principle of cohesion and continuity, they are dissolved, they go to pieces.

That conception is central to the history of the Hebrew people as given in the Scriptures. The text itself is among the words of Solomon, a man in whose reign the vision faded. There was no more disastrous failure in the history of Israel than that of Solomon, a man who was punctilious in his observance of externals and neglected the essential, the spiritual verities; who attempted to solace

a great people by ostentation and material magnificence, and undermined the kingdom. The vision faded, and the moment the spell created by the presence of the magnificent King Solomon was broken, the people went to pieces: Jeroboam and Rehoboam, the divided kingdom, with all the appalling sequence of the terrible years. That is the man who wrote these words, "Where there is no vision, the people go to pieces."

To go back in history, the graphic description of the condition out of which the mistake of clamoring for a king arose is found in these words: "There was no frequent vision." Men did not hear the word of God, it was rare; there was no continuous traffic with heaven, there was no commerce with the spiritual, no listening for God and to Him. With what result? The people went to pieces; they lost their high ideal of the theocracy and clamored for a king. That was the beginning of the ruin of the kingdom itself.

The same thing is graphically described as the condition preceding the reformation under Asa. Israel had not known the true God, there was no "teaching priest," an arresting phase in itself.

Then we have those wonderful words of the prophet who was neither a prophet nor the son of the prophet, by which he meant to say he was not ordained, not recognized by the schools of the prophets, the herdman of Tekoa who broke upon the people in thunder with a great message. He described the condition as that of "famine for the Word of God." With what result? The young men and maidens thirsted and were weary; they went to pieces, because there was no vision, no dealing with God.

My purpose this evening is to take that principle and see what it means in the case of the great continent of South America, which we are trying during the course of the winter months to understand in order that we may know our responsibility. In previous sermons I have spoken of the geography and the peoples of South America. Its geographical situation and conditions are attracting the attention of the whole world. Its peoples are presenting grave problems to missionary enterprise because of their past history. Moreover, I have declared in passing that the supreme need of the people of South America is twofold: moral dynamic, and spiritual vision.

The text which I have taken puts these two things into their proper relationship. Moral dynamic is always the outcome of spiritual vision. In this sense also the text is true. When there is no spiritual vision morality goes to pieces. That, unless I sadly mistake, is what Harold Begbie has tried to put before us in his last novel, *The Challenge*, a significant title. I am not going to describe the novel. I have read it, and advise you to read it. If I may summarize its teaching in a few words, this is it: the only challenge to immorality is religion.

That is the message of my text concerning men and concerning the nation. If these great peoples of South America are to be made strong nationally, they must be made strong individually; and if they are to be made strong individually, it must be by vision in the Old Testament sense of the word, by revelation.

In this fact we have the sanction and compulsion of Christian missions. Let us say it boldly: We have the true vision of God, we have His final revelation, for "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in the Son," in the Son Who is "the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." Vision through the Son is our greatest possession. It is in the light of that vision

that we are assembled for worship in this hour. It is in the light of that vision that we live our lives as Christian men and women. It is in the light of that vision that we are ready and prepared to carry our burdens, to endure restraint, to win victories, to enjoy the high and holy ecstasy of our fellowship. We are, therefore, humanly responsible for those who lack our vision. "Humanly," you say. What do you mean? I could understand it if you argued that it is a Divine compulsion that is laid upon us. It is a Divine compulsion, but I choose to stay on the lower level, the level of human responsibility. Is there any man in God's world more despicable than the man who tells you he has invented a cure for cancer, and then proceeds to make profit out of it and does not give it to the world? If any man has discovered that which will touch the dire disease with sure healing, he owes it to humanity to tell humanity the secret, even at loss to himself. That is the human sanction; it is Divine at last, I grant, for all high human sanctions are at last Divine; but that is a sanction which will be recognized by the man who denies our Christ. Therefore I say that we Christian men and women who have indeed seen the vision, and who have found it to be a vision that heals and helps, our bounden human duty is to see to it that that light is given, so far as we are able to give it, to all people who sit in darkness.

That conception of the sanction and compulsion of missionary endeavor is at the same time a revelation of the sphere of our operations. Where are we to take the light? Wherever people are in darkness. Yes, but South America is not a heathen country. I am told I must not so speak of it. Are the people in darkness? If they are, that is a sphere for missionary operations. That is what we have to discover. That is what the Church of God in the homeland is compelled to consider. It is to that subject I ask your attention from this moment forward.

There are two things I want to do in as few words as possible: first, to state the conditions of the people, and then to apply the principle of the text.

How shall I describe the condition of the people in South America? I am speaking for the moment, not of the Indian tribes, but of the people of Latin America. I know the difficulty of the task; yet there are certain outstanding facts from which there can be no escape.

There exists among these peoples a certain courtliness of manner under appropriate conditions, and an absolute absence of it under other conditions, a courtliness of manner which is conditioned by the etiquette of social, civic, or national functions, but which passes directly when no such claim is set up. The people are rapidly increasing in wealth, and are preeminently lovers of pleasure and display. They are—and the descriptive phrase I use is in some senses an ugly one because of its apparent flippancy—a people characterized by a jovial disregard of truth, a disregard of truth that is easy and careless. They are noted for a lack of conscience, and consequently for widespread distrust and deceit; abounding intemperance, most appalling looseness in all matters of the sexes, widespread indecency of language, and such indecency of action that if you visit the great cities you will never permit your daughters to walk in the streets alone.

In family life there is a very low standard of social purity, and consequently a low standard of homelife; homelife is lacking in sanctity, and therefore lacking in comfort, and appallingly lacking in discipline.

In the social conditions there are things that cannot be named in the assembly of the saints: the loosest of marriage customs, an appalling condition of illegitimacy, so that it has been declared

that the percentage of illegitimate births is sometimes thirty, fifty, or even greater.

Politically, there is perpetual unrest; while they now have greatly improved constitutions, for all have been modeled on that of the United States of America, there is lack of administration—the machine lacks the true motive power.

Inclusively, because there is no vision, the people are dissolved; the principle of cohesion and strength in the national life is missing.

That leads us naturally, necessarily, to the lack of vision. Two mistakes are constantly made about South America in speaking of it in this respect. First of all, it is described as a Christian country, and it was because it was so described that it was shut out from consideration by the great meetings of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In the second place, it is affirmed that it is a Roman Catholic country. That is not wholly true, for there are still to be found vast numbers of Indians untouched by Roman Catholic influence. Alan Ewbank said, "If you start away at the north and go right down to the south of the continent, you can travel in heathen lands, among people who do not know Who God is. The whole of that Southern continent, except the fringes around the edge, should be colored heathen." About that section of the population there is no question: they lack vision. Here Romanists and Protestants agree. In paganism there is no true vision of God. It will at once be agreed that among these people there is room and demand for our evangelism.

I turn then to the countries where Romanism is without any question the dominant religion. I cannot touch on this subject without recognizing that our campaign—I think I may so describe it now—for quickening interest in that continent is stirring up a good deal of criticism in England. I am receiving a good many letters of protest. I was speaking in Liverpool recently, and after the meeting received a long letter in which the writer charged me with historic ignorance. The only comfort I obtained from the letter was in the last sentence, "You ought to know better, seeing you are a clergyman of the Church of England!" I have had sent to me only this week newspaper cuttings criticizing certain things I have said, and an extract from a book that was published in 1911, called *Peru of the Twentieth Century*, by Percy F. Martin, F.R.G.S., in which he protests against all Protestant work in the country, and affirms that he has "no religious prejudices whatever," which it is quite easy to believe. I have received with this cutting a letter written from this neighborhood by a Roman Catholic, ten pages in length, kindly, courteous, Christly in spirit, but protesting, declaring that we are ignorant of what the Church of Rome has done in South America, and charging me—and that is the special reference I make in regard to this letter—with lack of charity and with slandering the clergy of the Roman Catholic church.

In speaking in public on this subject I have been very careful to distinguish between Roman Catholicism as it is in South America and as it is in England. I believe that underneath they are one; but I quite recognize that there is a vast difference. Moreover, I have always been careful, and shall ever remain careful, to distinguish most particularly between individuals and the system. I am perfectly sure that in the Roman communion there are saints of God; I have known them personally; I have numbered them among my closest friends; and far be it from me to say anything to wound them in the matter of their personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

But it is impossible to be blind to the influence which Rome has exerted in Latin America. I want to say with regard to that one charge, and I want you to hear me very carefully, when we are charged

with slandering the Roman clergy in these countries, our appeal will be from Protestantism to Rome itself. I have another letter here, and in it are a few words that have come from Brazil, written by a Roman Catholic lady there, after hearing what was said at our Mundesley Bible Conference about our new work. She writes: "We shall welcome the English church out here, and I hope many earnest workers will come out, for my Church has not sent of its best, nor enough, and its worst side is largely seen in every town." But I appeal even from that letter written by a devout Roman Catholic in Brazil itself. I appeal to Pope Leo XIII, and I shall ask you to remember that nothing I have said, nothing any of us has said, as we are attempting to draw the attention of Christian people to this country, is stronger than this. In his encyclical on the point these words occur:

In every diocese ecclesiastics break all bounds and deliver themselves up to manifold forms of sensuality, and no voice is lifted up imperiously to summon pastors to their duties. The clerical press casts aside all sense of decency and loyalty in its attacks on those who differ, and lacks controlling authority to bring it to its proper use. There is assassination and calumny, the civil laws are defied, bread is denied the enemies of the Church, and there is no one to interpose....

It is sad to reflect that prelates, priests, and other clergy are never found doing service among the poor; they are never in the hospital or lazar house, never in the orphan asylum or hospice, in the dwellings of the afflicted or distressed, or engaged in works of beneficence, aiding primary instruction, or found in refuges or prisons.... As a rule, they are ever absent where human misery exists, unless paid as chaplains or a fee is given. On the other hand, you (the clergy) are always to be found in the houses of the rich, or wherever gluttony may be indulged in, wherever the choicest wines may be freely obtained.

No words we have uttered are severer in their condemnation of the Roman clergy in South America than those words written by Pope Leo XIII in order to call to book the clergy because of their failure in that country. The reasons why we should carry to these Latin people the gospel of our Lord and Master as it is found in the New Testament have been set forth by Dr. Robert Speer cogently and forcefully in a paper which appeared in The Missionary Review of the Word for March, 1911, entitled, "The Case for Missions in Latin America." From the reasons which he gives us justifying our work as Protestants I shall select three, and I shall give you them in his own words rather than in my own, for they state the case so clearly that they cannot be improved upon. He says:

Protestant missions are justified and demanded in South America by the character of the Roman Catholic priesthood. I fought as long as possible against accepting the opinion universally held throughout South America regarding the priests. Ever since reading as a boy The Life of Charles Kingsley, the celibacy of the priesthood had seemed to me a monstrous and wicked theory, but I had believed that the men who took that vow were true to it, and that while the Church lost by it irreparably, and infinitely more than she gained, she did gain, nevertheless, a pure and devoted, if narrow and impoverished, service. But the deadly evidence spread out all over South America, confronting one in every district to which he goes, evidence legally convincing, morally sickening, proves to him that, whatever may be the case in other lands, in South America the stream of the Church is polluted at its fountains....

"Protestant missions in South America are justified because the Roman Catholic Church has not given the people Christianity. There are surely some who find peace and comfort, and some who see Christ through all that hides Him and misrepresents Him, but the testimony of the most temperate and open-minded of the men and women who were once themselves earnest Roman Catholics is that there are few whom they know in the Roman Catholic Church who know the facts of Christ's life, and fewer still who know Christ. The crucifixes, of which South America is full, inadequately represent the gospel. They show a dead man, not a living Saviour. We did not see in all the churches we visited a single symbol or suggestion of the resurrection or the ascension. There were hundreds of paintings of saints and of the Holy Family, and of Mary, but not one of the supreme event in Christianity. And even the dead Christ is the subordinate figure. The central place is Mary's. Often she is shown holding a small lacerated figure in her lap, and often she is the only person represented at all. In the great La Merced church in Lima, over the chancel is the motto: Gloria a Maria. In the oldest church in Barranquilla there is no figure of Christ at all in the altar equipment, but Mary without the infant in the center, two other figures on either side, and over all Gloria a Maria. In the wall of the ancient Jesuit Church in Cuzco, known as the Church, of the Campania, are cut the words, 'Come unto Mary, all ye who are burdened and weary with your sins, and she will give you rest.' There are many, I am sure, who learn to love and reverence the name of Christ, but Christ as a living moral and spiritual power the South American religion does not proclaim.

... Protestant missions are justified in South America, because the Roman Catholic Church is at the same time so strong and so weak there. There priesthood has a powerful hold upon the superstition of the people. As we rode along one day in Brazil, with bare heads and rubber ponchos, an old woman came running solicitously from her hovel, mistaking us for priests, and crying, 'Oh, most powerful God, where is your hat?' To the people the priest stands in the place of God, and even where his own life is vile, the people distinguish between his function as priest in which he stands as God before the altar, and his life as man, in which he falls into the frailties of the flesh. Not only is the priesthood the most influential body in South America, but the Church has a hold upon politics and family life and society which is paralyzing. Its evil is not weak and harmless, but pervasive and deadly, and the Christian Church is called by the most mandatory sanctions to deal with the situation. But, on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church does not have a fraction of the strength and power in South America which we had supposed it had, and the inefficiency of its work is pitiful. With enormous resources, with all the lines of power in its hands, it has steadily lost ground. The churches, save on festivals, are mostly ill-attended. The priests are derided and reviled. The leading newspaper in Chile, which bitterly attacked some statement which I made upon returning, about the character of the priests, a few weeks later printed a denunciation of the priests in Northern Chile far more sweeping than anything I had said. The comic papers gibe at them. This spectacle of a continent of men losing all respect for religion and leaving it to women, and to priests whose moral character they deride, is a grave and distressing spectacle. There is no sadder sight to be found in the whole world.

I maintain that if nothing more be said, that threefold indictment of the Roman Church in South America as failing to give the people Christianity, and yet as presenting something to them in the name of Christianity so as now to create in the minds of thinking men a revolt from Christianity, is a supreme and overwhelming reason why we should take to them the gospel of that vision of God

which came to men in Christ. The author of *Ecce Homo*, when speaking of the Pharisees, said: "If a divine revelation be the greatest of blessings, then the imposture that counterfeits it must be the greatest of all evils." Or, in the words of the Lord: "If... the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness."

I solemnly indict the Church of Rome for misrepresentation of Christianity in Latin America. When I am charged with ignorance of history, my appeal is to history. When I am charged with not being familiar with the facts, my appeal is to the facts that are patent to all who look and see. No stronger appeal for evangelization is coming from any quarter of the world than from South America.

In the building of nations—if you will suffer me to use a figure the force of which will be perhaps more patent to many of you than to the preacher—the true method is that of reinforced concrete. What is concrete? In case I should manifest my ignorance, I quote from the dictionary, "a compact mass of gravel, coarse pebbles, or stone chippings cemented together by hydraulic or other mortar." What is reinforced concrete? The phrase gripped me when I first heard it, and one day, sitting with my friend Mr. Charles Hay Walker in his study, I asked him what it was. He probably knows as much about reinforced concrete as most men, and he explained that reinforced concrete is that method of building in which metal and concrete are used. The metal prevents the concrete crumbling; the concrete prevents the metal buckling.

Nations must be built with reinforced concrete. The concrete of South America is its intellectual development, and all that means, of political emancipation and commercial advantage. But it must have the strong metal of religion. Where there is no vision of God, the concrete goes to pieces. Though you weld it with hydraulic mortar, the wash of the waves and the pressure of burdens will make it sag. Unless the Church of Christ that has seen the vision carries it to South America, then God alone knows the disaster that must sweep on those countries in the days to come.

There is only one appeal I can make to you as my eyes turn to that great continent, and I shall make it best in the words of one of the greatest missionary hymns ever written:

Shall we, whose souls are lighted

With wisdom from on high

Shall we, to men benighted,

The Lamp of life deny?

Salvation! Oh, Salvation!

The joyful sound proclaim,

Till earth's remotest nation

Has learned Messiah's name.

Song of Solomon 6:10. The Fourfold Glory Of The Church.

Song of Solomon 6:10.

The Fourfold Glory Of The Church.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning.

Fair as the moon.

Clear as the sun,

Terrible as an army with banners?

Son_6:10

There have been three methods of interpreting the Song of Songs, which, for the sake of brevity, I may describe as the material, the ethical, and the allegorical. There are those who treat it as being merely an Eastern love song. There are those who believe it was written in order to make a protest against polygamy, and to show the true ideal of marriage. There are those who believe that in the writing of it there were mystical intentions, that it was intended to convey spiritual truth.

My own view is that to lay undue emphasis on either of these is to miss the full value of the whole. It is an Eastern love song, but I think not finally. Even in that way it is the song of songs, for never was there a more wonderful unveiling of all the mystic wonder and beauty of love as the basis of marriage than is to be found in this song. In that sense, therefore, it has ethical values. I hold, however, that its chief value is spiritual.

It is an interesting fact, and a very suggestive one, that the Chaldee Targum contains a Jewish commentary on this Song of Songs, of which this is the title: "The Songs and Hymns which Solomon the Prophet King of Israel delivered by the spirit of prophecy before Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth." That title at once reveals the fact that the Jewish commentator looked on it as being spiritual and mystic in application.

I think, moreover, that this view is warranted by the harmony of Old Testament literature, for the final relationship between Israel and Jehovah was repeatedly described by those who saw most deeply into the great truth under the figure of the marriage relationship. That creates the infinite pathos and beauty of the whole of the prophecy of Hosea. It is found also in the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. When we turn from the Old Testament literature to the New, we find that the same figure obtained in the clearest thinking of New Testament writers concerning the relationship between Christ and His Church. If we think of the attitude of the Christian Church toward this Song in the past, we shall find that Hippolytus was its first Christian commentator, and he treated it throughout as allegorical. He was followed by Origen, who taught us that it was intended here to set forth the relationship between Christ and His Church, or between the soul and the Logos, between an individual and Christ. He was followed by Athanasius, Gregory of Nyasa, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, all of them treating the Song in the same way. In the Middle Ages, those

dark ages in which shone some of the brightest and most wonderful light that ever has shone in the history of the Christian Church concerning Christian experience, this Song of Solomon became the very textbook of the mystics. Bernard of Clairvaux preached eighty sermons on the first two chapters alone, and Aquinas made it perpetually the medium of teaching concerning the mystic relationship between Christ and His people.

I propose to employ the text in the allegorical sense. The Song of Solomon is not dramatic literature, but idyllic. There is not one consistent story running through, but certain phases of relationship are described. The opening chapters celebrate the marriage feast. At the center we have the matchless story of the betrothal. At the close we have pictures of the united state. If the writer was intending to suggest truth concerning the ideal relationship of Israel to God, then we have every right to take the Song and consider it as setting forth the relationship between Christ and His Church. Christ was the Revelation of Jehovah, the Church is the realization of the ideal of the Hebrew people. In that sense, therefore, I take this particular text, constituting as it does one of a series of interpolations running through the Song.

For the most part, the Song is made up of monologues and soliloquies by Solomon and the Shulamite, in which expression is given to all the deepest senses of the love and fellowship and communion existing between them. Ever and anon, between these soliloquies or monologues, the chorus is heard breaking out into inquiry. In the third chapter, sixth verse, we hear the inquiry of the chorus:

Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,

Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,

With all powders of the merchant?

Again, in the fifth chapter, ninth verse:

What is thy beloved more than another beloved,

O thou fairest among women?

What is thy beloved more than another beloved,

That thou dost so adjure us?

Again, in the sixth chapter, first verse:

Whither is thy beloved gone,

O thou fairest among women?

Whither hath thy beloved turned him,

That we may seek him with thee?

And then we come to our text, in the tenth verse of the chapter:

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,

Fair as the moon,

Clear as the sun,

Terrible as an army with banners?

In the eighth chapter, fifth verse, we find two further inquiries:

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,

Leaning upon her beloved?

And in the end of the eighth verse:

What shall we do for our sister

In the day when she shall be spoken for?

The text is, first, an inquiry, which in itself constitutes a description of the bride in her glory and her beauty:

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,

Fair as the moon,

Clear as the sun,

Terrible as an army with banners?

Lifting the literature on to its highest level of intention and suggestion, the text becomes a question concerning the Church as the Bride of Christ, in which we find a description of the Church. It is a comprehensive description of certain aspects of true Christian life, whether in the individual or in the corporate catholic Church. It is a text in which the glories of the Church are set forth ideally. It may be said, that the Church as we see and know her, never seems completely to have fulfilled the great ideal; nevertheless, there are senses in which these things describe exactly what the Church is, what she has been, and what she must continue to be, in her relationship to her Lord. Let us, therefore, first simply consider the fourfold figure, looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners. We shall be aided, I think, if we can put ourselves imaginatively in some Eastern land at the break of day. First, we see the dawn, swift and sudden and beautiful, illuminating every thing. Then, sinking away to rest, we notice the moon, in the suggestive beauty of her whiteness. Then, as the flush of dawn spreads over the Eastern sky and the moon is lost to sight, the sun himself appears, clear as with burning heat. As he gradually rises to meridian glory he becomes "terrible as an army with banners." Inclusively, the idea is of daybreak and of the glory of day. It has night for its background, but night being driven away by light.

Looking forth as the morning. Here, for a moment, let us forget what the figure suggests. Let us see the thing quite naturally. Morning is the time of new life. Sleep and unconsciousness have passed away. There is the sense of renewal, of reinvigoration. It is the time of new light. Darkness is vanishing and hasting away, and in its passing becoming beautiful, for its deep, dense blackness grows to purple, and presently to saffron.

Hail, smiling morn,

That tips the hills with gold,
Whose rosy fingers ope the gates of day.
Who the gay face of nature doth unfold,
At whose bright presence darkness flies away.

Morning suggests freshness. The dawn always comes with the moving of the wind. The night may have been dark, hot, sultry, and oppressive; and, perchance, the day presently will be hot and sultry and oppressive; but just when the first flush of the dawn is on the sky there is always a breath of wind. The dawn is the hour of true enthusiasm. Then the matin of the birds, then the opening petals of the flowers. The sun has not yet appeared, but he is creating the dawn.

"Fair as the moon," or literally, beautiful as the white one. The moon, which is being kissed into obscurity by the dawn, has been fulfilling her function in the night, reflecting the light of the hidden sun. She is perfectly prepared for the great and gracious ministry of reflection—having no light within herself, but catching on her otherwise darkened surface the glory of the hidden sun; then with gentle white beams she shines over the darkness, so that, while she shone there was no darkness, for the deep, dense darkness itself has been made silver with suggestion of the dead day and the coming day.

At last, with magnificent willingness, the moon is hidden, for the sun has appeared, and so we get our third figure, "clear as the sun." The word clear is suggestive. It means clarified as with burning heat. The Hebrew word is the same as that occurring in the charge of Isaiah, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." Be ye clear, clarified as by fire! It is a word never used of ceremonial cleanness, but always of moral and spiritual cleanness. It means that no evil thing remains; it partakes of the nature of fire; things destructible can never live in fire. Then is seen the day emerging under the dominance of the sun. It appears in all its strength, glory, and beauty. The figure is of an army, of hosts armed, and ready for conflict, keeping rank, with banners flying, the great attacking force of God. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. So at last the vision is of an army, terrible, with its banners flashing in the sun as it moves forward to the destruction of all the enemies of God.

Glancing again over the same line of perfect rhetoric and wonderful unveiling, considering the figures now as revealing truth concerning the Church, I suggest that each figure deals with a separate relationship. Looking forth as the morning, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is within herself. Fair as the moon, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward the world and its darkness. Clear as the sun, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward her Lord. Terrible as an army with banners, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward all the enemies of God and toward the things that are against the accomplishment of His high purposes.

"Looking forth as the morning." That is what the Church should be as within herself, not so much as to her effect on the world, to which we come presently—but what her own sense should be. It should ever be the sense of the morning, the sense of the dawning of the day; the sense of fire, the sense of light; the sense of freshness, the sense of enthusiasm, of music, and of motion. Her very consciousness should be a perpetual prophecy of the day that has not yet come, but which

surely is coming. Yet, alas, how constantly the Church has sat down in sackcloth and ashes on a dark and dreary day. In the days of Isaiah there was a time when men were calling on God, and were saying to Him: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," to which God's answer was: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." It was as though God said to them: I have never been asleep! It is you that have been asleep! Awake, put on thy beautiful garments! It is a picture of God's people, Israel, sitting in dust and ashes when they ought to have been shining in the darkness, for they were children of the day, even though the day had not yet appeared.

Alas, how constantly and perpetually the Church has sat in sackcloth and ashes, lamenting, crying out for God's help, when she should have been shining. Constantly the word of God to the Church is, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Whenever the Church has realized herself, she has looked forth as the morning. "Watchman, what of the night?... The morning cometh, and also the night!" The morning is known when the night is darkest by those whose relationship to God is such that they catch the gleaming hidden glory, and reveal it in what they are themselves, in the freshness of their enthusiasm, in the evidence of their faith, in their determined loyalty to the great beliefs and convictions that have made them. That is the first aspect of the Church; but there can be no dawn save as the Church is conscious of morning within her own soul.

Then take the second of the figures: "fair as the moon." That is the Church toward the world, reflecting the glory of the hidden sun. That is not the final figure, for there is a sense in which the Church is called on to shine in the world, not merely as a reflector, but because, in relationship with her Lord, she herself is light. Yet, while not exhausting the truth, it suggests a matter of great importance concerning the Church. What is the light which shines as the dawn? In the midst of some hour of darkness, in the midst of some circumstance of terrible trial, there is one man, one woman, one youth, one maiden, on whose face there is light, by which other faces are irradiated. That light is the reflected glory of the face of Jesus Christ, of the One Who never fails, and is never discouraged, nor will be until He have set justice in the earth, for Whose law the isles are ever waiting. If we could but see things as they are we should see that amid the sad and awful darkness in Flanders, in Gallipoli, are men on whose faces is the light that never was on land or sea, and these men are helping their comrades. What is the light on the face of that lad as he stands where death stalks round him? It is light reflected from the face of Jesus! That ought to be true of all of us who bear the holy name. If we are a part of the bride of Christ, of the holy catholic Church, we should ever be beautiful as the white one, catching the glory that is otherwise hidden, and reflecting it on the age in which we live. "Fair as the moon."

Again, the poetic figure runs on, and we reach the next stage of exposition: "Clear as the sun." Now I seem to break down in the sequence when I declare that this suggests the Church's aspect toward the Lord rather than toward the world. Yet this is the mystery which only He understands. The Church is as the sun itself, clarified with burning heat, possessed with a passion which sustains her, and enables her to create day. The Church shines most gloriously, not in reflection of her absent Lord toward the world, but in her relationship with the Lord in that deep, mystic, inner life which in some senses never can be revealed to the world; for spiritual things can be discerned only spiritually, and there are essential strengths and glories and perfections within the Church that can be apprehended only of the Lord Himself. So it ever seems to me that the words, "clear as

the sun"—clarified as with burning heat, all that is evil burned up by fire—tell the deep and profound secret of the Church's relationship to her Lord and of His understanding of the truth concerning her. Men look on the Church, and even at the best she seems to be beautiful only as the white one, reflecting a glory. They see much of the dark through the white, they see much of her failure; but the Lord Himself looks on His Church, and knows her perfectly, sees all her hidden purity, her aspirations after purity which in themselves are the guarantees of her ultimate victory and glory. There is a sense in which the true catholic Church of Jesus Christ in the world is affecting the world more by what she is in the seeing of Christ than by what she is in the seeing of the world. Involved in that view is the heartening deduction, the solemn declaration of obligation, that the Church's true passion is not to reveal anything to men, but to be true to her Lord, and to reveal herself to Him as answering the fire of His cleansing, and so sharing His enthusiasm and His emotion.

Finally, "terrible as an army with banners." That describes the Church in her attitude toward all the enemies of God, forever warlike, forever unconquerable, forever a terror. Do not let us soften the first word, for therein lies its force and beauty—terrible: the Church must be a terror to evildoers. The conception is microcosmically revealed in the history of Jesus. There was a day when, proceeding on His way, He found Himself confronted by a demon-possessed being, and the demon spoke, "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Son of God?" Then came the revealing answer of Christ: "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." Evil is always saying to the Church of God, Let us alone. When the preacher is told he has nothing to do but to preach the Gospel, and must not interfere with any vested evil, the drink traffic for instance, the answer of the Church is this: We cannot let evil alone; we are bound to speak, and to say to every demon that damns humanity, Come out, thou unclean spirit! "Terrible as an army with banners." Add to the great poetic figure of this ancient, mystic song the words of Jesus Himself, "I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." That is the picture of an army terrible, marching against every form of evil, breaking through the very gates of Hades!

In conclusion, let us dwell on the first figure as expressing our responsibility. We must ever be looking forth as the morning. He Who walks amid the seven golden candlesticks, holding in His own right hand the stars of the seven Churches, said of the Church at Ephesus, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." The loss of first love is the loss of the quality of the morning. The freshness has gone, the enthusiasms have died out, the breath of the wind is no longer felt, the song of the birds is silenced, the flowers are not blossoming. For the Church and for the individual there is no tragedy more appalling than the loss of first love, the ending of the first upspringing of enthusiasm that inspired the song and created the light and brought the breath of the wind. Are these things lost? Have we lost them? Are we sighing and sobbing with Cowper,

Where is the blessedness I had

When first I found the Lord?

Then we are failing to reflect light on the world, we are failing to satisfy the heart of Christ in the cleanness of the fire nature, we are failing to be terrible as an army with banners.

What, then, shall the Church do, if she have lost her first love, if she is no longer looking forth as the morning? She must return to the source of her first love, she must go back to face Him Who

came as the Dayspring from on high, visiting His people. Or, to utter again the eternal paradox, she must go back to the place of the Cross where the darkness was deepest, and where hatred seemed to have won its victory; there in the place of the Cross she will find light upspringing, and love outrunning, and life beginning. Being thus herself restored to her first love, she will look forth as the morning, and become fair as the white one, be clarified as with burning heat, and become terrible as an army with banners.

As are the units, so is the unity. As are the individual members of the Church, so is the catholic Church. Then let us aim high, individually. Let us attempt in our individual life to get back into the spirit of the Song of Songs. Let us earnestly pray and strive, that in the day of drought and darkness and desolation, and almost of despair, we may be fresh as the morning, fair with the reflection of the hidden light, clear as the fire nature in our intimate relationship with our Lord, and members of the host of God to whom He has given a banner for display, proceeding resolutely against all the enemies of God and the race.

Behold the Bride. She, herald-like precedes

The royal sun, arrayed in dazzling light,

As mild Aurora smiles away the night,

While all in dewy stillness shine the meads.

Behold the Bride, fair as the moon outgleaming,

Melting dim shadows of the midnight skies;

His grace, through her reflected, meets our eyes,

The light which she receives o'er others beaming.

Behold the Bride, a terror to her foes;

As the vanguard of long embattled hosts,

The power of heaven's Eternal King she boasts,

Renown to win, and glory, forth she goes.

Isaiah 6:1-9a. Preparation For Service.

Isaiah 6:1-9a.

Preparation For Service.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And He said, Go.

Isaiah 6:1-9 a

Standing as we do on the threshold of our winter's work, feeling that we are coming to days of harvest and of gracious ingathering, the question of my own heart has been, Lord, what hast Thou to say to me? I feel that if I can but hear what He has to say to me, I may venture to pass the word on to you.

This passage of Scripture is familiar to us all. In the middle of the ninth verse the revelation of perpetual principles ends. After that we have the commission spoken to Isaiah concerning his own time. He was commissioned to utter a message of devastating judgment. We are not commissioned to utter that message. The local, and the incidental, occupy the last half of this chapter. The essential and the eternal occupy the first part.

The opening words of this passage fix in the history of the Hebrew people the event it recounts. "In the year that king Uzziah died." The reign of Uzziah over Judah, which had lasted for fifty-two years, was over, and his son Jotham was about to succeed to the throne. Israel was suffering under the fearful tyranny of a military despotism. Shallum came to the throne by the murder of his predecessor. Menahem came to the throne by the murder of Shallum. Pekahiah succeeded his father, but was murdered by Pekah. And now Pekah was on the throne, reigning over a people who were soon to be scattered.

The reign of Uzziah had been remarkable in many respects. When he ascended the throne fifty-two years before, as a youth of sixteen, he had set himself to seek God, and the issue had been a period of remarkable prosperity. He had conducted a series of victorious campaigns against the enemies of God, by which he restored much lost territory. Following these, he brought about internal development, the building of towers, the making of cisterns, the planting of the land,

its cultivation, and the increasing of husbandry. It was a wonderful reign to a certain point. Then his heart became lifted up, and the man who was victorious over the perils of adversity was overcome by the perils of prosperity. He rebelled against God, and was smitten with leprosy, and for the last period of his life lived in a leper house. At last he died.

It was at this point that there came to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, the vision recounted in this chapter. He had lived in Judah, and had known no occupant of the throne of his own people other than the king who had now passed away. In the economy of God the time had now arrived when he should come forth to his definite and public ministry. In this wonderful passage we have the story of his solemn ordination.

The passage falls into two parts, first, the vision; and second, the voice.

In the first verse these are the outstanding words, "I saw the Lord." In verse five we have the answer to that. "Then said I, Woe is me!" In verse eight we have the outstanding words of the second division. "I heard the voice of the Lord." In the last part of the same verse is the answer, "Then I said, Here am I; send me."

Take the simplest of these sentences that we may have the outline of the study on our minds. "I saw the Lord."... "Then said I." "I heard the voice of the Lord."... "Then I said." A vision and a voice, and in that order. First the vision with all that it meant of revelation to the soul of this man of truth concerning God, and consequently of truth concerning himself, and all that it led on to of cleansing. And then, and not till then, the voice, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" First the vision, and then the voice. First the personal relationship to essential Light, and Love; and then the relative commission in obedience to which, the man illuminated and cleansed, went out to do the work of God. If I am to do anything for my Master, today, tomorrow, and the next day, I must have this vision, I must hear this voice. My answer to the vision must be Isaiah's answer, and my answer to the voice must be his also.

Let us, then, first examine the vision. What did Isaiah see? The first thing that is impressed upon the mind in the study of the passage is that the prophet saw an occupied throne. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." That is the first truth that broke upon the soul of the prophet, with such terrific force and power that he spoke as though he had never seen the vision before. As a matter of fact, this man had long seen the Lord high and lifted up, but the empty throne was the occasion which revealed to him the true significance of the filled Throne.

"In the year that King Uzziah died." The news spread from street to street, from town to town, from village to village, that the king was dead. There came to Isaiah the sense of loss in the passing of the king. Chaos was everywhere. Israel was in such a terrible condition that she could not exist any longer nationally. Judah was following hard and fast in the wake of Israel to the same defeat and disaster. The one throne to which Isaiah had looked for support was empty. Men said to the psalmist, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

And that, perchance, was the first feeling that came to the heart of the prophet when the throne of Judah was empty. Who now will succeed? Then, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne." Behind the empty throne, there is a throne that is never empty. Over the chaos that appals the heart there is the God of order and government.

I think if we had cross-examined Isaiah, he would have been unable to describe the personality upon which his eyes rested, but he saw the Lord. A Person was manifested to him. Through this whole book of Isaiah there is presented a Personality vague and undefined, a Personality that startles us with contradictions, a Personality robed in splendor, girded with strength, with government sitting upon his shoulder; a Personality stripped, wounded, bruised, suffering; a King reigning in righteousness, and prosecuting His propaganda to the end of the ages, and through all the spheres, a bruised and broken Man Who says, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Vague shadowy outlines, never quite clear until the New Testament is in your hand, but nevertheless a Person. Isaiah's first vision of this Person was so vague that he could not perfectly describe it, so definite that he said, "I saw the Lord."

He proceeded immediately from the description of the central Person to that of the surrounding facts; seraphim, flaming glory, smoke, reverberating thunder, and the maintenance of a song, but the Person is mentioned and left, "I saw the Lord." The essential truth is that of a Person enthroned.

There is a very beautiful connection between the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of John and the whole prophecy of Isaiah. It is the chapter of Jesus overshadowed by the Cross. The first incident is that of Mary's coming very near to His grief, and breaking the alabaster box of ointment upon His feet. The second incident is that of His entrance to Jerusalem, which we call the triumphal entry, all full of sorrow to Him. The third incident is that of the coming of the Greeks. The Cross is everywhere. It was the shadow of the Cross that drew forth the adoring worship of Mary, that filled His own eyes with tears as He rode into Jerusalem, that made Him reply when Greeks asked to see Him, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone."

Now look at verse forty-one in this chapter. "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory." What said Isaiah? "Lord, who hath believed our report?" "These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory." Isaiah's conception in chapter fifty-three of the mystery and the agony of rejection had been made tremendous because he saw His glory. When did he see His glory? When he was commissioned for his work. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." The first thing the prophet saw ere he went forth to work that was to be hard and perilous and difficult was the vision of the enthroned God. The throne of Judah is empty. There is chaos everywhere. For this man the Throne is filled, and out of the chaos the cosmos is coming.

He next proceeded to speak of the surrounding glory, the seraphim, the flames of fire; the hosts of the Most High God. Six-winged seraphim. In the presence of that Personality, with two wings they veiled their faces, with two they veiled their feet, with two they were perpetually flying. This is of course symbolic, and we can interpret such symbolism only by Eastern thought. The face is the symbol of intellectual apprehension, the feet are the symbols of governmental procedure, the wings are symbolic of activity Divinely inspired. The unveiling of the nature of the enthroned One is seen in the activity of the burning spirits that surround the throne. They veil their faces, unable to come to perfect intellectual apprehension of the mystery of His Being. They veil their feet, for while they are principalities, dominions, rulers, their governmental procedure gains its strength from submission to His Throne. The veiling of the feet is the hiding of personal authority in the presence of supreme Authority. But the wings, the remaining wings, are ever active, inspired by the very Spirit of life; they perpetually serve under the authority of His Throne.

Now listen to the song. It is a twofold song. First, the song of the nature of the enthroned One. "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." Then it is a song about earth. I am always so thankful when I come to this. It is a song about earth in that high presence chamber, with the enthroned Jehovah revealed personally, but so that He cannot be described; surrounded by the flaming spirits that veil their faces of intelligence, and their feet of government, and beat their wings in perpetual service. What is this they sing of the earth? "The whole earth is full of His glory," or notice the marginal reading of the revised version, "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory." These spirits that surround the throne look down to the earth and see God's glory in it. Isaiah has a different vision of it presently, and these spirits saw his vision also, but they are singing in the presence of God of an ultimate triumph of truth, of a final restoration, of a final victory. They are singing by faith and hope, in the presence of God, of the victory that is to be. "The whole earth is full of His glory." The great psalm of the King, which describes His procedure to ultimate victory, ends with the words that the seraphim sang in the presence of God. "The whole earth is full of His glory." So that the psalm of the glory of God, which is part of the inheritance of the saint here and now amid the chaos and the darkness and the strife and the battle, is the perpetual song which angels sing.

Notice for a moment the effect of the song on the earthly temple. The very "thresholds were moved," trembled. "The house was filled with smoke." We shall be perfectly correct if we translate this word "smoke" by "anger." In Psalms 80, verse four, we read;

O Jehovah, God of hosts,

How long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people?

The literal translation of this is, "How long wilt Thou smoke against the prayer of Thy people?" The connection shows that smoke is a symbol of anger. In the day of God's activity it is said by the ancient prophet Joel that there shall be "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke"; and Isaiah, in that high presence chamber, saw the uplifted God upon His throne; saw the burning spirits round the throne veiling their faces and feet, and ceaselessly moving to do His bidding; heard their song, the song of ultimate victory, in the earth itself; and yet there was the trembling of things in the temple of God. There was the filling of the house with smoke, typical of His anger. So this man stood in the midst of the awful vision, conscious of God's holiness, and His enthronement, conscious of the victory that must be final, and yet conscious that anger was abroad, that judgment was out on the highway of the Most High. The house trembled and was filled with smoke.

And now how did he answer the vision? The answer was not a prepared one. The greatest words men speak in the presence of God, either about God, or to God, are words that come surging out of the deepest consciousness, words that must be spoken because no others are fit. And when this man stood in the midst of the glory, when for a moment his eyes were unveiled, what did he say? Oh, the agony of the cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." All of which means that when the prophet had a clear vision of God, he had the true vision of man. And when the prophet had the clearer vision of the Divine order, he had a more overwhelming sense of human disaster. Notice that the cry concerning himself proceeds backward, from effect to cause. The effect, "Woe is me!" The reason of the woe, "I am undone." The reason of the being undone, "I am a man of unclean lips."

Why unclean lips only? Why did he not say unclean heart, why did he not say unclean spirit? Again, the language is symbolic, and it is most simple symbolism. Let us turn over to the epistle of James (3:6). "The tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison." As in the Divine, the Word is the expression of the God; so in the human, the speech of man is the expression of man, and the lips and the tongue are the instruments of speech. This man standing in the presence of the glory confesses that his lips are polluted. Let Jesus speak, "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man." Within is the fountain head of corruption, but it is poured out and expressed through the tongue and lips, and so Isaiah says, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." The words are unclean, because the fact that they have to express is an unclean fact. What has this to do with his work? Everything. I do not know how you all feel, my brethren, but the most stupendous evidence to my heart, every day growing, of the grace of God is not that He saves me. That is a great evidence of grace, amazing grace! But the most stupendous evidence of God's grace is that when He saves me He consents to use me. And, my brethren, one of the first qualifications for being ready is to have stood in the presence of His glory, and to have found out how unworthy I am to utter His message. God almighty is my witness that I am not speaking to you idly. Every day I am more astonished that God should use me at all.

And what follows? I do not know that it would not be good to sit still and read the rest almost without comment. It is so simple. "Then"—I wish I knew how to emphasize that "then," because it is the dividing line. We have tried to look at the glory of God, at the enthroned Jehovah, at this man smitten in his inner consciousness with a sense of unworthiness. Then what? "Then flew one of the seraphim." Taking in his hand one of the sacred vessels from the altar, the place of blood and fire, and catching one of the burning coals from the altar, he comes to that man.

Now, whereas I want to speak especially of the fact that for the man called to service there is perfect cleansing and energizing provided, what I want you to see first is that out of the midst of the overwhelming and awful glory of God comes the most overwhelming vision of His grace. The enthroned Jehovah surrounded by the burning spirits that worship. Do you hear the thunder of the seraphim as they sing? Can you hear anything else? I do not think I can. God can! What did He hear? The cry of a guilty man! Oh, soul of mine, take heart. One guilty man cries out in the consciousness of his sin, and the faint cry of that human soul, conscious of pollution, rises in the ear of God above the thunder of the seraphim. And a seraph must leave the place of worship to work when a human soul is in need. These are Divine measurements. These are not the measures we sometimes put upon evangelistic effort. That was evangelistic effort. And he brought the live coal and he touched the lips of the man, he touched that which the man had made the symbol of his own uncleanness. The man said, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips," and the seraph touched the lips, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." This is one of the cases where I am almost inclined to translate iniquity very literally as to the actual meaning of the word. "Thy crookedness has been taken away." Fire has straightened out three! But something more. "Thy sin is purged." Sin is offense, guilt, the thing in a man that is the outcome of his iniquity in his relation to God. What of that? It is

purged, and here you may use the old Hebrew word, "thy sin is expiated." It is the word that the Hebrew made use of when he referred to atonement. It is the word to cover over, not in the sense of covering over a polluted thing, but to atone, to blot out. Thy sin, as against this high excellence and glory of heaven is expiated. Thy personal crookedness is straightened out. Your relative guilt is expiated.

And how was it done? By the coal of fire from the altar, and God Almighty cannot deal with Isaiah in his uncleanness except by the coal of fire that comes from the altar.

What follows? Perhaps a pause. I do not know. There is no pause in the letterpress. I think there must have been a pause, a waiting moment, in which this man rose into the great consciousness that he was undone no longer, that his lips were no longer impure but purified; and it is as he waited in that great consciousness that the voice came. He had seen the vision of God. This was the outcome, and now the voice, and how much it says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Who will go? God is asking for volunteers. God needs someone to be sent, someone who will go. What is the question? Who is ready to be sent? "Whom shall I send?" "Who will go for Us?" and the emphasis in that second question is not on the "Go," but on "for Us." Who will be ready when I send them? Who will be in readiness to be sent, ready to represent Us? And then, thank God, notwithstanding that this man but a moment ago had expressed his consciousness of pollution, immediately came the answer, "Here am I; send me." "Here am I," that is abandonment; "send me," that is readiness. He could not have said that until his lips had been touched by the coal from the altar. The vision cursed him, but the fire cleansed him; and now when God wants help, this cleansed man says, I am at Thy disposal.

That is the whole law of service. In order to do successful service I need first a vision of God enthroned. Have you this vision of God? If you are not quite sure whether God's throne is tottering or not, you had better retire. You remember God's method of sifting an army. It was a wonderful method. Thirty-two thousand came out and said, We are all ready. And the first test was, Let the men fearful and afraid go home. And twenty-two thousand men turned right about face and marched home. Are you sure that was not a mistake? No, for in the day of battle the man who has fear in his heart is a peril. When the victory was won they all came back to shout. God bless them! But when we are fighting we do not want them.

Can we see God on His throne? That is the question. We can see the chaos. We are very blind if we cannot. National corruption, municipal rottenness, dilettante fooling with the problems of poverty that ought to be the problem of every statesman. But high over all earthly thrones is the Throne that never trembles. If you can see God on His Throne, then that Throne is commissioning you to take the evangel of the crucified Christ to cure all the ills of humanity. That is our message. We must have a vision of His enthronement, of His holiness, and we must have this also, the vision of His ultimate glory in the earth. And then we need the vision of self. If I may have a vision of His glory I need the true vision of self. We need also the cleansing that He provides. We are not fit for all this. But to stay there is to dishonor God. Remember the altar is there, and the fire is there. God help us to get to the altar. He will cleanse us and purge us, and with a baptism of fire make us all He wants us to be, if only we will let Him. Let us look up into His face, solemnly and earnestly saying, By the vision of Thine enthronement, by the matchless mercy of the altar and the fire, here am I; send me.

Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 10:34; James 3:17. Peace

Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 10:34; James 3:17.

Peace

His name shall be called... Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

I came not to send peace,... but a sword.

Matthew 10:34

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.

James 3:17

That is a startling combination of text. The first is part of one of the sublimest of Messianic prophecies. It occurs in that great passage of Isaiah in which out of circumstances of tumult and turmoil, of war and strife and perplexity, the prophet foretells the day when all the things of war shall be destroyed; and he bases his hope upon the great fact that a child is born, a son is given. Whatever local meaning there may have been in the words of the prophet; whatever first application there may have been in his own domestic relationships, it is quite certain that he looked through, and saw emerging, amid the mists somewhere—how far I think he could not have told—the figure of One, a great and wonderful Deliverer, Whom he described by the four titles, Wonderful Counsellor, God-hero, Father of eternity, and finally Prince of peace; which titles constitute a key to the interpretation of Scripture, and of all human history so far as that history has been written, either in what we call sacred or profane literature. The complete title gives us an account of the unveiling of God, of the growing understanding of God on the part of man.

He was known first in Creation as the "Wonderful Counsellor," and then of necessity, in human history as the "Mighty God," the God-hero, the God of battles, the warrior God. Then in revealed religion, He was progressively revealed as the "Everlasting Father," or as the margin has it, the Father of eternity. If we take the Hebrew word here, and translate it quite literally we are grievously disappointed. It would then read, the Father of the terminus. Can anything be more disappointing than that? Yet that is that! As another Hebrew word—"everlasting"—means vanishing point; this Hebrew word, not from the same root, and not having exactly the same meaning signifies the terminus; that is, that which is beyond the vanishing point. God is the Father of that. So if the first uttering disappoint, we find that the suggestiveness is vast. The Father of the banishing point, and of that which is beyond, the terminus. Therefore He is the abiding One both as to time and space. And finally, the "Prince of peace."

If we accept the suggestion, which this morning it is not my purpose to argue, that here a progressive unveiling of God is indicated; then you will notice that there is first the thought of the "Wonderful Counsellor," the One of perfect thought and perfect will, from Whom must come a

perfect law. And immediately following it, the "Mighty God," the God-hero, the God of battles, the God of war. And out of that, and following it, the further revelation of the "Father of eternity." And at last, that of the "Prince of peace."

So that if we take the whole of this description, there is here also a recognition of conflict. "I came not to cast peace"—and I adopt that marginal reading very definitely, not "I came not to send it," but I came not to cast it promiscuously, carelessly. There must be the God of battles before there can be the Prince of peace. There must be the coming of the sword ere there can be peace. And yet why? And the answer is postponed for a moment.

The second of these texts is the word of the Prince Himself. The centuries have run their course. Others have also climbed the heights of vision, and have gazed in hope and longing; and men have again, and yet again, been encouraged as the dreamers have told of lights upon the eastern sky, and have sung to them some refrain caught in high moments of meditation; and all the songs have been those of a coming One. At last we stand by the side of the One long looked for; and what this prophet said of Him long before is true; "when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." The Prince of peace is now speaking to His messengers as He prepares them for their work; and as He is sending them forth to proclaim the Kingdom He is warning them of the fact that they will have to do their work in the presence of, and in spite of persecution. "Think not that I came to cast peace on the earth: I came not to cast peace, but a sword!" That text is meaningless and valueless, and may be misinterpreted immediately unless we keep it in relation to its context. Where does the subject really begin? In the previous chapter, with Matthew's declaration that when Jesus went through all the cities and villages He saw the multitudes, and He was moved with compassion, because He saw them as sheep scattered, harried by wolves, without a shepherd. Out of that compassion comes the rule of the sword; and if you will take time to look at the context you will see that from that declaration of the moving of His heart with compassion in the presence of what He saw, the story moves right on to my text. It is continuous! The text belongs to that. He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion. He said to His disciples, Go ye, and then He began to instruct them as they went. He said, You will go as sheep in the midst of wolves. It is not going to be easy work, this work I bring to you. What is the work? To bring peace. The multitudes are harried by wolves, scattered, spoiled, harmed; therefore, I must fight! What for? To bring peace to the multitudes. The passion for peace creates the necessity for the sword.

The third text is the word of the most practical of the New Testament writers, and if you will take all the context here in this letter of James you will see that he is protesting against conflict amongst the brethren of the Prince. Brother of the Prince Himself, according to the flesh, he writes to those scattered by the dispersion, and speaks to them again and again as "My brethren," "My brethren," "My brethren." I am constrained to wait a moment here, because there is light upon that thought which is of value to us. There was a day when Jesus was in the midst of His work, and His mother and His brethren—this man amongst them in all probability—took a long journey as far as from Nazareth to Capernaum, to find Him, and to persuade Him to give up His work, because He was over-wearying Himself. Jesus was in the house, with a handful of disciples, and He then inquired "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren... For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." A great deal has happened since then. His brother has become His brother in a new sense, because he is doing the will of His

Father. And it is very significant to me, that when he writes, this brother of the Lord after the flesh, he says to those to whom he writes, "My brethren." He is protesting against conflict amongst them, faction and strife among the brethren of the Lord. How will it be cured? In these circumstances, which are very local, and for the correction of conditions which do not universally obtain among the saints of God, there flames out a principle of interpretation, which helps me in an understanding of all the things of difficulty which have oppressed me as I have read the prophecies of the coming of the Prince of peace, and then heard this self-same Prince of peace say, "I came not to cast peace, but a sword."

Think of the history of the centuries, the nineteen centuries of the Christian era or dispensation. Look back for a moment to the Person with Whom we are so familiar now, the Person of this Lord Jesus Christ of ours. Remember that He is the One to Whom all the prophets give witness; the Prince of peace for Whom men had been waiting, and for Whose coming they had been longing. Remember this also, even though it but increase the perplexity of the situation, that before He went away He said to a little group of His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Remembering all these things, then look at Him, and if there is one matter that impresses the mind more than another as you watch this man Jesus, from the moment when His public ministry began, to the close of that ministry, it is that of the restlessness of the life of this Lord of peace. I know you are in revolt against that statement because you are in sympathy with the underlying riches of His quietness. All that is true. I am speaking now of the external things. No home! Oh my masters, did you ever think of it? Oh, the tragedy of it! We recite it carelessly, or with merely sentimental sympathy, but listen to it, and at this Christmastide try to understand it: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Homeless! Friendless! Do you challenge me? Well, then I shall ask your definition of a friend, and I will give you one from inspiration, and this is it. "A friend loveth at all times, And a brother is born for adversity."

Test the friends of Jesus by that, and He had not one. When the darkness gathered, and the tempest swept, He was left alone. There are some passages in this New Testament that to my own heart are passages which flame with fire. "They all"—they, that little group of disciples, whom He in grace called friends only by virtue of what He would make them presently, "they all forsook Him and fled." No, I am not angry with them. I admire them for staying so long. I am such a coward myself that I should have gone long before they did. But the fact, consider it, wherever He went, unrest; no place to lay His head; no friend. He tried to tell them of His Cross, but they never understood it until after His resurrection. All about Him were the men of light and leading, planning and plotting to catch Him in His talk, to entrap Him, He was a storm-center from the beginning of his ministry to its close. No peace.

Then look at the story of His first disciples, and the appalling thing is that when you begin now to look at the inner circle, strife is discovered amongst them. Oh, that dreadful picture of the New Testament of those last days, in which there was strife amongst them, as to which of them should be the greatest, repeated as you read the story, until you are weary of it. Conflict!

And then we come outside, and look generally through the centuries; and we look abroad today; where is peace? In the Church? Would God it were, but it is not. Brethren are divided, fighting; wasting the energies of their spiritual life which ought to be devoted to the warfare against the

devil; hindering one another. Do you admire the divisions of Christendom? Then so do not I. Do you care to argue that all these things are willed by Him Who prayed that we all might be one? The divided condition of the Christian Church is a shame and a disgrace. Where is peace?

And my brethren, if I lift my eyes and look outside, if I look at the world, where is peace? If I look at that section of the world over which, sooner or later during these centuries, the messengers of the Cross have passed, that section of the world which is spoken of as Christian, or Christianized, where is peace? Well, I need say very little. I do not know, and I do not ask, and I care absolutely nothing for your particular convictions as to national politics, but I ask you to look from the height of your Christian experience at the world. We talk about peace. We thank God in speeches from the throne and elsewhere that there is peace, but is there peace?

To take that first text, "His name shall be called... Prince of peace" is to be faced by apparent contradiction. Nineteen centuries, well nigh two millenniums have run their course, and where is peace?

But to take the second text, "I came not to cast peace, but a sword" is to find a description of all that we have seen, but it seems to contradict the idea that He is the Prince of peace.

To take the third is to find the explanation, and to deny both the apparent contradictions.

Mark then I pray you, how these three texts are a revelation, and in order that we may profit by the revelation let us understand its method.

The first text is the announcement of ultimate purpose. He is the Prince of peace. This one Book of Isaiah, is the Book of the Servant of God, Whose mission is one. What is that mission? To establish peace. How does He do it? By the way of judgment; and the first division of the prophecy describes the peace resulting from judgment. In that second division; first, the purpose is declared; secondly, the Prince is presented; and finally, the program is announced. If I were to write one word across the prophecy of Isaiah, a word that catches the underlying motive, what would it be? Peace, God's great purpose of peace. He is the Prince of peace.

When the Prince came, He described the process toward the peace as being the way of the sword. Jesus did not come to sing a lullaby to humanity, and to tell it that its sin does not matter, and its wickedness is nothing, that presently it will all be forgotten. He came in the name of God and eternity to declare war upon all the things that prevent peace. The sword is necessary in the interests of peace.

The third of these texts reveals for us the underlying principle. "First pure, then peaceable."

In the few moments that remain to us, let us make some applications of the teaching; first, in individual life; secondly, in social life; thirdly, in national life; finally, in international matters.

He is the Prince of peace. Think of individual life today. Was it ever more restless than it is now? What are the causes of unrest in individual life? Now I pray you, shut out of view, if it be possible to you for the moment, all other people than yourself. Think of the individual, think of the restlessness of individual life. What are the causes of unrest? Sin. And if the word is not understood outside, I think it is understood here, even if it is a word you are not inclined to make use of. Sir Oliver Lodge says the intelligent man does not speak of sin today. I deny it absolutely. The intelligent man

speaks of every fact, it is ignorance that declines to look facts in the face. We may differ as to the interpretation of what is the underlying cause of the unrest; but the Bible teaches that it is lack of God. I take any individual life you please, and where there is no recognition of God, no practical, everyday, actual, positive traffic with God or commerce with eternity, then you have a life hot, restless, feverish. And by way of contrast, find me the life of the man, or the woman, or the little child, who knows God; and I will find you a life of quietness and peace, in spite of all the circumstances of stress and strain and conflict. Oh, do we not know them! How they help us, the quiet saints of the most high God, many of them devoid of all the things that minister to man's supposed well-being, but whose hearts are firm and steady and quiet, until it may be said of them, "He that believeth shall not make haste." All the restlessness of individual life today is due to man's lack of God.

What is the way of peace? First pure. And what is purity of heart? It is the heart undivided in its allegiance to God. So this Prince of peace comes. He will come this morning. He is coming this morning. He comes into the pulpit, for this Prince of peace does not divide between the pulpit and the pew. He comes to say, I have brought a sword, and I have come to war against the things in your life that shut God out. This Prince of peace is first the warrior with flaming sword and flashing eyes, and the tremendous word of the ancient prophecy upon His lips, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Jesus Christ does not come first with a song and a lullaby and a narcotic. He comes with a sword and a flame and a fire; and there are men and women feeling this, here and now. You know that He will not make peace with the evil thing within you. "First pure." And there are men and women who will yield to Him, and hand over to Him their sword of rebellion, and let Him destroy as with burning the habiliments of their warfare; and to such men and to such women He will bring the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

And He is the Prince of peace socially. What are the causes of unrest in the social world? Take the word of the inquiry in its most general sense; there is social unrest, and we all know it, we are all talking about it and arguing about it; and all that may be perfectly proper; but what are the causes of it? Caste, and injustice, the failure of men to recognize the absolute oneness of human nature. And so class is set against class, and the dividing lines are being emphasized. Oh the peril of it. And there is injustice in many ways, not only the injustice on the part of those who hold power, but the injustice of misrepresentation on the part of those who lack power; and the injustice as between two men in conflict is that neither of the two will see the standpoint of the other. There are caste differences and injustices.

Or, if you look at the business world, self-seeking is the inspiration of commercial activity, and a vast amount of dishonesty, which has been rechristened business sharpness.

Or, if you look at the Church of God, love of power, and lack of love are the causes of unrest.

What is the way of peace? The Prince comes, first pure; He brings a sword. He is against everything that emphasizes class. He will not enlist as under His banner, even the man who names His name if he bring into the spirit of his conflict that which is against the Spirit of the Lord Himself. He demands that there shall be recognition on the part of all men of the first fundamental necessity of manhood's relationship to God; and then consequently, the great issues and results, of man's true relationship to his brother man. He still comes, and it is not a song merely, it is thunder, saying to men, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God... thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thymself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets; and He is at war with everything in social life that contradicts the individual right of every man to a relationship with God; and the individual responsibility of every man concerning his brother. He is at war with all the forces of unrest.

Or, if you make a further application, what are the causes of national unrest? And I am not lifting my eyes to gaze any further than the shores of my own land. What are the causes of our own national unrest? Are they two, or is it but one? I leave you to decide. Perhaps one, but it must be stated in two ways. Forgetfulness of God and that which is the result—the enthronement of Mammon. Forgetfulness of God! I wonder if we shall soon hear again in our Houses of Parliament, a man who dare quote his Bible, and do it accurately; and do it, not at the bidding of a party, but at the bidding of God Almighty. I wonder! We have forgotten God. We must not say—as we were told recently—too much about the Congo, lest we disturb the balance of power somewhere. Away with the base thing! Where is God? We have forgotten Him, we are putting Him out of count. If a man says these things, somebody will say he is political. I avow in the presence of God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve, I have nothing to do with the mere paltry tricks of party politicians. I have everything to do with the land I love, with its lack of peace and its restlessness, and I affirm it is because we have forgotten God. Our empty churches, our broken-down family altars, our neglected Bibles, these are the things that matter. And my brethren, the Christ of God is at war with all these disturbing forces. It is the sword that He brings. He has not come this Christmas time to sing a national lullaby. He has come again anew, to declare war against the men who forget God, and against the men who enthrone Mammon in His place. Mammon! Oh what eyes had this Man of Nazareth, what far-seeing vision, what clear and accurate understanding of the constructive and destructive forces of the ages. Listen, You cannot serve God and the devil? Oh no, He did not say that. That is what I should have said. I must have my antithesis perfectly balanced. This is what He said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," for He knew the devil also, and knew that the devil hides himself behind Mammon, behind its gaudiness and its glitter and its ministry to sensuality. The devil keeps out of sight today, he hides behind Mammon. I have said before on one occasion, I fear the thing was printed, but I will say it again, I have stood in amazement in the presence of Watts' great picture of Mammon. You look at it some day; and yet—my apology to his memory—had I to paint Mammon, I should have painted it otherwise, not bloated, satiated, and sensual, but as gaunt and hungry and never satisfied. That is Mammon. Why is wrong forever on the throne? Ask that question when next righteousness is defeated in any locality, or in the nation, why? And the answer will be, Mammon. When a nation forgets God, it always enthrones Mammon.

And so this Prince of peace is against the forces that cause unrest, and that in the interests of peace.

One other word, for even if so far I have only looked at one's own land, if a man be a Christian man, he cannot forget that he belongs to the world. If a man be a Christian man, he has come to a recognition of the unity of the race. And so one other glance, the international unrest, what are the causes of it? I had almost said, and I am perfectly sure you would have been in revolt against if I had said it so bluntly, that the cause of unrest is patriotism. I will qualify my word,—false patriotism, the patriotism that consents, out of a narrow attitude of mind, to use the word foreigner. Is there a more terrible word in existence than the word foreigner? I do not think there is to a

Christian man. Foreigner! The patriotism that says, so long as this land, and this country is maintained in peace and prosperity, then it matters nothing what others go down in the struggle; is false, it is of hell!

And the consequent unfairness that grows from it, and the avarice of which it becomes the expression. Would you have an illustration? I will give you one. The fact that at this hour, a paper, standing supposedly for Conservatism—a great word—is consenting to employ the prophet of godless socialism to create strife between this country and Germany. That is what I mean. I will not be silent in the presence of this kind of thing. Silence here would be wicked and evil. Mark well, I pray you the unholy association. A man, brilliant and clever, who has taken stance definitely against revealed religion and the religion of Jesus Christ; and by his own paper is advocating a socialism that is godless in its thinking and godless in its outlook; and yet, this man is to write to show how we are to defeat Germany! And think you, the Christ is in favour of it? I make my solemn protest against it in the name of Christ. What does it mean? It is the outcome of a false patriotism; it is the determined attempt to say that this nation is the only one that really matters. My brethren, here are the causes of unrest. What has Christ to say? He brings the sword, and He is against it. He is against everything that denies the absolute right of all men and all nations, and castes, and rulers, to God, and to the fellowship of their brother man. And there will be long conflict ere peace can be established. A peace based upon unfairness and injustice in thinking and attitude towards other nations is no peace, and cannot live or last.

The supreme passion of the Church of God must be for peace. We must mourn over all war. War in itself is contrary to the ultimate purpose of God. But, we must also remember the refrain of Isaiah, and the declaration of Jesus. "There is no peace... to the wicked." "I came not to send peace, but a sword." We must remember that the principle of peace is purity. To make peace with wrong, or to consent to be silent in the presence of the things that are wrong, is to destroy peace.

And yet, let the final word this morning be the personal word. What is the Prince of peace saying to thee, to thee, Oh heart of mine, Oh soul of mine? I feel as though it were almost impossible, and as though it would be almost an impertinence to ask in the case of any other man, and yet let every man ask it. What says the Prince of peace to thee, Oh heart of mine, Oh soul of mine? Does He draw the sword? Then He draws it against some evil thing in thy heart, in thy thinking, in thy outlook, in thy habits; and He will make no peace with it for the sake of ultimate peace. Then do not be at war with Him, but end the war by letting Him win, even though it mean the breaking down of the idol, and the wounding of the spirit; for out of that wounding there will come peace, God's great peace, which is first pure.

Isaiah 28:20 Short Beds And Narrow Coverings

Isaiah 28:20

Short Beds And Narrow Coverings

For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

Isaiah 28:20

This is the language of a fine satire. At this point the prophet, burning in anger, indulged in sarcasm. It was caustic and severe, but behind it throbbed the great heart of the man who was carrying the burden of his people's sin and attempting to lead them from the folly of their unbelief and rebellion back again to allegiance to God.

To understand this text in its final application and in its perpetual meaning, we must consider the context. The prophet was addressing a people who had been created as a people by God, a people who had been familiar from childhood with the law and with the testimony. He was addressing a people, moreover, who owed all their material prosperity to Him. Yet, he was speaking to a people whose life in its underlying impulses and its perpetual mode was the life of godlessness. The greatest difficulty confronting the prophet as he delivered his message was not the mere fact of the godlessness of the people, but that of the form this godlessness had taken. It was that of self-satisfied contempt for all that he had to say concerning the claim of God and God's methods in judgment. Intellectually, these men had not abandoned belief in God, but, practically, they had abandoned the truth concerning God. They still believed in Him, but they did not believe in His immediate government.

The whole story of the prophet Isaiah, as it is revealed to us in this one book, is that of a man who spoke to an inattentive age or to an age which, if attentive, mocked him and refused to obey his message, until, as the prophetic period drew to a close, he inquired in anguish, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

In this twenty-eighth chapter we have a tremendous and terrific utterance concerning the judgment of God; and as we read it carefully, we discover the interruptions of the mocking rulers. We hear the contemptuous speech of the men who listened to him but declined to believe the things he said. The prophetic message is always that of the government of God. Occasionally this man—who was a man of heart and a man of tears, a man who understood the suffering of the Divine heart, and foretold more perfectly than any other prophet of the old economy how, in the fulness of time, the suffering of the Divine heart would have its expression in the suffering Servant of God—occasionally this man broke out into denunciation, fierce and terrible; announced that God is not only the God of mercy, but also a God of judgment, in the sense of vengeance and punishment of sin. Every now and then, this man of tears became a man of thunder; this man—whose heartbeat seems as though it reverberated through the centuries until it found its

perfect harmony with the heartbeat and the heartbreak of the Son of God—declared another side of the Divine nature; told men of God's "strange act" of judgment. Judgment as punishment is contrary to the Divine wish, but nevertheless part of the Divine will, that which God would never do, if man did not compel Him to the doing.

The answer of the men of that time is clearly brought out in the particular chapter in which our text occurs. These men taunted the prophet. A careful reading of the chapter shows that he repeated what they said. These are the words of the men who had heard his message, words uttered in regard to him, Isaiah; words that reveal their contempt for him: "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?"

Then follows a revelation of what they objected to in his message, and the voice of their scorn is heard. They said, "For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little."

If I may interpret the attitude of these men by the language of our own days, they said, "This kind of preaching is out of date! Whom is he trying to teach knowledge? Let him talk to children! This halting method, of precept upon precept, of line upon line, of here a little and there a little, is of no use."

"Whom will he teach knowledge?" says the advanced age! "Whom does he imagine he can convince?" says the intellectual giant, who may be a moral leper. So the men of his day contemned the prophet. Then he told them of judgment. He thundered of the Divine government. They said, "We are not afraid! We have made a covenant with death! We have entered into a covenant with hell." Then the passion of the prophet blazed, and he said to them, "...Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." There shall be no fever, no fret, no fear, for that man! But beyond that, what? The scourge is also coming; the hail shall beat, the whirling flood shall sweep across, and "your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand;..."

Then it was that he said: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." In other words, I have told you of Divine government, I have announced the Divine judgment. You try to find rest by declaring that you have made an agreement with death, a covenant with hell. The bed is too short for you. You have never rested on it yet. The cold and biting windstorm will sweep upon you, and the covering will not keep you warm. You cannot rest on the beds you are making. You cannot hide in the covers in which you are attempting to wrap yourselves.

We are thus brought face to face with the principle that underlies the text. This age is very much like that age, but I am not proposing to make any wide application of this great message. I bring it down to its individual application, and I want to say two things, the first with all brevity, the second at greater length, and close with a return to the first.

The first thing I want to say is this: "Behold," said God through Isaiah, and says God to us today, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." That is the first thing. I say it briefly now. I will

return to it in conclusion. The prophecy has become history. The prophetic foretelling has had its gracious and glorious fulfilment. Whereas the prophet spoke in the abstract of principles, at last in the fulness of time the abstract message was wrought out into concrete history, and there came to men God's Stone, a tried Stone, an elect, a precious; Stone. We know the connection between the New Testament and this message. We know how in the New Testament we read of that Stone, as He Himself spoke to men, "He that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust." The message of the prophet has become the fact of history, and there is rest for the heart of man in Him Whom God set forth to be a Propitiation for our sin, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world. Wherever a man is weary of sin, weary of sorrow, weary of self; wherever a man is feeling the pressure of life, and attempting to realize his manhood and failing, thank God for the Stone laid in Zion, elect and precious. You need not wait for an after-meeting. Believe as I preach. Before I get to the end of my sermon, if some tired broken man or woman will but fall on that stone, it will break him, but break to remake, and he will find God's rest, God's covering; presently, when the storms break and judgment begins,

Bold shall he stand in that great day,

For who aught to his charge shall lay?

While by His blood absolved he is

From sin's tremendous curse and shame.

But now, if we are not resting there, where are we resting? Of all other rests than that I say, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." Unless we have found rest for our souls in Jesus, we have found no rest. Unless we have taken refuge in Him, we have no covering that hides us. The first half of the figure refers to a present experience. The second half of the figure refers to an experience that must come to every soul of us—the final day, the day of assize, the day of inquisition, the day of wrath. The rest is that which men are seeking now. The refuge is that which they will need when the hailstorm sweeps, and the Divine judgments are abroad. In Jesus we may have rest today, and refuge forever. Out of Him there is no rest today, and there will be no refuge in the great and awful day of God.

Let us take the first of these matters. There is no rest for any man save on that cornerstone built in Zion, and yet men seem to be resting. What do we mean by rest? In the underlying deeps of our consciousness we know that this life is not all. I am not now going to argue with the man who doubts that assertion. I pray for him, for probably no argument of mine can convince him. I speak now to the rank and file, to the great mass of human souls. We know that this life is not all. We are also profoundly conscious that whatever else we may do, we cannot stay the moving wheels of time. You may smile at my folly when I tell you that once as a boy I remember wanting an hour longer for recreation. Seeking to obtain it, I stopped the clock! God help you to see that you smile at the folly of every man who imagines he can pat back or delay the turning wheels of time. They bear us onward to a consummation. If we have fear in thinking of the end, then there is something wrong in our life. If, when a man speaks of death, you object, shall I tell you why? It is because sin is unforgiven. Christian men and women in the frailty of the flesh sometimes at the end shrink from

death because of its mystery. Yet they look into the face of the rider on the pale horse, and with the dignity of an assured victory they say, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

"The sting of death is sin." If we do not like the preacher to speak of death, it is because sin is not dealt with in our experience. We ought to look on toward the last day. Let us honestly face it. Presently these turning wheels will bring us to the end, to the margin of life, where burdens are laid down; will bring us to the confines, crossing over which, we go out into what has been spoken of as "that bourne from which no traveler returns." In view of that day, and in view of the fact of the spiritual nature of man, how are we resting? On what have we attempted to lay down our humanity, our soul, our personality, so that we are not affrighted when we think of the close?

I talk to men individually, and I find their answers to these questions are very different. One man says, I have no fear of God, or of the end, or the future, because my life has always been a moral life. That man is making a bed for himself of his own morality.

Another man says, I have no fear of the future, because I am a Christian by all the rites and ceremonies of Christianity, by all religious observances on the part of my parents, and on my own part. That man is making a bed of external religious observance.

I find another man who says, Well, ten years ago, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, I yielded myself to Jesus Christ, and it is all right. That man is making a bed of worn-out experience.

I come to yet another man, and he says, I have no fear; God is a God of love, and God will never punish me, or let me suffer for my sin. That man is making a bed of a false doctrine of God, utterly unwarranted by the revelation which He has made of Himself to men.

Another man puts me aside when I attempt to speak to him, saying, Oh, don't talk to me. I know these things are important, but I have no time for them yet. That man is resting his soul on the unspoken conviction that there is time yet to be, when business will not press, and pleasure will not allure, and he will have inclination to deal with the things spiritual and eternal, and with God.

These are but samples. I say to you in the presence of every one of them, and of all similar ones, first, "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it"; and, second, "The covering is narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." In other words, none of these things brings perfect rest to the soul of man; none of these things will be sufficient to enwrap and hide him in that awful day of wrath which must break forth against all wilful disobedience and rebellion and sin.

I say, in the first place, these things do not constitute beds on which men can rest. Take the man who says that he has no fear of God and of the future, because he has been a moral man. What is morality? Morality demands a standard. What is your standard? It would be ludicrous, if it were not tragic, to hear the answers that human beings will give to that inquiry. One man says, I have always paid my way; I have never defrauded anyone, or harmed anyone. These things are advanced as though they were of the essence of morality. We see at once what is the standard of that man's morality. It is the policeman. Here is a man in the image of God, with the very stamp and likeness of Divinity on his brow; and yet he talks as though everything that the universe can ask of him, and God Almighty demand of him, is that he escape the clutch of a human policeman, and that is supposed to be morality. Morality must have a standard, and the standard of true

morality must come as a revelation from Him Who is God. He has given us a standard of morality. I do not choose for the moment to find it in the words of Jesus, simple and sublime and all inclusive as they are; I go back rather to the ten words written by the finger of God long ago for the government of human life, and I ask, Does our morality bear the test of that high standard? When men consent to measure their morality by that standard, they too often begin among the things of secondary importance. What is the first word, the fundamental word of morality. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." That is morality. The man who is simply moral enough to escape imprisonment, moral enough to maintain the respect of the crowd of people that live around him, because he never harmed them, is immoral—unless his life is crowned with worship, unless he realizes the highest thing in his being as his soul goes out in love and adoration to the God of all.

And we know it. There are moments when the consciousness surges upon us. There are moments when the whispering of the other world rings through our souls, when an infinite light such as never was on land or sea flashes on our consciousness; somewhere in the silence of the night, in the loneliness of the mountain; somewhere amid the more tragic loneliness of the crowded city, God breaks in upon our souls, and we think of the infinite distances, and spaces, and eternities, and tremble! Yes, the bed is too short for us to stretch on, and our souls find no rest on any morality in which we have made our boast.

Some there are who trust in religious observances. I find persons who say, I was baptized in my infancy; I was confirmed when I came to a certain age; I have regularly attended the sacrament; therefore I am a Christian. By no means therefore. To begin with, spiritual life is never generated by material action; the life of God is not communicated by the sprinkling of water, nor could be. It is a lie, of all lies the most dastardly, that tells a child that in baptism it was made the child of God and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. We dare not, even at the risk of uttering things that sound controversial, consent to say nothing about that lie; for thousands of souls are being deluded by it; they are led to think of themselves as Christians, and yet the Christ-life has never touched them, and they are devoid of the love of God. The warrant of my assertion is not any formulated creed, but the Scriptures of truth, the revelation of God, in which it is said to men, not, Ye must be baptized into life by water, either more or less; but, "Ye must be born again." Any man who puts his trust in any ceremony such as this finds a bed on which he cannot stretch all his manhood, and finds, therefore, no perfect and positive rest.

I have known men and women who most surely on the day of confirmation were born again. Let us consider this. What did you promise on the day of confirmation? You took upon yourself vows that others, alas in their folly, had taken upon themselves for you long ago, and never fulfilled. You say that is a drastic statement. I challenge you to find me any godparent who ever fulfilled his vows. It cannot be done. I cannot do it for my own children, let alone the children of other people. But there came a day when you took these vows. What did you promise? You promised three things, in what you believed to be the presence of God's minister: you promised to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. Did you mean it? Did you do it? If so, that was repentance; and if in the doing of it, you yielded to Christ, then and there you were born again. But did you do it? Did you renounce the world? Did you renounce the flesh? Did you renounce the devil? If not, your bed is too short to stretch on. You cannot rest on a broken vow, can you? Instead of renouncing the flesh you have pampered and ministered to its constant, clamant cry. Instead of renouncing the devil, you have

allowed the devil to lead you and drive you at his will. And yet you are a Christian, forsooth! No, a thousand times no! "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it." In the honest integrity of conviction, you know that on such a bed there is no rest; on such a false assumption there is no place for the soul's security.

But someone else will say, Ten years ago—fifteen, twenty—I gave myself to Christ, and I am all right. By no means necessarily so. The fact that Jesus saved me yesterday is in itself no use now. Unless I am able to link on to my past tense a present tense, then woe is me, for I am undone. The great apostle, writing his own biography in rapid sentences in the Philippian epistle, said, "...I count all things but loss..." That is what happened on the way to Damascus. Suppose that, having counted all things but dross, he had gone back and picked them up again and said they were precious; suppose sin had triumphed because he had gone back to the world and forsaken the things of Christ; suppose he had turned his back on the Christ and crucified Him afresh, and had counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite unto the spirit of grace, what then? Then, I tell you, his cleansing long years before would have been of no avail. But in that great chapter he said something else. "Yea, verily, and I count all things but loss..." The past is the present also. The attitude taken up long ago is maintained today. Jesus saved me on the Damascene road; Jesus saves me now.

I am afraid the Church of Jesus Christ is full of men and women who are living on a past experience; and they sing at rare or regular intervals, as their choice may be:

Where is the blessedness I had

When first I found the Lord?

Men and women sing that as though it were a sign of saintship. It is a sign that they have lost their saintship. The blessedness I had when first I found the Lord is with me yet; but it is greater, mightier, and flows as a river instead of a rivulet. That should be the language of the soul. The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it. There is no rest in a past profession that is not merged into a perpetual possession.

Once again. Here is the man who tells me that he is trusting God, that he is casting himself on God, that God is too good to punish him. Oh, man, God is too good to let you go unpunished! There are men who if they passed into heaven as they are would turn it into hell. God writes on the portal of His home, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie." God is so good that He will not let anything that works abomination into His dwelling-place and home. If we will not accept the conditions of His heaven, in love to heaven, in love to truth, in love to the well-being of multitudes, He must shut us out, He must visit on us the vials of His wrath, the punishment we have positively and deliberately chosen.

If you can persuade me that God will allow a man to sin until character becomes sin, and then let him, the impure, into the land of light, then you will persuade me that God is unkind with an unkindness that is tragic and awful. His wrath flames in the passion of His love. The punishment that He visits on the sinner is the necessary outcome of the infinite compassion of His heart. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Let me turn to the last illustration I used. A man tells me that there is time enough yet, that he has no time yet, that he is postponing these things to a more convenient season, that business presses and pleasures allure, but that some day, in a little while, he will attend to his religion. Oh, how often the messengers of the Cross have had to speak of the fatuous folly of this position. Long before the Christian light had fallen on men, the philosopher said to his students, "Gentlemen, the supreme thing is that we be ready to die." One of their number said, "That is true, and I propose to be ready." Asked the teacher, "When do you propose to prepare?" "Just before I die," came the flippant answer. Then the old man said, "And now, sir, have you fixed the date of your dying? Do you know when it will be? Seeing that you may die within a moment, this is the time to prepare for dying."

I grant you that the soul cast on God in the last extremity is mercifully saved for Jesus' sake; but when is the hour of your last extremity? Moreover, how do you know that when the passing comes, all the intellect will not have lost its power to think? God's time is the perpetual Now! Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation! There is not a man really at rest who is postponing the decision of infinite and eternal and important things. The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it.

Let us remember that the thing on which we are trying to rest we shall need as a refuge in the day that is coming. How will our morality hide us from the searching eyes of Him Who judges, not the external action, but the internal character? How will our religious observance cover us if it have not produced in us religious life? Will a profession of the long ago hide us from the eyes of Him if it have not continued, and if our life have not harmonized with it in all its process? How will our affirmation of the love of God stand us as refuge when, in love, to save others from the contamination of our pollution, He hurls us into the darkling void? How will our excuse as to time avail us when He will remind us that the one supreme and first business of life is the adjustment of the soul to Himself?

But thank God for the message of the prophet, who, ere he satirized the men who thought they had made an agreement with death, uttered these words: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." He who rests there shall have no restlessness. He who takes refuge there shall know nothing of the fitful fever of the man who attempts to wrap himself in a narrow covering. That resting place is long enough, and broad enough, and strong enough, to rest the weary soul and give it perfect peace.

Bold shall I stand in that great day

if I am arrayed in the robe that He brings to me, that righteousness of which Paul writes, which has been set forth as at the disposal of men by faith and unto faith.

Turn from your false rest, and come to the true; and you will find in God all that your soul is needing now, and all that it will need in the last unutterable day.

Isaiah 33:14. Dwellers In Fire.

Isaiah 33:14.

Dwellers In Fire.

The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the godless ones: who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?

Isaiah 33:14

This chapter is a graphic description of Divine deliverance wrought, and the text reveals the effect produced upon some in the delivered city as they gazed with wonder and astonishment at the judgment of that God who was their King. The hosts of Assyria had melted away, and yet of these hosts they had been afraid. It must have seemed to those within the city as though they would be utterly overcome by the great armies that lay encamped about the walls. It was of this occasion that Byron sang:

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea;
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

And yet, though Judah had struck no blow, but through her King and her prophet had waited upon God only, the vast hosts had been driven back, many of them escaping to Nineveh, many of them being left dead upon the field. As the men of Zion looked out at this wonderful work of God, and became conscious of how God wrought without human instrumentality when it so pleased Him, the sinners in Zion were afraid, and the godless inside the delivered city trembled and cried out in their anguish, "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" They had seen the fire at its work. They had seen the age-abiding burnings take hold of the enemies of God, until they became weak and were driven and consumed. Isaiah had perpetually taught the truth of the presence of God as righteousness and as fire amongst men. That truth was demonstrated in the destruction of the hosts of Sennacherib. When in answer to prayer God delivered them they were impressed, not so much with the deliverance as with the method. As it proceeded in fiery judgment upon the foes outside, and the consciousness of God as fire came home to those within, they cried out in trembling and anguish: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Are we safe? May not that fire burn us ere the night fall upon us? May not that age-abiding burning scorch us at it has scorched the men outside? The question is a revelation of the dawning upon the consciousness of these men of the truth which Isaiah had attempted to teach them, that of the presence of God as devouring fire and as age-abiding burnings. This consciousness raised in their case, as it must ever raise in the case of men who arrive at it, an inquiry of the utmost importance. How can man

live in fire without being burned or scorched?

Turning from the local coloring, coming at once from Jerusalem to London, from the bygone age to the age that now is, I propose to ask you first to consider with me in the light of the inquiry of the men of old the fact of the presence of God in human life as fire; and, secondly, I shall invite you to make the inquiry they made, "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire?" and then to listen to the answer of the prophet which immediately follows.

First, let me speak to you of this vision of God as fire. I have already said that this was the burden of Isaiah's message. Certainly the great burden of his message was the immanence of God, the nearness of God. Isaiah, perhaps the mightiest of all the Hebrew prophets, the man of largest outlook and keenest insight, came to an age characterized by its practical godlessness. We know the history of Israel and Judah, and how terrible had been the forgetfulness of God. To these people Isaiah came, saying in effect, You forget God, but you do not escape God; though you put Him out of your thinking, and make no calculation upon His presence and will, He wraps you round about in every hour of your life. This man of far-seeing vision, as he looked on to consummation and deliverance and salvation, expressed the whole of it by one word—Emmanuel, God with us. He taught constantly the presence of God in human affairs, and that in the processes of the method of God there would be a mysterious moment in human history when God would be present in the form of a child. Whether he saw clearly all the issue of his teaching I am not prepared to say, but this was the underlying truth, the nearness of God and the impossibility of human escape from that nearness. Isaiah taught, moreover, the righteous character of God, and insisted that the uplifted throne was based upon righteousness and holiness and equity. He declared with scorching and biting scorn that their religious observances were of no value in the sight of heaven if in their own life they were not true and upright and righteous. He insisted first upon the immanence of God, and, secondly, upon His righteousness and His righteous requirements. Then he perpetually used fire as a symbol of the Divine presence and method. Go back to the opening of the prophecy, to chapter 6, in which he describes the wonderful way in which he was called to the work, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and His train filling the temple, and when there came out of his own anguish the cry that told of his sin and of the people's sin, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." How was he prepared for his work? "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand... from off the altar; and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin forgiven." God came to him as fire for purification, according to the figurative language of that chapter. Then coming to the end of the prophecy, in chapter 66, speaking of the coming of God in punishment, he says: "For behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and His chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render His anger with fierceness, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will Jehovah execute judgment, and by His sword, upon all flesh." It is not Isaiah only who uses this figure of fire. All Scripture brings us back again and again to this symbolism. From beginning to end you will find that the presence of God is suggested under the figure of fire. When from the Garden of Eden man was excluded from intimate communion with God it was a flaming sword which was the symbol of that exclusion and of God's holiness. When God would reveal Himself to a man for the making of a nation it was in a bush which burned with fire and was not consumed. Then in the New Testament all truth about God is expressed in one remarkable sentence in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Our God is a

consuming fire." Or, if I think of Christ, the last prophecy foretelling His coming declared that "He is like a refiner's fire." Christ Himself used the same figure: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth." In the final book of the Bible, John, describing the glorious vision of this selfsame Christ, said: "His eyes were as a flame of fire." Or, if I come to the Holy Spirit of God, omitting all the incidental words concerning Him in the old economy, and taking up the simple story of His coming to initiate the era in the midst of which we live today, what was the symbol of His coming? Tongues of fire that sat upon the heads of the assembled company. I have but gathered these things together to show that this figure runs through the Word of God, teaching us certain truths concerning God Himself.

What, then, are we intended to learn by its use? What is fire? Fire is the evolution of light and heat by combustion. Those of you who perfectly understand what that means are welcome to the definition. I think I see enough of what it means to understand the use of this marvelous figure in the Word of God. In the New Testament, which is the final revelation, we have three definitions of God, which it is well to put together. "God is love." "God is light." "God is a consuming fire." The greatest of the three is not the first, nor the second, but the last, because it includes the other two. God is love and light, and therefore He is fire. The evolution of light and heat is fire. The combination in one mysterious personality of light and love is fire. Love is heat, passion. Light is illumination, principle. Combine the two and you have fire. "Our God is a consuming fire." Omit if you will the distinguishing word "consuming." It is used there because it is needed in the connection, but the great word stands, "God is fire." Whether He be consuming or not depends entirely upon the condition of that which comes into contact with Him. Whether He be a devouring fire or an age-abiding burning depends entirely upon the condition of the person who comes into contact with Him. To put the whole thing superlatively, whether when a man is wrapped about with God he be in hell or heaven depends upon what the man is in himself. No man escapes God in hell. I need not say that no man escapes God in heaven. It is the One Presence which makes heaven and hell the presence of the God of fire, who is to certain people a devouring fire and to others an age-abiding burning. It is this combination in a personality of passion and principle acting upon each other, holding each other in true proportion, which blazes out into fire. If there were nothing but principle it would petrify itself into stone. Where there is principle—light, and passion—love, principle is suffused with passion and passion is held in check by principle, and there is fire. Not fire that needs feeding with any earthly fuel or else it die, but the eternal fire, the age-abiding fire, which fire is God Himself.

Take this symbolism of fire a little further. What shall we say of the presence of fire? It is everywhere. Scientists make use of the word "eremacausis," and believing with John Ruskin that it is well to translate such words into simpler words, I find that eremacausis means a slowly burning fire. There is in nature everywhere a slowly burning fire. There is fire in everything, there is no escape from it. We do not always see its flame, but it is always burning, and it is most beneficent. Without it nature could not renew itself, nature would be halted in its procession from season to season, and in its unfolding of new glory and beauty. Sometimes we speak of this in other words as the process of oxidation going forward everywhere. I pick up a piece of metal from the highway. It is rust covered. What is rust? Fire. I stand in autumn looking at the hillside clothed with trees, and I admire the beauty of the tints. But what is this? Fire. This is not poetry. This is not imagination. This is cold, scientific fact. The fires in nature flame out in autumn time. What are they

doing? Devouring effete things—age-abiding fires thoroughly purging nature's floor, and making way for springtime and new harvests. These fires are destroying this building while we are in the midst of it, tearing it down, burning up the effete thing, making way for something yet to be. It is not idly that this great figure of fire is utilized all through Scripture as a symbol of God. God is in this and every age, in this and every place. He fills heaven with His presence. He wraps earth about by that selfsame presence. He is everywhere throughout the limitless and marvelous universe of which we know so little. There is no escape from Him. He is present as fire, as devouring, age-abiding fire. At this very moment all the men of this age and all the movements of this age, and all the thinking of this age are wrapped about with this fire, penetrated with this fire. I am not yet dealing with the effect it will produce upon us, but rather facing the fact of the presence of God everywhere, and the impossibility of escape from that presence.

I would like for one moment to change my tone and say that in this text there is the greatest comfort the soul of man can find. I never look at some vested interest rearing its lordly head and blighting with its breath the life of men without saying, Oh, thou foul monster, thou too art wrapped in the fires of God, and as the Assyrian host melted so shalt thou melt presently! It would be interesting to make application of that to all the nation and the outside world, but I am more anxious to make application to this audience. I am in the fire now. I am wrapped about with Deity, unable to lift my material hand save in Divine strength, unable to think a problem out save with heaven's own wisdom. I may prostitute the wisdom and the strength, but it is in God I live and move and have my being, and God is a fire.

One word more as to this symbolism of fire. If this is fire, and the presence of fire, what is its effect? It is penetrative, it is resistless. It is devouring or transmuting into permanence, according to the material that is put in it. There are things that fire makes not to be, so far as there can be an end of anything. There are things that fire makes stronger and mightier. There are certain things which, if flung into a furnace, lose their identity. There are other things which, when put into the furnace, lose dross, alloy, admixture, and flash with new brilliance and luster. The effect of fire is according to the material. To certain things fire is devouring, and the Hebrew word "devouring" is, literally, eating. We talk of rust eating, and it is a perfectly correct figure; it is the figure of this word. Who among us can dwell with fire which eats like rust? Who among us can bear the age-abiding burnings?

From these questions, then, as to the symbolism of fire we make these deductions: God, because He is love and light, is fire. He is everywhere, therefore all things and all men are already in the burning and ever-present fire. In its effect fire is devouring, or transmuting into permanence, and I would not pass from that statement without one word of personal application. God is destroying you or making you. God as a veritable fire is devouring you already, or is devouring that in you which would destroy you, in order that you yourself may not be destroyed. Everything depends upon what we are in ourselves. I am not dealing with how a change in personality may be effected which changes the relationship to fire. That is the Gospel, blessed be God! I am dealing with simple and abiding law. Those souls that have wandered into everlasting darkness, who have of their own deliberate choice turned their back upon the call of infinite mercy and of infinite law, are not without God, they are with Him, and the fire of their age-abiding devouring is the fire of the Divine presence. Draw me what graphic picture you will of the condition of the lost, it may be lurid, it may be medieval, according to the fastidiousness of this age, out of date, but no picture of the

Middle Ages is half so dreadful as the fact of the soul abiding in God yet out of harmony with Him—destroyed by the fire that ought to have made it, because of deliberate and final choice on the part of that soul. Hell is begun here as heaven is begun here. I am not foolish enough to tell you that hell ends here any more than I am foolish enough to tell you that heaven ends here. Some men tell me that heaven is beyond but that hell is all here. Hell begins here; some of you are in it. Heaven begins here; some of us are in it. When we have done with this material frame we shall be where we choose here and now. Whether in hell or heaven, we shall have our being in God, and in God as fire. Whether to feel forevermore the eating and devouring of that fire upon the thing that is unworthy, or to feel forevermore the burning of that fire to high and noble purpose and permanence, depends entirely upon what we are ourselves. How often this text has been preached from as though it refers to hell. So it does, but it also refers to heaven. The deepest thing in it is not a description of hell, but a tremendous announcement that God is fire. It is the cry of a heart conscious of sin, Who can dwell in this? Who can dwell in such burnings as this?

Now we turn to that inquiry. Take the simple word used in both cases. Who can dwell in the fire. Who can dwell in the burnings? You will find that the word "dwell" is used four times in this chapter. Twice in the chapter of my text, in verse 16: "He shall dwell on high," and in verse 24, "The people that dwell therein." The Hebrew word is not the same. There are here three Hebrew words with different shades of meaning. In verse 24 is a word which suggests sitting down in perfect rest in a certain place. In verse 16 the word signifies being at home. In my text it signifies to sojourn as a guest. The word used in the text itself has three distinct significations: to sojourn as a guest, to fly away, and sometimes conflict. I am by no means perfectly sure what these men meant when they used it. I am not sure that the use of this many-sided word is not indicative of the trembling fear in which they asked the question, as though they had said: See that fire outside, how it has destroyed the Assyrians. Who of us dare visit it, dare flee it, dare fight it? There is evidence of a lurking subconsciousness that that fire is where they are also, and a desire to be out of it. Who are the men who ask the question? Sinners, ungodly ones, and they say, Who can be the guest of fire and not be burned or scorched by the flame? What flame is it, O men of Jerusalem? Of what are you speaking? And I think I hear their answer. There has been a scorching fire; behold the Assyrians dead about our city. We are delivered, but, oh, what a blast has burned Assyria! Who of us can live in it? Whether they were consciously in it is not definitely told by the word they used, but they were conscious of its nearness. They felt the hot blast of the fire sweeping toward them and said, Who among us can dwell there? If there had been nothing but the question we should have gone away feeling that the symbolism of the test was that of judgment only. How wonderful is the answer of the prophet: "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly." That is, he whose attitude toward God is what it ought to be. It is as though the prophet had said: I have told you that God is righteous, God is upright, God is fire. But you need not be afraid of the fire if you have God's character: "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly." How shall I know whether that is my condition or not? And the prophet turns from the relationship to God to the relationship to man. "He that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from taking a bribe, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil: he shall dwell on high." Isaiah uses a stronger word than they used. He says, If you are right with God you can be at home in fire. Then follows the most marvelous description of the absolute safety of the soul that is right with God. He gives the position, "he shall dwell on high"; and the defense, "his place of defense shall be munitions of

rocks"; his sustenance, "his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure"; his hope, "thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."

May I venture to translate this message of Isaiah into other words? Oh, soul of mine, art thou afraid in the presence of the truth that God is fire? If thou art afraid it is because of what thou art in thyself. God's fires never harm God's children. The man who partakes of God's character can live in God's fire. You may well fear fire if you are a sinner. You may well fear the burnings if your hands are full of bribes and there is blood in your garments. You may well fear the fire if you are unholy, unrighteous, but not if you are right with God. To use the magnificent and daring word of Peter, the man who himself partakes of "the Divine nature" can live in the fire of the Divine nature. Hell and heaven are one in atmosphere, and the atmosphere is a burning, blistering pain, or a shining, beauteous glory, according to what I am in myself. Nothing can live in fire but that which is of the nature of fire. Nothing can live in fire but that which will take hold of the fire and be unweakened thereby. Who is it that can dwell in everlasting burnings and be unafraid? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly. He can dwell in the fire.

This is the great rock upon which faith fastens in the midst of toil. I may be speaking to some tonight who are greatly overburdened in their toil for God. Perhaps there are some worshiping with us who have come from the country, and down there in your village or town it seems as though God was being beaten, it looks as though the Assyrian must triumph over Judah. It is not so. God is in this age burning, burning, burning, and only that can remain which partakes of the fire nature, which answers the call of righteousness and becomes righteous. The mightiest foe cannot abide, God will burn it to destruction. Assyria is very proud. She spoils, though none has spoiled her. She deals treacherously, though none has dealt treacherously with her. For a time evil has a glamour and apparent glory about it. Take heart, and be at rest, oh, warrior of the King! The one thing that evil cannot do is lock its door against God. He wraps it about in the flame of His own being, and there is no evil house in London, no evil man or movement that is not already in this all-embracing fire. I thank God that my heart knows it. Then there is the other side of this great truth, which should give my heart pause tonight. Can I dwell with the fire? Can I dwell with the age-abiding burnings? Let me drop the figurative language of the prophet and ask, Am I right with God? That is the final question. If I am right with God then I can dwell with the fire. If not, I must still dwell in the fire, but the fire will blast me. Hell is an absolute necessity of morality. Deny me the fire of hell which burns the man who deliberately turns his back upon right, and by that denial you deny me the love of God, the love and light, from the commingling of which fire issues. Find me the man, the woman, the child, who is love-governed, and who walks in light, that is a son, a daughter of fire. Such can live in fire. Find me the man, the woman, hate-governed, and who loves darkness, such is stubble for burning. The very fire which purifies to perfection the son of fire consumes with age-abiding force the soul that is against God.

Oh, soul of mine, canst thou dwell in fire? I dare hardly ask you, so does the question press on me. Ask it of your own heart tonight. Having said with these men, Who can dwell in the fire? say, I am in the fire What will it do with me? Will this fire, from which I cannot escape, this fire so slowly burning that in my unutterable folly I think of it as some autumnal tint, when it is blasting devastation—will it finally devour or purify me?

Eternal Light! Eternal Light!

How pure the soul must be,
When, placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,
Can live, and look on Thee!
The spirits that surround Thy throne
May bear the burning bliss;
But that is surely theirs alone,
Since they have never, never known
A fallen world like this.
There is a way for man to rise
To that sublime abode;—
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
An Advocate with God.

Isaiah 40:3. Preparing The Highway.

Isaiah 40:3.

Preparing The Highway.

The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God.

Isaiah 40:3

These words are taken from the prologue to the second part of the prophecy of Isaiah. That prologue consists of the first eleven verses of chapter 40, and this chapter contains the keynote of the twenty-seven chapters here beginning and closing with the end of the book. The burden of this second part of the prophecy is comfort, and the comfort which was to be brought to the people of God in those olden days was to know that Jehovah was acting on behalf of His people. Nevertheless, there was a responsibility which they were called on to fulfil. That responsibility is revealed in the words of my text.

By bringing together the first verse of chapter 35, with which the earlier prophecy closes, and the charge of the text, light will be thrown on its meaning.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God.

The abiding principles revealed in the text and in all its context are these: first, that God never abandons man to the result of his own folly; second, that He interferes, arresting, changing, restoring; and, finally, that in His interference He always calls on man for cooperation.

In order that we may gain the present value of this Old Testament call let us examine carefully the scriptural applications of it, and apply this scriptural examination to our own circumstances and conditions.

The prophet heard a call, the voice of one that crieth, and this was the cry: "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." When we turn to the New Testament we find that each of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John connected this prophetic utterance of Isaiah with the ministry of John the Baptist as the herald and forerunner of Our Lord Himself. Consequently, we have a double illustration of the real meaning of the text, and so are helped to apply it to ourselves.

In the twenty-seven chapters which constitute the second part of the prophecy there are three great movements. In chapters 40 to 48 the prophet was contrasting Jehovah with idols. We may summarize the contrast thus: that the difference between Jehovah and all other gods is just this:

other gods men make and carry; Jehovah makes men and carries them. Having thus contrasted Jehovah and idols, beginning with chapter 49 and ending with chapter 57, there comes into view, first indistinctly, then gradually with a wonderful distinctness, a Person Who is the Servant of Jehovah. We see Him suffering and triumphing, the Person through Whom Jehovah is to reveal Himself in His superiority to all idols. In chapters 58 to 66 the prophet again leads us along the line of contrast, contrasting faithful souls and hypocrites. The whole movement has to do with peace, the purpose of peace, God's Prince of peace, and the program of peace. Peace is seen ultimately established, not by the abandonment of any principle of truth or honor, but through battle and smoke and turmoil under the leadership of the great Prince of peace. The twofold preparation which the prophet pointed out as necessary for this activity of God through His Servant was, first, that people should turn from idols to Himself, and, second, that they should turn from hypocrisy to perfect confidence in Himself.

Then, as we come to the New Testament to consider the message of that wonderful man, the last of the long line of Hebrew prophets, again we discover three movements in his ministry which may thus be summarized. First, he came denouncing sin; second, he came announcing the near advent of the Messiah; finally, he came to present the Messiah to men in that statement: "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world." When they asked him who he was himself, he answered that he was a voice, and uttered the words of the text.

The twofold preparation on which John the Baptist insisted may thus be described: repentance, a change of mind expressing itself in reformation, a change of conduct; and faith in the coming of One, expressing itself in following Him. He fulfilled his ministry when he indicated Jesus to his own disciples and sent them after Him, and when, at last, he said, "He must increase, I must decrease."

Now, the value of this glance at the old-time illustration and the illustration in the New Testament is that each reveals the fact that those who hear it can obey the call, and prepare a way in the wilderness for God, a high way in the desert along which God can travel. The accomplishment of the divine purpose is wrought out by God Himself, but He always asks for cooperation from men. In the ancient time the little remnant gathered round the prophet of the Theocracy is seen helping God's progress, making a high way, casting up a way in the wilderness and in the desert along which it was possible for God to move in order to accomplish His final purpose. In the case of the herald, the little group of disciples that gathered about him, loyal to his preaching in the midst of the corruption of the age in which he preached, constituted God's vantage ground. Out of their number the Messiah Himself at last selected His own disciples at the first, and so moved forward.

And if we follow through we find the principle obtaining in all subsequent history. The apostles of Jesus, hearing the call, obeyed and prepared a high way for God, and through their loyalty God moved forward to all the victories of the centuries.

In the dark ages in the history of the Church the cry went up again, and the Reformers heard it, and made a high way for God. Later on in the history of our own country, amid lasciviousness and frivolity and corruption, the Puritans in the Established Church, and the Independents outside it, constituted that little group of souls who felt the agony of the wilderness, and made therein a high way for God. A little more than a hundred years ago, when once again darkness had settled on the Church in this country of ours, the Holy Club at Oxford, so-called in uttermost contempt, in which

were found the Wesleys, Whitefield, and other kindred spirits, constituted a remnant who in the dark wilderness made God's opportunity, who in the desolate desert cast up a high way for the triumphant march of Jehovah.

Now I come to that which of course is principally on my heart, the immediate application of the call of the text. We lift our eyes in the midst of worship and look out on the world. As we do so we see the world today in the throes of the most terrific and appalling upheaval that it has ever known. The measure in which our eyes have seen the vision of the glory of the divine ideals for humanity is the measure in which we are conscious of the tragedy of the hour in which we live. I go back again to this passage in Isaiah, and see in the 35th chapter a most glorious picture of restoration: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." If we reverse the picture contained in that whole chapter we find a picture of desolation, an exact picture of the circumstances in the midst of which we are living today.

But that is not all the outlook, that is not all the truth. That is not the highest truth or the deepest. So let us look again. What does the man of faith really see today when for a moment he resolutely climbs the mountain, and looks from the standpoint of his living fellowship with God?

First of all, he sees God. Ah! but that is the difficulty today. That is where we halt. Well, if you and I, living in the comparative quiet of this England today do not see God, the men in the trenches see Him, and the men who keep their long and lonely vigil on the high seas see Him. There is nothing more wonderful than the fact that letters are coming pouring in everywhere today from these men, who, in different ways, in different language, are telling the same great truth, that they are seeing big things and know it, that they are finding God as they never found Him before, and are being tremendously impressed with the reality of God.

But all the faithful see Him, and they see Him still in Himself as Love. God is Love. That fact has been forever made sure in human history by the Cross of Christ. That God is love never can be denied by all such souls as have really seen that Cross and have really come into fellowship with it in their own lives, and know its matchless power in the lives of other men. Therefore we know today that we must interpret circumstances by God, and not God by circumstances. The peril of the hour is that men and women of faith may be trying to account for God by the circumstances of affliction. It cannot be done. That is not the true outlook. The true method is that of interpreting the circumstances by the fact of God. Under the shadow of the Cross of the world's Redeemer, in the presence of all that Cross has wrought in personal life and in history, we are compelled to look again at this dark hour from the standpoint of the abiding, unchanging certainty concerning God, that He is the God of love. When we begin to do that we find that we see God not only in Himself, but in His activity.

In Isaiah 63 the prophecy is of conflict. "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?" The answer was given, and another question was asked. Why are thy garments red in their apparel; why is there blood on thy garments as thou swayest forward in the majesty of thy strength? Then came the great answer, "I have trodden the winepress alone." The figure is daring, illuminating, inclusive, final. Look at the treader of the winepress in those Eastern countries and see what he does. He presses the grapes so that their own lifeblood may be poured out, so that their own very nature shall be manifested. That is what God is doing today, pressing out the inwardness of things to manifestation in the sight of angels, in the sight of men, in the midst of

human history. Nothing has happened yet in all this strife but that potentially, its inspirations lay within the human heart and the human mind ere the strife began. All the brutishness and godlessness lay like a smoldering fire under the veneered rottenness of a false culture, and all the strength and heroism of the faith that is prepared gladly to die in defense of honor and truth lay unrecognized as the inspiration of life before the war broke out. In this hour God is compelling humanity to express itself, and in all the terrific scenes in the midst of which we live God is treading out the winepress, compelling the inward things of human life to express themselves. He has not inspired the slaughter, He is not responsible for the iniquity of war. All the potentialities that have grown into experience have been generated within the heart of man. God always compels man to be outwardly what he is inwardly. He gave Judas the bag, knowing that he was a thief, which is a graphic, terrific illustration of an abiding principle, that God compels a man, a nation, a race, into circumstances in which they will manifest outwardly the true inwardness of their character. He is treading the winepress.

But the true man of vision climbs higher yet, and sees the issues resulting. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; that is the ending of all inequality—valleys exalted, mountains made low. All the unevenness shall be made level and the rough places plain; that is the restoration of the highway that has been lost, over which ravenous beasts have been passing. Finally, is seen the divine Hegemony, the revelation of the divine glory, which all flesh shall see! God Himself is winning His victory, which ultimately is the victory of humanity as it marches out into the larger, grander, nobler life, a life to which it cannot come until the poison is pressed out in the winepress, until the forces of life have been poured out in the winepress. So God is seen, even today, not exiled, not indifferent, but active with the master impulse of infinite love to humanity; the hour of His vengeance is come, and that is the year of His redeemed.

Now we come back to the call of the text: "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." Observe that way is to be prepared in the wilderness, in the desert. It is in an hour of desolation that this work is to be done; it is through darkness that this toil must be endured. The results will be seen when presently the desert is blossoming with beauty, and the wilderness has become a cultivated way; but we are to do our work while it is still a wilderness, while it is yet a desert.

That brings us to the very practical question: How are we to prepare a way for God? What can we do? I say the question is practical. It is a large question. Yet sometimes the most practical and the largest questions may best be answered by the simplest forms of statement. Therefore, in two declarations, I want to give the way of preparation as I see it today. First, we have to prepare His way by standing for God with men; and, second, by acting with God for men. This is an hour in which the men of faith must stand for God with men, must stand for the sovereignty of God, for the absolute rights of God. Does that really need saying? Is it not so patent that there should be no need of saying it, certainly no need of argument? Yet, on the other hand, have we not been in grave danger of wandering from it? That old fundamental bedrock of Calvinist theology is the bedrock to which the Church must come back, the sovereignty of God. In this flippant and decadent age of ours, someone has positively written something about "If I were God"! The almost blasphemy of the suggestion! We have to take our stand anew today, for the final sovereignty of God, for the fact that there is no appeal from His decision, for the fact that whether it be a man or a society or a nation or a race, if either or all of these seek in any way to act apart from His law there

is nothing for man or society or nation or race but irrevocable and irremediable ruin. That is a bedrock assumption to which we must get back from all those anemic interpretations of Deity which seem to think Him as merely some sentimental Being with Whom men can trifle and then escape. We must get back to the rock conception of God, and know that, whereas on that granite Rock a man or humanity may build eternal dwelling places, if man or humanity trifles with it, it will grind man and humanity to pieces.

I go further. The Church of God today will prepare a high way for God as she insists not merely on this fundamental fact of His Sovereignty, but on the revealed character of God. The Church is to insist on it that God is, as He has revealed Himself to be in the Word. The Church must lift her perpetual protest against any false conception of God. God is not Moloch, God is not Baal, God is not Mammon. God is God as He unveiled His grace and glory in the Person of Christ, terrific in His wrath, overwhelming in His compassion. The God of truth, the God of justice, the God of righteousness, the God of long-suffering and patience, the God Who will make compromise with evil under no circumstances, but the God Who will divest Himself of His dignities to die for a lost and ruined humanity.

Included in this is the fact that today the Church must stand everywhere for the law of God as that law is laid down, for individual rectitude of life, a rectitude of life the Pattern of which has been given to the world in the humanity of Jesus, in all the interrelationships of humanity for the value of truth, the necessity for justice, the maintenance of honor, and loyalty to obligations.

Forevermore the Church must stand for the infinite mystery of the love of God, so that as she helps men to make their policies, as she sustains men in the hour of their strife, as she prepares men to live or die for righteousness, she must forever more instruct and inspire them with love as the central, final meaning of all life.

The Church is also called on to act for men with God. That means, first of all, that she is to lift holy hands in perpetual prayer. I wonder if we are ceasing to pray as the days go on, or are we praying more? When this war broke out meetings for public intercession were held here and there much more so than today. I have had correspondence recently on whether we are right, or whether something should not be done to bring the Christian people together for public intercession. I am not anxious for this, but I am anxious that the individual soul in holy fellowship with God shall never cease to pray. I am not anxious to assemble a crowd. I am anxious for the mystic fellowship of all the saints in all congregations in unwearied intercession on behalf of humanity. We are to act for men with God. Men will understand our activity presently when we go out and act for them in actual deeds. I am coming to that. But the Church's first business is prayer. So far as I have influence, so far as my message may reach, I would urge, not that men will waste time trying to get up a meeting, but that they get to business in private, that whenever their minds go to the fields of slaughter, to the suffering homes, to the rulers of the nations and their counselors, they give their thoughts wings and lift them Godward. So shall we prepare in the wilderness a high way for God.

Then, of course, there must be much more than that. We must act for men in the actuality of the strife, in all ministry on behalf of those who are sorrowing, in guiding all diplomacy the compass of the divine wisdom and the divine thought. This is an hour when prayer must have its expression in actual service. In proportion as all men and women of faith are realizing these things, and doing them, we shall prepare a high way for God.

In conclusion, let me say some things that are on my heart. Recently an interview with Benedict XV, the Pope of the Roman Church, appeared in our newspapers. He is reported to have declared that he stood for spiritual neutrality at this particular hour. I hasten to say that we have no right to judge any utterance of the Pope by newspaper reports. At the same time, when a man occupies that august and terrible position, any opinion to which he gives utterance demands attention. I notice that the Organ of the Vatican has said that in that report there are "various inexactitudes." I observe that Cardinal Bourne has said that in the report he discovered "much embroidery." I note also that Father Bernard Vaughan said, in his own more vigorous method, that the whole thing is "a wicked fake." Let us hope that it is so. I do not suppose that anything I say will influence the Pope any more than anything he says will influence me. Yet, because people are reading this report, and the mind of men has been moved by it, as the correspondence in the newspapers has revealed, I should like to say that the Pope has the means of definitely correcting the inexactitudes, removing the embroidery, exposing the fake. However, that is beyond the consideration of the present moment. The idea which shocks my soul is the idea of spiritual neutrality. I declare to you today that this is impossible. Because the Church of God is supernatural, she cannot be spiritually neutral. She must distinguish between right and wrong, she must distinguish between truth and a lie; and she must speak. The necessity for her distinguishing, and for her public speech today, is the greater because the rationalization of theology has issued in the destruction of the elementary moral sense in certain theological quarters. Perhaps it is so—I suppose it is so—that organized Christian testimony is impossible. Then let all individual Christians and those prophets who are responsible to God alone utter no uncertain sound today. Let it be declared, and insisted upon, that we stand, not first for our own nation, but first for the Kingship of God and for the Kingdom of God, and for all those things which are involved in the divine government of right and truth. Only as by our praying and by our toiling, and, if necessary, by our sacrifices, our tears, our suffering, we stand for the spiritual ideal are we helping. But as we stand for that ideal, in the wilderness the way of God will be prepared, and in the desert the high way will be flung up.

Isaiah 43:7. The Purpose Of Life.

Isaiah 43:7.

The Purpose Of Life.

Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Isaiah 43:7

The first application of this text was to God's ancient people Israel. The whole message of which it forms a part was delivered to the chosen nation. The opening word of the text indicates the fact that the prophet was thinking, not so much of the whole nation as of the individuals who made up the nation. "Every one" is a distributive by use of which the thought passes to individual life, and the great purpose of its being. "Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

My purpose in taking this verse is not at all to deal with it in its application to the nation of Israel. Neither is it my purpose to deal with it in its application to individual members of that nation only. It is my purpose rather to take it as a revelation of the principle that has application in the case of every individual life; for while there are special ways in which Israel was indeed the chosen nation, and special ways in which the members of that nation were the chosen people of God, yet we must ever remember that all the things said concerning them, in their deepest intention, reveal the thought and intention of God for all men. I have taken this verse out of the ancient prophecy, then, because I conceive it to be a remarkable declaration of the real purpose of human life. "Every one that is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

The whole burden of the message of the verse, and consequently the burden of the message I bring you tonight, may thus be expressed in briefest words, Man is created for the glory of God. The Bible makes clear to us that this is true, not only of the elect people, but of all humanity. The charge made by the prophet in the ancient days against the king of Babylon was couched in these remarkable terms, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, hast thou not glorified." We should have charged neglect of his kingdom; with encouraging vice. He was guilty of all these things, but the spokesman of the eternal purpose and the mouthpiece of the Divine message to the profligate king said nothing of these manifestations. He at once struck at the root of the trouble, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is hast thou not glorified." It is equally evident that the principle has application to all men when we come to study the New Testament argument of salvation. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, having shown that the Gentile failed because he held down the truth in unrighteousness, and the Jew because he failed to be obedient to the revelation of God, sums up the whole situation in these striking words, intimately related to the thought suggested by my text, "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." So whether it be the ancient Babylonish king, or whether it be humanity, both Jew and Gentile, the Bible declares that human failure consists in

failure to glorify God. That brings us back to our text, with its simple central declaration, "whom I have created for My glory."

A right understanding for the purpose of human life will give us the true standard by which to measure our lives. That is the supreme difficulty, we so perpetually measure ourselves by wrong standards. When Robert Burns sang,

O wad some power the giftie gie us

To see ourselves as ithers see us,

he did not touch the deepest thing in human life. It would be a great advantage to us sometimes if we could see ourselves as others see us, but it would be a temporal and passing advantage. If we would find the supreme advantage we must see ourselves as God sees us. When Dr. Jowett was Master of Balliol, on one occasion at dinner a lady, desiring to draw from him some smart witticism, asked him, somewhat flippantly, "Tell us, Dr. Jowett, what do you really think of God?" His answer came quick and sharp: "Madam, it matters nothing what I think of God; it matters everything what God thinks of me." When we allow the Scriptures of Truth to do their work in our lives they always compel us to that judgment seat. We come to the standard of eternity, to the balances of the sanctuary, to the measurements of God.

The declaration of the text is supreme, "whom I have created for My glory." I call you then to quiet meditation on that declaration along two lines. First, man a creation of God; and secondly, man a creation of God, for Himself, and for His glory.

First, then, man a creation of God. In this one brief verse three words are employed to describe that creation. Whereas I am not going to detain you at any length, for detailed examination of them, suggestive as such examination would be, I cannot wholly pass them over. "I have created... I have formed... I have made." The Hebrew words living at the back of these three English words are as distinct as are the English, and more so; for we may interchange the English words, but we cannot interchange the Hebrew, each one having a separate emphasis and signification. The first word is the essential one, to which I draw your attention specially, "I have created." It is an all-inclusive word, which indicates actual causing to be, by the God of omnipotent power and wisdom. At your leisure you will read again the first chapter of Genesis, and you will find these words there used with great accuracy. The word translated "created" appears in that chapter three times only. The word translated "made" occurs over and over again. The word "created" is used only when there was evidently an entirely new beginning, a new departure. If you accept the evolutionary theory of creation you will remember that there are gaps that have never been filled; not a missing link, but many missing links. Three principal links are missing. There is the link between man and the highest form of life beneath him. There is the link between the animal life which is sentient and the vegetable life that lies beneath it. There is a missing link at the back of everything as to origination of the first fact in creation. At those points in your book of Genesis the word "created" occurs and nowhere else. "In the beginning God created," the primal activity of Deity. The word appears again between the vegetable and the animal kingdoms. It occurs again when man appears upon the scene. It is the essential word that indicates the original act of causing to be.

The second word in this particular verse, the word "formed," is a word which indicates a process. It is a word which is perpetually used of the potter at his work at the wheel. By manipulation of things already existing, a new thing is made to be.

The third word, "made," is a word which indicates the outlook on the result. I have made. I have accomplished. I have finished.

I cannot think that it is without signification that the prophet gathered up the three great words used to describe the making of anything when he spoke of what God does in the case of man. I have created him; the original essential thought was that of God, and the act by which the thought of God was realized was that of God. I have formed him; all the mysterious and hidden processes so full of interest and yet for ever baffling the ingenuity of man perfectly to discover are the processes of God. I have made him; when at last he stands upon the earth the completed being the finality of the work is of God.

To me in this great declaration of my text there is infinite comfort. Man in all his complex nature is a thought of God, a work of God. I look out upon nature everywhere, and see in the handiwork of man inventions and improvements, but there is no advance in man, save as man is developed; that is, save as that which already lies within him potentially is realized in the process of human history. All the culture of this age and of every age is simply the development into visibility of powers Divinely bestowed in the original creation of man. How wonderful are the thoughts of men. I see them expressed in architecture, in sculpture, in art, in poetry, in philosophy; but all these are broken lights of that essential thought of God which He wrought out when He made man. Some of you will remember how angry John Ruskin was with the railway train, with what vehement passion he denounced the monster that swept over the landscape and spoiled it. I plead guilty, if guilty be the word to use, to being a disciple of John Ruskin. I owe more than I can tell to his writings, but I never could follow him in that vehement denunciation of the railway train. I stand upon an eminence, and looking out over the landscape see the fields of exquisite green, or, as Ruskin says, the ploughed field which sweeps up the hillside in folds of russet velvet; and as I look a railway train comes thundering across the country. Then I am always inclined to worship the man that made the train, because of the ingenuity that is revealed in it, the wonderful and determined mastership of nature that laughs at mileage and acres, and moves swiftly to its destination. I see in the train, not the smoke, that is a process and will be consumed presently, but rather the power of humanity manifesting itself. Everything that has come from the thinking and planning and working of man is the result of the creation of God. Man is God's thought, and God's creation, and in himself is infinitely more than all his work. Humanity is the creation of God, the crowning creation, the last fact in the wonderful process of creative power. Every human being stands upon that final eminence, and the greatness of man is but evidence of the greatness of God. Man is of Divine creation.

Man is not only of Divine creation in that broadest sense. Every man is a Divine creation. There is an old saying which is used about some outstanding man. I have heard it used on this side of the Atlantic of Oliver Cromwell, and on the other side of Abraham Lincoln. God made Oliver Cromwell and broke the mold; God made Abraham Lincoln and broke the mold. I have no quarrel with the statement. I have a perpetual quarrel with the suggestion. What is the suggestion? That God occasionally makes some remarkable man and breaks the mold, that there may be no repetition.

He breaks the mold after He has made every man! Every man is a lonely individuality, a special thought of God, incarnate. When Jesus stood before Pilate, and Pilate challenged Him as to Kingship and as to truth, Christ said, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." It was a great declaration of conscious individuality, potentiality, responsibility. Every man can say the same in some measure. The trouble is we do not all find out for what we were born and for what purpose we came into the world. In the great economy of God, in the wondrous, matchless marvel of His government it is true of every human being, "whom I have created for My glory."

But it is not only that man is Divine creation; according to the teaching of this book He is a Divine expression, made in the image of God. Perfect personality can only be postulated of God Himself, and that personality is limited in man. Whatever you think of personality, you are thinking finally of the infinite, eternal personality in God. Force, mind, heart, will. Are these elements that constitute personality in man? They are all shadows of the things that constitute the personality of Deity. Man is distinct from all lower creation in this, and herein lies his dignity, that in some way, which perhaps he never perfectly understands, he is kin of God; in His image, made with His likeness, an outworking into visibility of the essential facts concerning God Himself.

Because of these things man is the one link between the material and the spiritual. He is the point in which all lower forms of life touch the highest and become familiar with it. He is the point at which all the highest forms of existence touch the lower, and make them flash and flame with beauty. I pass over all this world and I see everywhere life in creation, but it never becomes spiritual until I see it in man. There is never recognition of the infinite and the eternal until I come to man. I think there is profound significance in the discovery of the opening declarations of John's gospel, where the mystic writer says of the incarnation of the Word, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." You cannot say that of anything lower in the scale of creation. You can say "In him was life" of every blade of grass, of every daisy that decks the sod, of every bird that poises in air its wing, and sings the song of seraphim; but you cannot say "the life was light" until you come to man. All else was created by God; but when creation reached man man turned round and looked into the face of God and knew Him. Light flamed with the coming of man. In him the lower orders of creation reach light, and finality. In man earth has traffic with heaven. In man heaven stoops down to earth and makes it beautiful. This is true of every man. Created by God. An expression of God. A link between the material and the spiritual worlds.

Now pass to the second of these thoughts. For what is such a being made? I have created him, said Jehovah by the mouth of Isaiah, for My glory. Here my difficulty begins. I know this is the ancient phraseology of the Church. We are all familiar with it, but how shall we say it so that the declaration may startle us into attention and change the whole order and current of our lives? It ought so to do, and will so do, if we can but hear it as we ought to hear it. Allow me a moment or two with the background of negation. What is the purpose of human life? There is the day of birth, and out there somewhere is the day of death, and these are but human terms, the full meaning of which none of us fully understands. The beginning and the end. What is the real meaning of the interim, of all that which lies between the wail of birth, and the darkness of death? What is the real meaning of human life, its true purpose? I will mention some things to you. The amassing of wealth, the acquisition of knowledge, the pursuit of pleasure. I mention these things only to dismiss them. You have already dismissed them. The deepest in you has said at once, No, it cannot be

that a man Divinely created, himself an expression of Deity, a link between the material and the spiritual worlds, has as the purpose of his existence such things as these. Let them be dismissed. I will not stay to argue them for a moment.

Once again. Think of the day of birth. Think of the day of death. Tell me what is the purpose of the life that lies between? Is it the salvation of the soul? Certainly not. That is but the initial activity enabling a man to fulfil the purpose of his being. Is it then sympathy with sorrow? Assuredly not. The day will come—it seems slow in coming but it will come—when God shall wipe away all tears from men's eyes, and sorrow—listen, this is not my imagination, this is inspiration—"sorrow and sighing shall flee away," like black plumaged birds, never to return. Then is the purpose of life the service of humanity? No, that does not touch the deepest. That may be a method by which man today will fulfil the purpose of his being, but there is a profounder answer.

What, then, is the real meaning of this strange, complex, and marvelous life of mine; creation of God, expression of God, in itself a link between dust and Deity, between the material and the spiritual? I go back to the ancient prophecy. "Whom I have created for My glory." Allow me to illuminate that declaration by the revelation of the Bible generally, without referring to any particular passage. Man is created first for the knowledge of God. Man is created secondly for communion with God. Man is created thirdly for action with God. Man is created finally for revelation of God.

Man is created first for knowledge of God. There is given to man a consciousness of God which no other being has. The light of the uncreated beam is focussed in the lens of a human spirit. Zophar, in the olden days, said, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" and the answer intended, and the accurate answer, is, By no means. Yet man can know God, although he cannot know Him absolutely and perfectly, just as a man cannot encompass in his thinking eternity. Although eternity as a thought baffles the proud intellect of man, a man can know it. The moment in which a man knows the limitlessness of space he knows that he cannot know it; but in knowing that he cannot know it if he knows it. The moment a man encompasses in his mind the thought of unending duration he knows he cannot know all the meaning of it; but knowing that he cannot know it is to be sure of it, and so to know it. No dog thinks of eternity. No lower form of life thinks of unending space. No other created being can know God, but man is made to know Him. This is the first way in which man glorifies God, by coming to know Him. To this bear witness the words of Jesus Himself, so full of meaning. "This is age-abiding life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send."

Man is made not merely for the knowledge of God but also for fellowship with God, communion with God. In every man there is a desire, and capacity to listen to the voice of God. In every human being there is the possibility of sympathy in thought and feeling with God. It is sadly lacking in all of us, even in the best; yet there is no man or woman in London but is capable of communion with God; no man or woman but that can desire and cry out after the living God. Where that listening and that crying out and that desire are instructed and directed and obeyed, then God is to be found and known, and communed with. If my assertion is not enough, then in this sanctuary tonight there are hundreds of witnesses who still hear the voice saying amid the city's din and bustle, "This is the way, walk ye in it." For this communion man is made.

All of these are but preliminary and fundamental things. Not merely for knowledge of God and communion with God man is made, but also for co-operation with God. What was it in the beginning? Go, dig this garden and keep it. When the first man began his delving and his digging, his watching and his cultivation, until there came first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; first the sapling, then the tree, then the verdure garments, and then the fruit, what was he doing? Working with God. He was partner with God. When the last man delved in your garden, and put in those russet bulbs that had no form or comeliness that you should desire them, and waited and watched until the spring time came and kissed the ground, and out of the russet bulb came the glorious flower, that man worked with God. Cooperation with God is the law of human life, and for that man was created.

I come from Eden and look at the second man, the last Adam.

The whole story of how He glorified God is told in His own words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Cooperation with God in His case was Redemption and Renewal; gathering the thorns out of the garden and bathing them in His blood that the curse might be removed. It is a metaphor, a figure of speech, but the infinite fact behind is far finer than the figure can ever suggest. The Church in so far as she fulfils the Divine ideal, to use the apostle's words of all its members, is composed of "workers together with God." To-day saintly men and women are in co-operation with God, and presently in those dim and purple distances of the ages to come the ransomed will co-operate with God, for through the Church the kindness of God is to be manifest, and to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is to be made known by them the wisdom of God.

So that man finally fulfils the purpose of his being by such activity with God as results in the revelation of God. Angels desire to look into these things; they bend over, peer into, watch with intense interest the whole process and progress of man. Why? Because, according to that great Pauline teaching, the angels are learning God through His manifestation in humanity as they cannot learn Him anywhere else. Man reveals to man the truth of God, as in the Fatherhood of God he realizes the brotherhood of man. Devils are learning through human history God's righteousness and God's power, and the ultimate doom of evil. For co-operation with God man is made.

Thus man fulfils the purpose of his being. Every man who is living for any lower thing than to glorify God is prostituting God-given powers. It is an ugly word. It is a word that is hardly used in polite society. Yet I pray you remember there is a prostitution as vile as the sin we shudder at; which yet, alas, man seldom trembles at the thought of. It is the prostitution of human life to anything lower than the glory of God. Do I take these hours, these days; these powers, this thought, this mind, this spirit, and use them for any other purpose ultimately than to glorify God? That is prostitution.

Sin is just that, wilful, chosen failure to seek the glory of God. That was the meaning of the word of Jesus when He said concerning Nicodemus, and through him concerning every man, "Ye must be born anew." That was the meaning of Paul when he wrote, "Ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

Now I have done; and you will begin. In the light of this consideration, what about our life? God requireth that which is past. Where is it? What of the years that have gone? Yonder the day of

birth, I can name it, and date it, and fix it. Somewhere is the day of dissolution. I cannot name it. I cannot date it. I cannot fix it. All these years since then till now have gone. What have I done with them? No such question can be asked, and honestly answered without our having to confess, "We have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Yet it is to those who have so sinned, and so come short of the glory of God that He sent His Son. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Here tonight in actual and spiritual presence is that selfsame Saviour. One of the words of my text is the word "formed," the word which I reminded you indicates the activity of the potter. Take that word and let me finish with it. Take that word as I find it in this same Bible. The vessel that the potter formed is marred, spoiled, ruined in the hand of the potter, but He will make it again another vessel.

See how you have failed. See how you have groveled in the dust. See how when the golden crown was held over your head, like the man with the muckrake you sought the satisfaction of the glitter of a straw. Behind you are the years the cankerworm hath eaten. The promise is that "He will restore the years that the cankerworm hath eaten." The promise is that "He will make it again another vessel." All He asks is that you will understand another great declaration of this chapter, "I am Jehovah; and beside Me there is no Saviour." Let us come to Him as a Saviour and we shall find Him full of pity, full of power. The past may be forgiven and we may yet live to His glory.

Isaiah 46:13. Salvation In Zion.

Isaiah 46:13.

Salvation In Zion.

I will place salvation in Zion.

Isaiah 46:13

The forty-sixth and forty-seventh chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah constitute a complete message in themselves. The forty-sixth has to do with God's determination to destroy Babylon; the forty-seventh describes that destruction.

The reading of the forty-sixth chapter brings before the mind a condition of affairs that might almost be described as chaotic.

The city of God was in ruins; the people of God were scattered; the nation, peculiar to God for the fulfilment of His purpose in the world, was represented by the feeblest remnant. The chosen people of God are seen by the prophet, under the dominion of Babylon. Then the mind of Isaiah, illumined by the Spirit, sees a Deliverer—how far or how near perhaps he himself could not have told—and in the wake of that Deliverer Babylon destroyed, and the people of God restored to the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. In delivering this message, the prophet instituted a contrast between Babylon and Zion; between the city of God and the city of men; between all that man is able to do without God, and all that God is able to do in spite of man. It is a contrast between idols and God; a contrast between the gods of Babylon, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth," and the God of the chosen people, Jehovah. The contrast may be crystallized in two very brief declarations; idols are created and carried; Jehovah creates and carries. That is forevermore the difference between false and true religion, the difference between all idolatry and the worship of God, the difference between Babylon and Zion, between good and evil, between right and wrong. So that the contrast in this chapter, being peculiarly a contrast between religions, the conception of the prophet most evidently is, that what a nation is, depends upon the religion of the nation. Babylon has worshipped idols. Zion is the center of the worship of Jehovah. Idol worship means that men make idols and then have to carry them. They make them, carry them, and put them down; and they stay where they are placed, they cannot move. Their makers cry to them, but they cannot answer. When they move, it is because they are carried. In contrast, God creates, and whatever He creates He carries. Babylon makes an idol, and puts it down. It never moves. Jehovah makes a man, and carries the man; and if the man have vision and wisdom he worships Jehovah.

Of idolatrous Babylon, Isaiah saw the destruction. It was the vision of faith. Had we been there, with any other than the prophetic outlook, listening to any other voice than the voice of faith perpetually singing its song in the heart, we should have said that idolatry was strong and true religion weak. Behold Babylon, mighty Babylon; wealthy, equal to the conquest of the world;

Babylon with its splendour and its pride! Behold Zion in ruins; her sons languishing, all her wealth gone, her power departed! But faith sees neither Babylon nor Zion pre-eminently; but the idols and Jehovah. Faith knows that the conflict is not between Babylon and Zion, but between idols and Jehovah. Faith foretells the downfall of Babylon, and does so in an age when no one will believe the message save those who live by faith, and by faith see Him Who is invisible, and so are able to sing the song of ultimate triumph long ere the crash of battle commence.

The last word in the great movement which declares that Jehovah is determined upon the destruction of Babylon is the word of my text, "I will place salvation in Zion."

There are three lines of thought suggested for our consideration in this text. The great ideal is first suggested; salvation in Zion. Then the fact of failure is recognized; Zion without salvation. Finally, the prophetic word of promise declares that Zion shall be restored to the fulfilment of ideal, "I will place salvation in Zion."

The great ideal; "Salvation in Zion." For the interpretation of this phrase, the fulness and finality of the whole Bible is needed. Two antagonistic principles are discovered in the history of humanity as revealed in the Scriptures of truth. Whereas in our study of the Bible, we discover remarkable differences as between the old economy and the new, there are great underlying, unifying principles running from Genesis to Revelation. I am not going to deal at length with that principle of antagonism to faith which is represented by Babylon, but will state it in a few brief sentences. Babylon is first manifest as a confederacy without God in the history of Babel. From that moment throughout the whole of the Scriptures, whether Babylon be an actual city with an actual king, or whether the actual has passed and the principle of Babylon which is human confederacy without God alone remains, Babylon is against Zion. In the final book of the Bible, among the visions of the Seer of Patmos, we see at last the Lamb enthroned on Zion's hill, and immediately there follows the song of the multitudes "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

Let us now restrict our examination to the other principle, and taking out of our text the two words "Zion" and "Salvation" attempt to see what they suggest.

When we read the Old Testament, the word Zion seems to thrill to the tireless music of a psalm. Zion is the synonym for everything of which the Hebrew thought with pride, with satisfaction, with gladness, and with rejoicing. What does Zion mean? That is a question that has not often been asked. We are so familiar with all that Zion stands for symbolically that we have been slow to inquire into the real meaning of the word. It means desert. That in itself is a suggestive fact. We find the first historic reference to Zion in the Book of Samuel, when after all Israel had made David king at Hebron, he captured Zion from the Jebusites. This Zion was a rocky fastness, devoid of verdure, in the center of verdant and glorious hills, so that presently men will say "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear Him;" but itself was desert. A city had been built upon it long ere David captured it, and being a rocky fastness it was considered impregnable. When the Hebrews sang of Zion they never thought of the desert. The Hebrews associated with the name great essential values, and principles, and aspirations.

With the degeneration of the instrument through which God intended testimony concerning Himself to be borne to the world, the conception of Zion itself degenerated also, and men thought of it only from the civic standpoint, the national standpoint, the patriotic standpoint. These are all

secondary things. A devout Hebrew who knew the secret mystery of his own life, and who lived in true consciousness of his relationship to Jehovah, sang of Zion and thought of Zion, as the place of Divine founding; the place of Divine dwelling; the place of Divine revealing. Zion for the Hebrew was the synonym of the Divine presence, the Divine government, the Divine unveiling; and the thought that came to the heart of the Hebrew when turning from those central verities to consider his own relationship to Zion was always the thought of the other word in my text, salvation.

Let us then inquire the meaning of this great word. The particular word, here translated "salvation," is somewhat rare in the Old Testament. The root significance is that of freedom. The idea here is that of safety based upon freedom. Zion was the home of the free; because it was the dwelling place of God, it was the place where bondage could not continue. Zion, the place of Divine dwelling and Divine revealing and Divine government, was the place of human security, and human realization, and human happiness. The captive exiles sang of Zion, and sighed for Zion, because Zion was the dwelling place of the great King, and consequently the place of the perfect Kingdom. Zion and salvation to the thinking of the Hebrew were always closely associated.

I turn from these Old Testament Scriptures to those of the New. Zion is first mentioned in Matthew, and finally in Revelation. In Matthew, it is mentioned by the citation of Hebrew prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, Meek, and riding upon an ass, And upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The word occurs again in John's record of the same event; so that in the gospel stories, the thought of Zion is maintained in relation to the King Who came to establish the Divine order and bring in the Kingdom of God. When Paul was writing his great letter to the Romans he also quoted from the ancient prophecy and showed that the spiritual ideal was to be fulfilled in the Christian Church. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, writing to the Hebrew Christians, tells them "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." When Peter was writing to those of the dispersion in Bithynia and elsewhere, he told them that God had already laid in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and that the preciousness of the cornerstone is made over to all such as believe in Him; and so the spiritual house is being built, the spiritual city is being constructed; the principles of the Divine government are being established in the world. We come at last to the Book of Revelation, and in chapter fourteen, we read these words, "I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His name, and the name of His Father, written on their foreheads." That is the ultimate fulfilment of the Hebrew purpose and ideal; and closely associated with it is the declaration "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

What then is the ideal suggested by this text? Let the local colouring fade. Let the immediate application of the ancient prophecy be forgotten, and the economy of God concerning Israel be out of sight. The principle revealed as a great ideal is that of the establishment of the Divine order in the world; Zion instead of Babylon. Babylon, the city and the life of godlessness. Zion the city and the life of godliness. All the prophetic writers and all the prophetic singers in the Old and New saw the ultimate victory, the victory of Zion over Babylon, of Jehovah over idols, of that religion which consists in worship of the One Who creates and carries, over that religion which consists in the creating of idols which men have to carry, and carry until overburdened by their weight they stoop

to dust and destruction.

The startling recognition of the text is that it infers disassociation between Zion and salvation. It reveals the fact that there may be Zion without salvation. It suggests that the city may remain ostensibly the city of God, and yet not be a city of salvation. Is not that the story of all the trouble with which the prophets had to deal? Was not that the actual, local condition of affairs in the midst of which Isaiah and all those great Hebrew prophets exercised their ministry? Zion without salvation; the city of God, without God; the place of the Divine revelation, but no revelation; the center from which the law is to proceed for the benefit of the world, but no law proceeding from the center, the temple of worship with all its rites and ceremonies, but no worship; or in the words of the New Testament, form without power. That is the tragic side of the picture presented; the purpose of God, thwarted, prevented, hindered, unrealized. Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King, the place to which captive eyes look with longing, the place to which the remnant of captives did return; but Zion without salvation, Zion, mark it well, under the yoke of Babylon, Zion mastered by forces which were antagonistic to Zion. That is the appalling picture. That is the condition of affairs in the midst of which the prophet exercised his ministry.

That is the perpetual peril of Zion, of the people of God, of those who name His name, bear His sign, profess His doctrines, claim to be His peculiar people; Zion without salvation, Zion under the yoke of Babylon; Zion, that ought to be against Babylon, preventing its victory, breaking its power; under Babylon's yoke, mastered by Babylon. That is the tragedy of the text. How comes it that Zion is mastered by Babylon? By the introduction of idols! How came the introduction of idols to Zion? By forgetfulness of God. Zion has made for herself idols, and Zion has had to carry the idols she has made, and Zion has been bent and bowed beneath the weight of her own idols. That was a subtle form of idolatry when Israel made the golden calf. What was the golden calf? Read the story carefully and you will find it was a representation of God, for when they made the golden calf they did not ostensibly turn away from the worship of Jehovah. They worshipped God as they sang and danced around the calf. They made the calf to represent God. The golden calf was one of the ancient symbols of religion; the cherubim, the ox for service! Had you talked to the leaders who in the absence of Moses made the golden calf, they would have said, We are not turning from God, we are making something that will help us to worship God. That is idolatry on the part of the people of God. So surely as they make a likeness of God, presently they will worship the likeness and forget God. That is why God forbade the making of any likeness of Himself in order that men should worship. We are far away from the wilderness today, far away from the golden calf, far away in this assembly from image worship in any form, and yet idolatry abides in the Church of God today. The idolatry of the Church of God is seen in her mastery by Babylon, and in her weakness in every hour of stress and strain and strife. Her inability to interpret the will of God, the law of God, and to insist upon it in the world, is born of her complicity with Babylon, and that in turn results from the fact that she has put between herself and God rites, or ceremonies, or priests, or preachers. By such creation of false intermediation as between the soul and God, Zion bends to idolatry; and when Zion bends to idolatry, Babylon with her wealth and her pollution and her godless strength places upon the neck of Zion a yoke, and Zion has lost her power and lost her testimony.

There can be nothing more tragic than Zion without salvation, than the Church of God without the dynamic that makes men free, without the authority that interprets morality in the terms of the eternal, without the voice to which the world is compelled to listen. Zion captured by Babylon is the tragedy of all tragedies. That is the picture of the conditions to which this man delivered his message.

Now finally, hear the word of Jehovah, "I will place salvation in Zion." The ultimate victory of Zion will not be Zion's victory, but Jehovah's victory. Zion will come again to the place of power and testimony and witness through restoration, but the restoration will be wrought by God, "I will bring my righteousness near." Zion had her responsibility and it is clearly indicated. It consists first in a recognition of the difference between the idols and God. Remember that when you make your idol, you must carry your idol, and it becomes your burden. Remember, God made you and still carries you. Break down your idol and cease its worship, and worship the God Who makes and the God Who carries. Refuse to bend the knee to any other than God. Bend the knee to God, make His will supreme, His government the one and only law. Let the Church of God have done with the worship of the golden calf. Let the Church of God have done with her worship of her own rites and ceremonies. Let the Church of God have done admiring her own magnificent organizations. Let the Church embody the principles of Zion, and faith, and return to Jehovah, make His will supreme in all the affairs of her own service, and in all the affairs of the lives of her own people; let her remember and let her return, and then "I will place salvation in Zion." He will make the Church a city of free men, for bondage to God is freedom from all other bondage. The neck bent to His yoke is the most erect in the presence of every other form of tyranny. The man wholly submitted to Jehovah is the man who is master of lust and passion and the alluring forces of the world which only win a man, for his destruction. It is the bondsman of God who is the free man in the world. That is the whole principle of Zion in a sentence.

From this consideration, we gather this application and these lessons. Anything in place of God, or anything that puts God at a distance, is idolatry. When we put something between the soul and God we at once become burden bearers. If our religion is something as between ourselves and God, though our creed be perfectly orthodox as to God, then are we idolaters.

How shall we know? We shall know by our relation to our religion. Let me put a question with all practical force. Are you carrying your religion, or does your religion carry you? That is the test question. There are men and women in this house tonight who are carried by God. They read the great word I read in your hearing, and they understand it, they know it. It is not poetry to them. It is poetry, but it is infinitely more, "I will bear; yea, I will carry." There are men here who, presently, will pass away from the sanctuary, the day's worship done they will take a night's rest, and tomorrow morning will settle back again into the work of the shop, the office, the hospital, and all the way will feel the lift and lilt of their religion. Those are the men who belong to Zion.

There are other men who lay their religion aside when the service is over, they have carried it, it is an observance. They come to the sanctuary because they ought to come once a week at least. It may be that in the morning hour, they will bend the knee in prayer, and also at night; but they are carrying their religion. It is something added on to their life, a department of their life which they lock safe up when they get to business and pleasure. It is a weariness to them, a burden. If they dared they would be rid of it. Then, even though they sing the song in this house, and attend

reverently to the preaching, and never take the name of God in vain, they are idolaters, they belong to Babylon and not to Zion. The test of religion is whether you carry it or it carries you; whether it is a weariness and a burden, something that after all if you only dared you would fling overboard; or whether it is the inspiration, the joy, the strength of life. Idolatry is the making of an idol which you can put down in any given place—and you will find it there when you come back. It will not move. There is a good deal of that in the Christian Church. You go away today, you will find your religion here next Sunday; it will not move, but you will be away from it for a week. That is idolatry. True religion is the worship of God, which means that in the busy street, in the midst of perplexing questions in the office and the profession, and amid the thousand and one duties of the home, it carries you, and the song of His praise escapes your lips, and the gladness of His presence is in your heart. That is true religion.

There is Zion. There is Babylon. Oh soul of mine, art thou an idolater, or art thou godly? Dost thou belong to Zion, or dost thou belong to Babylon?

Leaving the thought of the individual, or multiplying it into the corporate whole, is this church Zion without salvation; or is salvation here? Are we a company of God's free men and free women and therefore able to pass the word of freedom to the slave, and able to help to snap his chains; or are we enswathed and hindered by the very chains of our religious observances?

How fine are the distinctions of God, and how searching the figures of Holy Scripture. Just where we thought we were safe from observation, He flashes upon us the light that shows that all the things in which we put our trust are false. Zion; the house is there, the name is there, the songs are there, the sacrifices are there, the priests are there! But is salvation there? A man crosses the threshold, is he likely to be helped? Is he likely to touch the unseen, the eternal? If not—listen to me, my brethren—if not, Zion is a more terrible menace than Babylon. Babylon stands aloof and we know where we are. But if Zion is under the influence of Babylon then what can the world do? Let us see to it, I repeat, that Zion is the hill of God, that her citizens are men and women of faith, and then from her goes forth His law which is life and liberty.

My last word ought to be, and shall be a personal one. Go back to the vision of the Lamb upon Mount Zion with Babylon tottering to decay. That day has not yet come, but it is good to look at it. Thank God that the victory must be won. Yet go back over it, and shutting thyself up alone with God, brother mine, sister mine, in an act of lonely dealing with God say, art thou an idolater, or art thou worshipping Jehovah? If some man shall say tonight—God grant he may—I am an idolater, I have carried my religion—then fling it overboard now, and trust in Jehovah. He will carry you, and all your life shall flame with light and thrill with power, May He so bring us to Himself.

Isaiah 45:22. Center And Circumference.

Isaiah 45:22.

Center And Circumference.

Face unto Me, and be ye set free, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:22

This is the great divine word to man, the perpetual call of love; it is therefore the Church's all-inclusive message. All the prophets, seers and psalmists of the past in varied tones and with differing emphases have uttered the same message. Upon man's answer to the message—when he has heard it—has depended his condition, his character, his destiny. "Face unto Me, and be ye set free, all the ends of the earth: for I am God." God gave the highest revelation of Himself to humanity in the incarnation, therefore these words of the ancient prophecy are supremely the words of Christ. The context of my text is quoted by the writers of the New Testament in direct application to Him. We are warranted, therefore, in dealing with this passage as finding its most powerful delivery in the Person and ministry of Jesus. It is through the fact of that ministry, not merely the ministry of nineteen centuries ago, which was straitened and limited, but the perpetual ministry of the Christ from Pentecost until now, that the Church is able to deliver this message. I think you will see what is on my own heart and mind this morning. We are facing, so far as our union as ministers and people is concerned, a new year of work. I am very much inclined to forget the things that are behind in order that we may press toward those that are before. As we face the future we are far more conscious this morning than we were three years ago of the problems, perplexities, and difficulties of our work. As we come to know the neighborhood in which we are called to serve we are sometimes almost overwhelmed. We are, moreover, conscious that there are currents of thought which three years ago were undercurrents, but now are more evident and on the surface. It is well for us, therefore, quietly to get back for a morning's meditation to first principles, to remind our hearts, together as ministers and church, of what indeed is the Church's business. I gather up my whole message as we start our new year together and express it thus. We exist for one simple and all-inclusive purpose, to say in this neighborhood, and so far as we may be able to make our voice heard and our influence felt, one thing only, and that, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." We cannot at Westminster say that as it ought to be said. By that I mean to say the message is too full, too varied, too infinite for one church to deliver it. The Word of God is symbolically referred to in that great book of dreams and visions, signs and symbols: thus, "His voice as the voice of many waters." If here we can express the music of one of the streams which mingle into the many waters, we shall thank God. Yet it is well for us to understand the full music to which our contribution is to be made. We go back, then, to this old text that we all know so well, that everyone here who has ever preached has preached about, not to discover in it something new, but to find in it the old without which the new is always useless, but in the power of which there is perpetually springtime following winter, new beauties blossoming out of the essential root. So I bring you back to first principles this morning as we face

another year's work.

Because the One Who here speaks has revealed Himself to us in Christ finally and perfectly I shall ask you to think with me first of the center, "Look unto Me," God as revealed in Christ; then of the circumference as here indicated, "All the ends of the earth"; then of the great claim as here made, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved." If one were seeking for a title for this morning's meditation, it might be described as, Center and Circumference, the Story of a Circle.

First, then, let us turn our thought to the Center. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." The ultimate revelation of God to man was made in the Christ. As I read the story of Christ in the New Testament I discover that the Man of Nazareth was but the revelation of One Who has been—and now the tenses are all at fault and there is no help for it—and must always be the Center, the age-abiding Center of the universe of God. I am not going to tarry there. The ultimate, final words were written long ago by the Apostle-Seer to whom was given to see things for all who should follow him. In those opening verses of the Gospel which bears his name, he has revealed to us the fact that the One Who came into time as Jesus was, in the deepest fact of His actual personality, "the Word." In the beginning with God, Himself God, present at and presiding over creation, sustaining all things by the word of His power, so that nothing has been made save by Him: Himself the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and so present in some sense to every human consciousness. All these things are mysteries of which there can be no final explanation. I mention them only that our hearts may be reminded of them as we proceed a little further. This Christ Whom we are called to preach is the age-abiding Center of the creation of God, the Word of God Himself.

Leaving that, I ask you to remember that Christ is the center of human history. All that preceded Him led to Him and culminated in Him. Everything since the time of His manifestation in the world has been affected by His presence here. All the highways of the past led to Him. All the highways from His coming unto this moment have proceeded from Him. He was the consummation of the old hopes and aspirations. We may think of the world on Hebrew or Gentile side, taking those old and convenient divisions with which we were familiar in our childhood, and we shall discover that everything led toward Himself. The Hebrew nation lived by hope in the coming of One: they were looking for Him; they were unable to produce Him; when He came they did not know Him as a nation. Yet as the centuries have passed since His coming we see how in His own Person He perfectly fulfilled all their expectations, and was the incarnate music which had expressed itself in their singing. All that was high and noble and ideal in their aspirations found fulfilment in the Man of Nazareth Who was at once the King with government resting upon His shoulder, and the suffering Servant bruised and broken and battered Who had been described in their ancient writings. All the lines of the strange and wonderful Hebrew history led to Him. When He came ritual was fulfilled, aspiration was realized. There came with Him the dawning of that day the gleaming glory of which the men of the past had caught glimpses of from many a mountain peak. There came the clear articulation of that truth, certain parts and emphases of which the teachers of the Hebrew nation had spoken to the people through the centuries. All that perhaps is readily granted. It is equally true that in the historic Christ there was found the consummation of all that was excellent in the Gentile world, and there had been much. We are greatly mistaken, and upon the basis of that mistake shall misinterpret history, if we imagine that God had abandoned the world outside Hebraism. There had been mighty figures in the Gentile world. Take the testimony of the

greatest of them preceding Christ; they themselves claim that they had been able to do no other than to teach men to ask questions. Socrates and Plato both practically declare in so many words that their mission was a mission of instructing men how to inquire. What were the questions they had asked? Questions concerning the immortality of man, concerning the destiny of the soul, concerning the character of the Creator. When one reads some of the writings of those Gentile thinkers one is inclined to think that God was leading them as distinctly and clearly as He was leading the Hebrew prophets in their doings and declarations, leading them to inquire. Yet remember this, they had been unable to give any answer to their questions. In some senses the world reached its greatest intellectual height before Christ came: Greek eloquence, sculpture, philosophy, poetry, we still go back to them for the standards. Yet the Greeks had not been able to answer these supreme questions. He came, a Man of Nazareth, and the very questions they had been asking were all answered. He "brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel." He, not in any long and set discourse, but by the familiar manifestation of His everyday speech, tore away the veil and revealed to men the destiny of the soul, and the nature and character of God, this last supremely. So that the idea of God which is embodied in the best thinking of the century in which we live has come absolutely as the result of His presence in the world and His teaching. He was thus not merely the One Who consummated and completed all that was excellent in the centuries before He came. He became the starting point of a new history. The old history had commenced with the creation of man. The new history commenced with the incarnation of God. By His coming new forces were introduced into human life, new aspirations were felt in the human heart. Men began to see, dimly, and yet as they had never seen before. That theme is a fascinating one. I remit it to your own thinking. I beg you often to think of it in these days. Every look of man outside the Church, I am not speaking merely of men in the Church, every look of man toward better conditions and the realization of brotherhood is the result of the light that flashed by Galilee and over the Judean valleys. Every high and noble conception of human life which we cherish, and which some men cherish who are telling us that the churches have done their work, was born with Jesus. I am not proposing to enumerate any of the things of which I am thinking. You know and are thinking of them. Every conception that is high and noble that is in the mind of man today was born with the Man of Nazareth. So I say that He stands at the center of human history. All before Him leading toward Him: all after Him coming forth from Him.

Again He stands at the center of life today. He still retains His absolute pre-eminence as the ideal man. It is to this Man of Nazareth that men turn even after they have denied some things that we of the evangelical faith teach concerning Him, and they point to Him at least as the ideal man, as the One Who has revealed in human history a type of humanity that had never been dreamed of. If I say that all men recognize that He is the ideal man, I do not mean to say that they are willing to conform to the pattern. They are not. While men stand in the presence of the sublime dignity of the manhood of Jesus they never answer or obey it save as they are brought by the power of the Spirit into the place of submission to Him first as Saviour. There He stands amid the men of His own age, a peasant, garbed in simplicity, girt as a slave, always serving. Hear me when I tell you this, that there is no thinking man in the East or West, whether East or West refer to London or the world, who does not recognize the dignity and beauty of that ideal, even though he do not obey it and is not prepared to follow it. Christ stands at the center of individual life revealing the ideal.

There is another word which is a supreme word and may be dismissed in a sentence. He stands at the center not merely revealing an ideal but communicating the dynamic. That is the burden of the preaching here perpetually, and I need not detain you to argue it this morning. That is the supreme and lonely splendor of this Christ, not that He flashes upon human life that is paralyzed an ideal—that He does; but that He touches the paralyzed life with power until it also becomes the ideal life. That is the loneliness of the Christ. The other is His loneliness also, for we refuse to put into comparison with Him any teacher the world has ever had in revelation of the possibility of human life. Yet this is the final loneliness today, that He stands amid men, with all their advancement and all their progress and all their new philosophies, and wherever a man comes to Him, from the East or West, North or South, paralyzed, helpless, beaten, broken, damned so far as a man can be in this world, this same Imperial One touches him with power to purpose, and he stands upon his feet and lives. That is why I continue to preach Him.

Then He stands at the center today of society, teaching men that there can be no regeneration of society save upon the basis of the regeneration of individuals. We are told that socialism is Christianity. That depends. So far as the men who are uttering their convictions concerning the social ideal have seen the realization of life upon the plane where war of every kind shall cease, that is Christianity: but so far as they are attempting to realize their dream while men are still in themselves evil and sinning, that is not Christianity. Jesus Christ confronts the individual man and says with passion and tenderness, "Ye must be born anew." I will give you life.

He stands at the center of the nations. They are not looking at Him, but He stands there. He has given to the world all truth concerning government. He has revealed to the world the fact that humanity can finally live out its perfect life only under an absolute monarch. He has also revealed to the world that there is only one absolute monarch, and that is God. He is calling men everywhere—mark the emphasis of the familiar word—to "seek—first the Kingdom of God." God is the absolute monarch He came to preach. In one brief sentence He flashed upon the world the whole conception of the true constitution of a nation, "One is your teacher, and all ye are brethren.... One is your Master, even the Christ." I do not know how you feel, but I am startled anew by the comprehensiveness of that word of Christ, by its profound philosophy. I am startled by the fact of how far the world is from understanding it.

What is He saying? "Look unto Me." I quoted the text in other words, attempting to convey the real force of the Hebrew, for this word, "Look," is not the word that is most commonly translated so; it is a word that literally means "face," "Face unto Me," that is the call. Mark if you will in the simplest way what this word is, and what it is in regard to the Christ. If only we were simple enough and I dare have a blackboard in this pulpit! Imagine it for a moment, and that upon it you have a diagram of a circle. You take a point which is the center, mark the sweep of your circle. At the center write the word "Me"; around it write "the ends of the earth." Look for a moment or two at that circle, and let me say some of the simplest things that you have nearly forgotten, though you learned them once. Look at the circle for a moment. You cannot draw a straight line from the center but it touches the circumference. There is no point in any circumference from which you cannot draw a straight line to the center. If you attempt to draw a straight line from the circumference which does not touch the center it touches the circumference again, getting back to its own dead level, and continues on into the distance never touching the center. That you may see it more clearly, with your eye fixed on the diagram, look at the center; we have drawn a circumference. You cannot put

your pencil or chalk anywhere outside the center but that you touch a circumference. You can sweep a circumference anywhere outside the superficial area exposed to your view. I like Isaiah's "the ends of the earth." At the center God revealed in Christ, for we may add to Isaiah's vision the revelation of the New Testament. What then? All the straight lines from that center touch the circumference, the myriad circumferences that sweep around the center. I do not think that the psalmist was thinking of circles and circumferences, yet he was in the midst of the same philosophy when he exclaimed, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them." All the lines and forces of God are out toward His humanity. You are in a circumference which is related to that center, nor can you escape therefrom. Round the center there sweep myriad circumferences, and there is not one who can escape. We are all in His purpose. We are all in the provision of His infinite grace, in some sense related to Him by purpose. It is possible that I am not experimentally related to Him, that I am not receiving the light He came to give, or the life He came to bestow, that I am not responsive to the love that is in His heart: but I cannot escape Him. If you will let me put that for one minute in another way, not for the sake of the multitude of Christian people, but for the sake of the one man who has drifted in here and does not know Christ as Saviour, there is a straight line from where you are to the heart of God; you have no journey to take, you are in relation to Him already in His economy and purpose: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

Follow me now as we come to that last great word, the claim: "Face unto Me." What is the thought conveyed in that call? That what is the matter with man, whether you use the term individually or generically, is that his face is not toward God. That is the trouble with human life individually. That is the trouble with human life socially. That is at the root of the agony of international dispute and war and armament. It is but a dream we are allowed to dream, we cannot hurry the processes of God; the consummation is not yet, but it will be. How will it come? All the nations of the earth are to face to God. That is the end. I am at the circumference of which He is the center. Sweeping lines round about that central personality in the universe include me, pass through my life. The cry that comes from the center, transcendent, immanent—I do not care for these words—the cry that comes from the center, from the center of this life and light, is this, "Face unto Me." God has never turned His back upon humanity. With that statement perfectly agrees the language of the apostolic writers. They never asked or suggested that God should become reconciled to man. It is always that man should be reconciled to God. It is the same great figure as Isaiah's. We speak of reconciliation as though God had turned His back on man and that man had turned his back on God. It is not so. Man has turned His back upon God. God has never turned His back upon man. Because He has never turned His back upon men—oh, I know the humanness of it and the incompleteness, and the difficulty of the figure, yet hear it—the face of the Father is still looking toward the far country where the prodigal has gone; the cry of the Father, "Face unto Me, and be ye saved," indicates the only way of salvation for a man, for society, for a nation. For a man, "Face unto Me."

There is life for a look at the Crucified One.

We do not all like that hymn. Some speak of it as being unworthy of the singing of a great congregation, but that is because their understanding of it has been so feeble. There is the profoundest philosophy in it for me.

There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee,
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him Who was nailed to the Tree.

You say it was borrowed from the old story of the brazen serpent. Certainly, but what is the story of the brazen serpent? It is the story of people who had broken God's law and turned their backs upon Him, beaten, suffering, turning back to the brazen serpent because that was the symbol of His authority. The great truth is that they turned back to God. That is human salvation. "Look unto Me." Oh, the comfort of it this morning. It is the voice of thunder that comes to us out of the infinite space. It is the voice of Galilee. I hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That voice was so simple and winsome that His mother loved it in babyhood and loved the music of it in manhood. It was so gentle that the men and women who came into contact with Him never trembled at the thunder. Yet behind it there was the infinite majesty and mystery of the calling of God to man, "Face unto Me." Man, you can do it where you are. You can do it without an inquiry room. You can do it without any sacramentarian interference on the part of priest or preacher. "Face to Me." That is His call.

That is His call to society. That is His call in the presence of all the problems that vex us. I am not expressing any opinion now as to the question at issue, but this Christian congregation this morning believes with all its heart that if directors and men would face to Him there would be no railway strike. "Face to Me" is the great cry. Remember that in this same great chapter of Isaiah a little way before our text these words occur, "Declare ye, and bring it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath shewed this from ancient time? Who hath declared it of old? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God beside Me; a just God and a Saviour." If you are going to take away from Christ the fact that He is a Saviour, then you are going to take away that in which when men look they find life. If you take that away you cannot reconstruct society. "Look unto Me." Not merely the ideal, the social reformer, but a Saviour and a just God.

That is His word to the nations. We are looking in other directions. We are still looking to armaments and to policies. Oh that we might be delivered from them and look unto Him. What then?

"Be ye saved." I do not want us to drop that word saved but to understand it. "Be set free." The facing of man, the turning of man to God is the liberation of man from all the things that bind him. It is not license. Man is not let loose upon the universe uncontrolled. That would be but to work ruin and havoc everywhere. He is brought back into true relation to the center of the universe. His life then indeed becomes in tune with the infinite in the deep and true sense of that word. He has found His way back to the path from which he had wandered. He is set free from all the things that spoil by being bound to the central throne of righteousness and judgment. "Be ye set free." Yes, saved, set free. This is what we need in our sociology. You may hold your meetings and discuss plans and pass resolutions, divide up and get angry and quarrel, but it is only as you can set men there that you can bind them together. It is only as men are bound to the throne of God that they are bound to each other. It is only as men are set free from lust and passion and selfishness that they can be bound together in a great society, a great brotherhood. "Saved"! It is not a narrow

word. It is not the peculiar property of the Salvation Army. Let no one go away imagining I am saying a critical thing of the Salvation Army. I wish I could have had you all with me at the Albert Hall recently as I sat and rested my soul and thanked God for the Salvation Army. It is not, however, their peculiar word. It is their word, blessed be God that it is. But it is our word also to this district of the West so far as we can touch it, and to the East so far as we are responsible for it. Being saved means being set free from all the things that spoil the soul. There is only one way: "Face unto Me," says God. Let me use my geometrical figure once more and I have done. If my memory serves me right it was in the third book of Euclid that we learned that concentric circles are such as have a common center. If that be true, then the ends of the earth—and what does that mean? The Hebrew word means cessation, the point where it leaves off. What is beyond it? I know not. I am at the ends of the earth. The circles are still sweeping round and round, what? The same throne, the same center, concentric circles having the same center, the same throne, the same God, the same Saviour. I leave you to make your application. Take the lines which in imagination I drew upon that first circle a little while ago. You remember that a line that proceeded from the center to the circumference of your first circle can be carried out and it touches all the rest. The line that commences at the circumference but was not drawn toward the center goes into ever increasing distance from the center. From all these simple things learn this at least, that if I am in right relation to the center here, so am I, so shall I be, through all the ages of which I do not know the mystery. It is when a man finds himself in right relation to the center there that he laughs at death with the laughter of holy victory, and recognizes that passing is but transition from limitation to larger life. Do not let us be at all anxious to prepare for dying, but very anxious to prepare for living. Am I ready for heaven? Yes, if I am ready for London. Am I ready for eternity? Yes, if I am fit for time. If my face is toward the center here,

Then let the unknown morrow bring with it what it may,

It can bring with it nothing but He will bear me through.

That applies not merely to changing seasons and years of quickly passing life, but to the up-heaped ages that baffle my thinking and yet rejoice my heart, the "for ever" more of which I am a part.

Isaiah 52:11. Clean, For Service.

Isaiah 52:11.

Clean, For Service.

Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord.

Isaiah 52:11

These words reveal a philosophy of service for the people of God. They define the responsibility which constantly rests on those who bear His name, that responsibility being indicated in the words, "ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." Moreover, they declare the conditions on which this responsibility may be fulfilled, that, namely, of cleanness in the full sense of that great word.

Bible history reveals the long conflict between two opposing principles, represented by two words, Babylon and Israel; the one standing always for self-centered life, and the other for life which is God-centered.

It is not for us to stay now to trace with any minuteness of examination the conflict between these two principles as it is revealed in the Scriptures of Truth. We may, however, call to mind the landmarks in the case of each. Babel, Babylon, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots. These words serve as indices, and cover the whole movement in the Bible. Over against them we may think of the landmarks on the other side, Abraham, Israel, and Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God for the establishment of the Divine order in the world.

In the first case we trace a movement, based on rebellion against God's government, and issuing at last in uttermost confusion as the great word of the Apocalypse indicates, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." On the other hand, we trace a movement based on loyalty to God's government and issuing at last in eternal steadfastness. The realization of the Divine order among the sons of men is indicated in that word of the Apocalypse, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples."

Ever and anon in the history of the people of God as recorded in the Scriptures, they are seen yielding to the spirit of Babel, and always as a consequence sharing its confusion. The picture of Jehovah presented, when one takes this outline view, is that of One Who broods over His people, and forevermore attempts to woo them back toward Himself, and He does that because by their complicity with the spirit of Babylon they injure themselves, and, infinitely worse, because by their complicity with the spirit of Babylon they injure the nations round about them.

In this prophecy of Isaiah, and especially in this part from which our text is taken, we find ourselves in the midst of this conflict, where the two principles are clearly evident. As a matter of fact, at this time Israel, as viewed by the prophet, was in actual captivity in Babylon. Yet there was evident among them a Divine movement toward return to loyalty to God, and consequently toward establishment in their own land. It is impossible to understand this text without recognizing that it

forms part of a greater whole. At the fifty-first chapter we have the commencement of the prophet's appeal, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord." There were among the people of God those who were following righteousness, who passionately desired it, and were seeking the Lord. As we read on we find that the people were aroused as the result of the prophet's appeal, and they lifted a cry to God in these words, "Awake, awake, put on Thy strength, O arm of the Lord." Then we come to the answer of God to the cry of the people. It is found in the opening words of the chapter I read to you, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion."

The people of God were captive in Babylon. I pray you notice carefully the suggestiveness of it. The people who stood for loyalty to God, and ought to have borne that testimony to the world, were slaves in Babylon, which represented antagonism to the government of God. Yet amongst them in slavery were those in whom was the consciousness of all they were failing to do, and the sigh after something nobler expressed itself in that prayer to God, "Awake, awake, put on Thy strength, O arm of the Lord." To them the answer of God, if I may reverently put it into other words, was this, Why do you cry to me to awake? I am awake. I am not asleep. It is for you to awake and put on strength, and put on your beautiful garments.

Then follows the strange movement which chapter fifty-two describes. The prophet's vision is a remarkable one. He sees the people in their captivity, and he sees messengers crossing the mountains between Jerusalem and Babylon, and the burden of the cry of the messengers to the people in captivity is this, "Thy God reigneth."

It had seemed to these captive people as though God had resigned the throne of government, and they had said, "Put on Thy strength." His answer is, It is for you to put on strength, and the watchman on the heights, and the messengers that traversed the roads between Jerusalem and Babylon cried to the captives, "Thy God reigneth." That cry was answered by a great song of hope, and the people are seen preparing to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem.

At last the call came, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence." The captives were called to leave the place of captivity and to take their way again to the city of their established government. As they were about to obey, this solemn word was uttered, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord."

They had suffered through the Babel spirit, under the influence of which they had passed. They had passed into captivity to Babylon, because they themselves had bent the neck to the spiritual conception of Babylon. Now revival was beginning in the sigh after God and the proclamation of His continued reign; and they were turning back again to the place of blessing. On the eve of departure the solemn warning was uttered, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord."

Such is the background. In the foreground is this clear enunciation of abiding principle. Those who bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean. Let us then quietly and solemnly consider the two thoughts already indicated; first, the responsibility of the people of God; and second, the condition on which they are able to fulfil that responsibility. That responsibility is suggested in the words, "Ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." The condition on which it is possible to fulfil that responsibility is indicated in the command, "Be ye clean."

This principle of responsibility is enforced from the beginning of Bible history, and has been enforced over and over again by the prophets and interpreters of the ages, and yet, as Christian men and women and as a Christian Church, it is a principle we are always in danger of forgetting. The principle is that the people of God exist, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the peoples who are not the people of God.

God's people are ever intended to be channels of communication, through whom He may reach others in blessing. Bible history does not exhaust the possible illustrations, but I am content to confine myself within this limitation. The keyword of God's communication to Abraham was this, I will bless you, and you shall be made a blessing. "I will make of thee a great nation... and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." As we watch the building up of that peculiar people—who are today scattered and peeled, but retain with singular and remarkable persistence their national loneliness, even though they no longer have a national constitution—as we watch the growth of that nation we see God's method for reaching other nations. Israel today is a people scattered and peeled over the face of the whole earth, because they forgot the meaning of their making, and failed to understand that they were created, not in order that God might have a people on whom He might lavish His love in forgetfulness of other peoples, but in order that they might become the instrument through which He would reach other peoples. An illustration of the principle outside that of the covenant people is found in this prophecy of Isaiah in the words of Jehovah concerning Cyrus, "I will gird thee, though thou hast not known Me." Trace the history of all national life through the ages and the same principle is discoverable. God makes a nation for a purpose. The moment that nation becomes self-centered, there comes disaster; He destroys the nation He has made. As the nation He makes realizes its responsibility for all the rest He maintains its strength.

The principle is most remarkably manifest in the life of the Church of God. The Church is the depository of the treasure of God for the race. The Church of God is not an institution which holds within itself treasures for its own enrichment. Said the great apostle, whose peculiar phrase, "my Gospel," referred to the Church, "I am debtor." I am in debt to men. In what did his debt consist? In that he had received the great evangel, in that he had perfect understanding of the provision of the grace of God for men, wrought out into his own experience. Not for his saving only was he saved, but in order that he might be the instrument through which God might reach other men for their saving.

To the Church is committed a threefold responsibility. She stands for the manifestation of God to the world. She exists for the reconciliation of the world to God. She has within her fellowship the living means of grace. Some of you may say that is very high-church doctrine. It is the highest of the high, because it is the New Testament doctrine of the Church. She stands first for the manifestation of God. Hear this great word of the New Testament, "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you." In other words, the Church exists to manifest God. Not through the Word alone will the world find the Father, but through the Word incarnate in the lives of people who have been obedient to it. Only through those who share His nature can His name ever be known.

We bear the vessels of the Lord. The world can find its way to the Saviour only through the Church. Do not misunderstand me, I mean through the Church's proclamation of this Evangel. If you take the widest outlook you see at once what I mean. He cannot reach the heathen people save through the contact with them of His own people. I am neither attempting to discuss the economy of God or to account for it. I declare it as a fact revealed and demonstrated by experience. The world is not waiting for salvation because God is unready to save, but because the Church is not wholly at His disposal to carry the message of salvation. Knowledge of God can come to men finally, fully, completely, only through the Church. He has committed to us the responsibility of revelation. We bear the vessels of the Lord.

The ministry of reconciliation is ours. We fulfil it by the revelation of His love, the revelation of the meaning of His atoning work, and the revelation of the power by which He remakes humanity. All these things are committed to the Church, and men can know them only through the Church.

The means of grace are committed to the Church, the inspired Word for its interpretation, the sacred activities of worship for explanation, and, infinitely more, and without the more these things are of no avail, that service of pity and of power which brings life to the dead, love to those who are lonely, and light to such as sit in darkness. All the treasures of God are deposited with the Church. I do not mean any organized ecclesiastical system, but the whole Catholic Church, made up of men and women who share the life of Christ and walk in the light He brings. We bear the vessels of the Lord.

The one message of God is that of love. God's love message is, that because He seeks the highest good of man He is the implacable foe of sin. All the vessels of the Lord under the old economy symbolized this truth, and called for the perfection of humanity. The ministry of the Church in the world is with this end in view, that the works of the devil should be destroyed, and the ideals of God realized.

To go back again to the simplest statement of the truth. The world can find God only through His people. Or let me make that statement in quite another form. The only use God has for His people in this world is that the world may find Him through them. The Church of God exists today for the bearing of the vessels of the Lord, for the revelation of the truth concerning Him, the opening to men of doors to fellowship with Him. The great deposit of the Church creates the great responsibility of the Church.

Let us hear what this text suggests to us concerning the conditions on which the Church may fulfil her responsibility. We need to hear them because a statement such as this must bring to us consciousness of our own failure. You speak to me of the indifferent city. I tell you the reason for it is the faulty Church in the indifferent city. We cannot realize our responsibility without knowing our failure. With that thought in mind let us listen to what the prophet said concerning the conditions on which the responsibility may be fulfilled. "Be ye clean." It is a very, very simple word. It is a very searching word. The word itself of which the prophet made use is suggestive. Its first intention is that of clarifying through and through. It is a word which suggests the idea, not of water, but of fire; not of something which deals with the external, but of something that searches through and through. I have been very interested in tracing through the whole of the Old Testament the use of the word here translated clean. The result of that survey is this: I find that it is never used of merely ceremonial cleansing. There are other words used in that sense, but this one never. It always has

reference to moral cleanness. When the psalmist says, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me"; "Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight"; "With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself froward," he in each case uses the same word. Perhaps the verse that helps us most to see the force of this word is that mystical and symbolic word in the Canticles,

Who is she that looketh forth as in the morning,

Fair as the moon,

Clear as the sun,

Terrible as an army with banners?

Clear as the sun, that is pure as the sun, clean as the sun if you so will, and the figure of that verse explains the real thought of the word "clean"; it means clarified as with burning heat. "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." Be ye of that fire nature in which no imperfect or impure thing can live. Be ye of that nature which consumes the unworthy, and purifies ye of that nature which consumes the unworthy, and purifies that which is worthy. Be ye of the very nature of God Himself, of Whom it is written, "Our God is a consuming fire." The great picture of the testing of the Church's work in the Corinthian letter comes to mind in this connection: He shall try our work as with fire. If you will allow your imagination to help you, look at the great picture of the Christ which is given in the Apocalypse by the seer of Patmos, "His eyes are a flame of fire." With eyes of flame he glances over the work of the Church. With what result? Watch the work. Some of it is burnt, destroyed; it shrivels and becomes dust, and is gone; all that is hay, wood, stubble. Some of it loses only its dross and flashes in beauty as the fire of His glance rests on it; all that is gold, silver and precious stones. These are the things that live in fire. These are the things of the fire nature, even though when you touch them they seem to be cold. They are fire nature, for fire cannot destroy them. In the ancient prophecy is this remarkable word, spoken to the king of Tyre, "Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire," stones that live in the midst of fire.

If we read the word, "Be ye clean," as though it referred only to some ceremonial cleansing, and inculcated certain ceremonial ablutions, we have not caught the force of the prophet's meaning. You bear the vessels of the Lord. You are to be responsible for His revelation to men. You are the people among whom He has deposited the truth for which the world is waiting. "Be clean," be clarified as by fire, be such men and women as that there is nothing in you that fire can destroy. Be such men and women that all the things fire can destroy are destroyed in your own life. "Be ye clean." Our word "clean" may mean so little when it ought to mean so much. That great Hebrew word of which the prophet made use, which is used with such marked carefulness in all the language of the seers and psalmists of long ago, is a word which suggests cleansing in its profoundest sense: cleanness from complicity with Babylon. You have been in captivity to Babylon. You are sighing after the higher and nobler. "Thy God reigneth." God is calling you back to the place and position of power. Leave Babylon behind you when you turn your back on Babylon. Do not carry with you as you come again to the place you have lost any of the spirit that destroyed you before. The emblems of the holiness of the Divine government must be borne by holy men. "Be ye clean."

Isaiah 55:10-11. The Harvests Of The Word Of God.

Isaiah 55:10-11.

The Harvests Of The Word Of God.

For as the rain cometh down and the snow pom heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11

The fitness of the symbolism of this text is apparent even to the most casual observer.

Snow and rain are characterized by gentleness which merges into force. One drop of rain falls upon my hand, and I brush it away, and it is not; but when the drop is multiplied and the great storm sweeps along the valley, it is almost resistless in its onrush. One feathery flake of snow falls through the atmosphere. I touch it and it passes and is lost, its crystal beauty destroyed forever by the rudeness of my human hand; but let that flake be multiplied and the falling snow will take hold of the thundering locomotive, clog its wheels, check its progress, bury it beneath its soft and noiseless whiteness.

Rain and snow are characterized by helplessness which grows into beneficence. We ask: "What can this drop of rain do for man? What can this flake of snow do for humanity?" And yet we know that when we pass from the individual drop to the great rain, that this in falling makes the earth laugh back in harvest and crowns the labor of the hands of men. There is no more exquisite word in all Scripture about nature than that simple and sublime passage: "He giveth His snow like wool." Like a warm mantle, it wraps the earth in winter time and keeps it from the penetration of intenser cold. And so we find that rain and snow, helpless as they seem, are the very messengers of beneficence to men.

Again, rain and snow come to us characterized by unfruitfulness, yet generating fruitfulness wherever they fall. Life cannot be sustained by the one or the other. Neither is there in either any element of reproductiveness. Yet in their cooperation with the forces of "old mother earth" and with the ministries of light and air, all that is needed for life's sustenance is produced.

This is but a surface application of the truth. As we watch the rain and the snow and think upon it more carefully, we find a most suggestive symbol of the Word of God. By the Word of God at this moment I mean all that phrase can possibly mean; the written Which reveals the Living, the Living Which seals the written; the written Which is still ours, the Living Which lies behind it and speaks through it in power to the sons of men.

This Word of God in the history of the race, what has it been? Symbols becoming substance, letters advancing to life, that which has seemed to kill becoming, presently, that which has

bestowed life everywhere. In order that we may understand the value of this Word of God and learn the true method of appreciation of such value, let us take this symbolism of the prophet and consider it exactly as he has stated it; first, as to the similarities suggested; second, as to the principles revealed; and finally, as to the responsibility entailed.

Let me first tabulate the phrases which we are to consider in this verse: "Cometh from heaven; returneth not thither; watereth the earth; maketh it bring forth, and bud; that it may give seed to the sower; and bread to the eater."

The rain and the snow come from heaven. Man has nothing to do with the coming of the rain and the snow. You will remember how in that great theophany of the Book of Job when, after the human eloquence of his friends has providentially been silenced, God Himself begins to speak to the suffering man. He speaks to him in the midst of his sorrow and his suffering by making all His glory in creation pass before him. In the midst of that wonderful questioning of Job by God occur these two inquiries; "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow...?" which, being translated from poetry into prose means, do you understand the snow? Do you know from whence it comes? Can you analyze the mystery of its crystallization and deposit? Then, "Hath the rain a father?..." which, by some process of translation means, are you able to generate it, to produce it? With those questions in mind, let me read again this statement of the prophet. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven,..." The Word of God is a message from God to man which no man was able to find out for himself. It is never a philosophy formulated by human wisdom; it is always a revelation made, a something declared that man could not by searching find out. The supreme quality of the Word of God is that however men may occupy their time in discussing the methods by which we have come into possession of these documents, there is stamped upon every page of them the sign manual of Jehovah. They are great unveilings of His nature, great revelations of the deepest secrets of human life, great illumination of the problems that confront men by Divine revelation. The Word of God is the gift of God and not the contrivance of man.

But it "... returneth not thither...." The snow and the rain pour themselves out on the face of the earth, they melt and pass, and within a very few hours of the great rainfall, which has sweetened everything in its coming, the roads are dusty again and we say, "How soon the rain has passed." So also, soon after the snow has once come under the influence of the sun, it is gone. It has seemed to pour itself out in magnificent waste. Judged by first appearances, it seems as though this gift of heaven had been poured upon earth to be spoiled, contaminated, soiled, wasted.

So also with the Word of God. The Word of God has been given to men in figure and symbol, in prophecy and song, and at last in the Person of Jesus, and since He came, in exposition and explanation, for centuries; and, ah, me! how perpetually it seems to us as we watch the openings and processes of the decades and even of the centuries, as though this great outpouring of Divine revelation was lost, falling upon man only to be spoiled. How often have we thought of it as wasted? Nay, have we not thought so of it sometimes when we have been preaching it? Have we not looked out with almost passionate desire upon audiences that have listened and passed away apparently to frivolity and forgetfulness and have said, Yea, verily, "as the snow and the rain from heaven... but it returneth not thither"? That is the first effect upon us after observing what happens as God gives His Word.

But there is another statement needed to complete and explain this; it "... watereth the earth...." Take this dust as it lies upon the highway and over the furrowed field, and know that within the dust is the making of everything that is beautiful and fruitful. But the dust does not of itself laugh in flowers; it is capable and incapable. Lying within it are all the forces of life. All the mysterious magnificence of your personality on the physical side lies within the dust at your feet, and all flowers that bloom lie there in potentiality. As the rain and snow water the earth, which is at once characterized by capacity and yet unable to fulfil the possibilities that lie sleeping within its own being, it makes all nature laugh with new beauty.

So also the Word of God comes to men in whose nature are the potentialities but not the realizations. The Word of God falls upon the centuries, upon society, upon individuals, and we thought it touched them but to be spoiled and soiled and pass, but we watched and we found that by its falling the soil became productive. There is in every human being the capacity for Deity. There is in every human life the potentialities of the highest and the noblest and the best. I am not discussing the question of man's ruin. I know the ruin; I know it in my own life. But that which is ruined is not destroyed. Without some beneficent ministry external to itself it will be destroyed. Given that ministry it is still capable of realization. The very ministry it needs is that of the Word of God. As is the rain, as is the snow to the dust, so is the Word of God to humanity in its ruin. God has not been wasting His Word. As He has given it by prophets, seers, and psalmists, by His Son, in many a symbol and by many a sign, in many a dispensation; given it to the mocking, laughing, scoffing crowds; He knows that in all the dust that lies about Him there are potentialities; and as He gives His rain and snow to smite the dust into laughter, so He has given His Word that the Word coming to men may touch the unrealized capacity into realization.

The prophet now adds a further truth concerning these elements in the statement, "... maketh it bring forth,..." After the rain and the snow the dull russet ground becomes beautiful with emerald and opal and ruby and diamond, and thus we know that when God's rain and snow touch the dust it makes the dust bring forth.

So with the Word of God. The Word of God makes the dormant forces in man move to fulfilment. All men that have ever realized the possibilities of their own life have done so in response to some part of the Word of God, to the Word spoken, to the Word written, to the Word lived, to the revelation granted; and as the snow and rain coming upon the earth make the earth answer by bringing forth, so the Word of God in the centuries, as they come and go, has provoked into realization the dormant capacities of life.

Yet another word that I have taken separately, because I think it really is separate. It is a stronger word than the former—"... maketh it bring forth, and bud,..." I feel inclined to use here the literal Hebrew word, "and sprout." That is to say, the rain and the snow not merely touch the dust into generation but actually come again in the grass, the flowers, the fruitage. You saw that rainstorm as it swept the field yonder. You watched it come; you smiled at the helplessness of the first few drops as they fell. You were appalled at the rush of the storm as the clouds broke and swept that field. Then you watched it as the clouds passed and the sun shone. As you watched the field it seemed as though all was lost and of no avail, and you went to sleep—and God gives unto His beloved in sleep—and you came back again and looked at your field, and there was the sheen of the emerald all over it. First the blade and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and so on

and on, until russet had become green and green had become golden harvest. And in that waving harvest of gold what do I find? The rain that I thought lost, the snow that I thought perished. It touched the dust with the alchemy of God, and it brought back the glorious, gracious harvest.

It is equally true that the Word of God that He has been giving for centuries has never been lost. It has come from Him to touch the failure of human life, and it has been returning to Him laughing with the harvest of ransomed souls. The Word was incarnate in the Christ supremely, and in a less and different degree but nevertheless as truly, God's Word has been re-incarnate in human lives in all the passing centuries. Do not let us be afraid of the word. I make no comparison finally between the incarnation of our blessed Lord and the incarnation of truth in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, in degree every Christian soul is a re-incarnation of the Word Who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. Is it not so? That which is true and beautiful and of good report in you, in others, what is it but God's great Word which has touched the fibre of your being and reconstructed your broken lives to the realization of His purpose and so to the glory of His Name. The transmuted rain makes the earth not only generate by the touch of beneficence; it makes it sprout and bud and answer back in harvest. So also, the Word re-incarnate in believing souls is the harvest of the earth which supremely satisfies the heart of God.

Yet that is not all. "... that it may give seed to the sower,..." What is this harvest for? You say for the sustenance of human life. That is not the first thing. What is the harvest for? "That it may give seed to the sower" comes before "bread to the eater." Bread to the eater is a secondary thing. Bread to the eater is provision for the toiler that he may continue his sowing and reap his harvests. But the first thing is that, in the new form in which the rain and snow return to God, there is always found the potentiality of propagation waiting for new showers and new transmutations and new harvests. This is the perpetual story of the harvests as they come and go. Always first, seed to the sower.

So with the Word of God. The Word of God taking hold of human life, changing it, becoming incarnate in it, communicates propagative power; it makes a new wealth of seed which may be scattered still further afield. From every life remade and sanctified by the Word of God, there must go forth the seed that will affect yet other fields and stretch out toward the consummating glory of the final harvest.

Finally we come to the last phase of the symbolism, "... and bread to the eater." The issue then is also sustenance to the toiler. The man that plowed and sowed and reaped, feeds. So surely also is it with this Word of God. It comes, as we have seen for the larger purpose, the creation of new seed that may be scattered still for the uplifting of man, but the Word of God is also the bread of life to the toiler. By it his own life is sustained, both in health and strength, and so he is enabled for the service for which he is created and to which he is called.

Let me pass now from these similarities to take the broader outlook and consider the great principles that are revealed.

The symbolism of this great prophetic Word teaches me, first of all, that the Word of God is purposeful. Rain and snow come certainly not for nothing and not for the display of their own wonders but for purpose. The symbolism teaches me, second, that the Word of God is powerful. The rain and snow come to victory always; they are never defeated. And the symbolism of my text

teaches me, finally, that the Word of God is prosperous. It accomplishes, it prospers, as do also rain and snow.

The Word of God is purposeful. All this is seen by the various similarities which we have rapidly surveyed. The Word of God is not given to be possessed; it is given that it may possess. The truth of God is not given that men may hold it. Oh, I am tired of the men that want to know if I "hold the truth." Of course I don't "hold the truth"; no man can "hold the truth." It is too big for any man to hold, and God has never given His Word to men that they may "hold the truth." The facts are truly stated in quite another way. The truth must hold the man, wrap him around, change the very fibre of his being, permeate his complete life, and unless the Word of God is doing that for me it is failing in the first intention that God has for it. Not for our good only does it come. It is seed as well as bread. Unless we come to receive the Word as the earth takes the sun and the rain, then I am not sure that we had better not absent ourselves from every occasion when the Word is opened. If I come with my notebook to write down all I can learn about the Word of God in order that I may know it, then I am absolutely failing. But if I come to strip from my soul all the things that hide me that the Word of God may search me, if I have come to lay my life out in the light of the Word that the Word may correct it, then I shall find the Word in me is fruitful as is the snow, as is the rain upon the earth. It is a purposeful thing.

Then, thank God, it is powerful. He says it shall not return to Him void. And why not? May I not reverently say as in the presence of the inspired declaration, God's Word never returned to Him void because it never comes void from Him. Do you remember the word of the angel to the blessed Virgin?—"... no word of God is void..." Every word of God thrills with fruitfulness. If we but know how to receive it and how to respond to it, then it shall return to Him not void but fruitful, in lives changed, remolded, re-fashioned, sanctified.

And finally, then the Word of God is prosperous. It is so because it is His Word. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall..."—and mark the two words—"... accomplish... prosper..." The word "accomplish" means it does something, it makes something, it realizes something; and the Hebrew word "prosper" literally means it "pushes forward." It is a great dynamic force. It is prosperous, moreover, by selection. "... that which I please,... the thing whereto I sent it."

These are the principles which we must bear in mind as we take up our Bibles and come to listen to the teachings of the Word of God. It is given for a purpose; it is full of power; it accomplishes the purpose by reason of the power.

In conclusion, it is important that we inquire as to the responsibilities that are entailed? Rain and snow might fall upon the earth a long time, and there be no harvest unless the earth is prepared. The rain and snow may fall in all their prodigal munificence and magnificence upon the earth, and there will be no harvest unless the seed is sown. And rain and snow may fall and make the earth laugh with harvest if the earth be ready and the seed be sown, and yet men get no benefit unless the harvest be reaped, the seed be sown again, and through the process the bread be eaten.

Here, then, are three things at least that I would say: the earth must be prepared; take heed how ye hear. The seed must be sown; preach the Word. The bread must be eaten; let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Take heed how ye hear. In all tenderness and yet with great earnestness and great conviction, I would sound that word in the hearing of all. Take heed how ye hear. How shall we hear? Prayerfully, obediently, and in faith. The spirit of criticism never produces the result of power. Let us pray that in our lives God will plow up the fallow ground, give us the receptive heart, the child heart, willingness to hear and learn, deliver us from preconceived notions and prejudice, make us ready when He speaks to obey, make us simple-hearted at His feet, for as the rain and snow demand an earth plowed, broken, prepared, so does the Word of God demand a condition in those who hear, if it is to bring forth a harvest.

The true seed must be sown, and it must be by the preaching of the Word if the work is to be done. We are not to criticize the Word of God, not to account for the Word of God, not to defend the Word of God. We are to preach it and hear it. And there is a yet fuller application of that truth. The final preaching of the Word is not that of the lips but that of the life. Fundamentally the Word is the seed in the hearts of men, but functionally for the sake of the world, the seed is the sons of the Kingdom, the men in whom the Word has had its true effect.

Finally, the Word, the bread that comes, must be eaten or the toiler will grow weak. We are to let this Word of Christ dwell in us, take it into our life. The Word must come into the intellect, the emotion, the will; and when we take the Word of God into our whole life and answer its every claim, then in that moment God's purpose will be fulfilled in us.

One of the greatest instruments of God in the world today is the British and Foreign Bible Society. It sends out no preachers, but it accompanies the preacher with his message in the tongue of the people to whom he goes. It cannot issue statistics of conversion, but it pours forth the great stream of living water over all the earth and by such action quenches the thirsts of humanity as with the river of God. Alone, however, it would soon fail. As the Word circulates it becomes the sustenance of human lives, and so over earth's wilderness wastes the green appears which merges at last into the golden glory of the harvests of the Word of God.

Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9. Waiting For God.

Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Waiting For God.

For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him.

Isaiah 64:4

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

1 Corinthians 2:9

The similarity between these two passages is patent. There is, however, an equally definite disparity. In the letter of Paul the words constitute a quotation. He introduced them by the formula, "As it is written...."

Now, there has been much discussion as to where the apostle found these words. Jerome affirmed them to be found in the Apocalyptic literature, with which Paul would certainly be familiar, but did not suggest that he quoted them from that literature. If they were quoted from the Hebrew Bible, this passage in Isaiah is the only one in the Old Testament which could in any way be looked upon as that from which Paul quoted. But there is a difference between the thing that Paul quoted and the passage which we are bound to notice. It is possible that he quoted from some other manuscript than that from which our translation was made. It is interesting to Bible students to observe in passing that both in Isaiah and Corinthians the revisers in the margin have not referred to these passages as being direct quotations but have indicated the relation by the use of the word "compare." By that method they suggest that it was not necessarily a direct quotation, but that it moves in the same realm of ideas.

Let us observe, then, the disparity between the two passages. In that in the prophecy of Isaiah, the emphasis is on the marvelous God Who works for those that wait for Him. "... from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him."

In the Corinthians the emphasis is not upon God at all; it is upon the marvelous things which God does for them that love Him. "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him." Isaiah says that no other such God has been heard of or seen. Paul says that such wonderful things as those which God prepares have not been seen, or heard, or apprehended by the human heart; so wonderful are they that they can only be made known by the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah the cause of wonder is that God works for them that wait for Him. In Corinthians the marvel is caused by the things that God does for those that love Him.

This recognition of disparity moves toward a recognition of the true spiritual relationship between the two passages which makes it more than probable that Paul was indeed quoting this very passage, only he did as New Testament writers perpetually did—changed the literal wording of the Old, caught a higher spiritual harmony, went further than the suggestion of the Old, modified it while not contradicting it in order to bring out a fuller and richer phase of truth. In each of them it is evident that the thought is moving in the same realm of ideas. In one it is occupied with the marvelous God Who works for them that wait for Him; in the other it is occupied with the marvelous things that God prepares for those that love Him. And so it seems to me that we may weave these two things into one statement: Our God is marvelous in that He does marvelous things for those who wait for Him because they love Him.

Now let us observe the similarity between the two declarations, in the light of the circumstances under which they were uttered or penned.

Historically the passage in Isaiah is not easy to place, but the nature of the circumstances is most clear. It was a day of darkness and of difficulty, when it seemed as though God had abandoned His own people and had ceased to act. Glancing back at chapter sixty-three, in the fifteenth verse, we find these words: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty acts? The yearning of Thy bowels and Thy compassions are restrained toward me."

Or again in the close of verse eighteen and in verse nineteen:

"... our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. We are become as they over whom Thou never barest rule; as they that were not called by Thy name."

It was a day, moreover, when there were those among the people who with passionate desire were making appeal to God:

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence; as when fire kindleth the brushwood, and the fire causeth the waters to boil: to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence."

Then suddenly the prophet seems to have taken a backward look which was born of his intense desire that God should thus appear, and the backward look was one which brought to mind God's past appearances:

"When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence."

It is as though the prophet had said: "I am not asking for things that have never been; I am asking Thee to return to Thine ancient attitude towards us, and to the activities of the past." In that very note of memory an idea was born. "... Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for...." Then he enunciated a central philosophy of life, as he declared: "For from old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, Which worketh for him that waiteth for him." Thus we discover the value of the declaration. God's words for a waiting people, and they only fail when they try to manage without Him. Now let us turn to the New Testament and look at the circumstances that were in the mind of the apostle when he wrote. In this Letter to the

Corinthians he was dealing with the difficulties that were confronting the Christian church, and in his mind was the fact of the darkest day in all human history. He was thinking of the day in which the cleverness of the world had crucified the Lord of glory. That was the day, that very day of unutterable and unfathomable darkness, in which God was preparing things for those that loved Him, too wonderful for human understanding, apart from the interpretation of the Spirit. This, then, is the second phase of the truth. God prepares in darkness and in mystery things for those that love Him that are so wonderful that they can only be understood by the interpretation of the Spirit.

From the wealth of ideas suggested by these two kindred passages I propose to make two simple deductions and to apply them.

The deductions are these. In the hour of darkness and difficulty the true attitude of those who believe in God is that of waiting for Him. The only strength sufficient to enable men to wait for God is that of love to Him, for love is the capacity for receiving the interpretation of the things which He is doing.

Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.

The Hebrew word translated "waiting" here has a pictorial affinity which is peculiarly suggestive today. It has affinity with a word that means "to entrench." We do no violence to the real thought of the text if we read it in that way. God worketh for him that entrenches himself in Him. The idea of waiting for God here is that of digging ourselves in to God.

Waiting for God, then, is the adjustment of our lives to the truth concerning Him which we know. When circumstances are chaotic, when it is impossible to understand their movements and to know what will be the outcome of this or that combination of circumstances, that is the hour in which we are to wait for God. God is certain; the one and only certainty of which we have any knowledge; far more certain than the fact of our own being. There is a sense in which we are sure of ourselves, we are sure of our existence, but there are infinite mysteries behind us as to the how of our being and far more unfathomable mysteries lying ahead of us as to the issue of our being; and as to its present continuity, there is no certainty. God is the one unchanging fact from everlasting to everlasting. Waiting for God means putting this life, of which I am so uncertain in a thousand varied ways, into right relationship with Him of Whom I am absolutely and everlastingly certain. Waiting for God means that I adjust my life to Him rather than to circumstances, and that I set my hope on Him rather than on the wit and the cleverness of men. Waiting for God means that definite personal activity which is busily occupied in adjusting the whole fact and circumstances of life to the unchangeable and unalterable fact of God.

Waiting for God means, therefore, readiness for any command; that state of perpetual suspense which listens for the word in order that it may be immediately obeyed. Those who wait for God are pilgrim souls that have no tie that will hold them when the definite command is issued; no prejudices that will paralyze their effort when in some strange coming of the light they are commanded to take a pathway entirely different to that which was theirs before; having no interests either temporal or eternal, either material or mental or spiritual, that will conflict with the will of God when that will is made known. Souls who wait for God are such as have their loins girt

about, their lamps burning; they are alert, awake, ready.

Waiting for God, then, means power to do nothing save under command. This is not lack of power to do anything. Waiting for God needs strength rather than weakness. It is the power to do nothing. It is the strength that holds strength in check. It is the strength that prevents the blundering activity which is entirely false and will make the true activity impossible when the definite command comes.

For those who thus wait, God works; and as surely as men wait thus for Him while He works for them, there will come to them, presently, the clarion call to arise and cooperate. When it comes, the plan is almost invariably a different one from that which had been expected. "In ways we looked not for," said the prophet, "Thou hast wrought for us in the past."

Is not that the history of every forward movement in the economy of God? A period of darkness, a period of desolation, a period of difficulty in which His people were brought to the point of knowing that they did not know and understanding that they could not understand. A period of being clever enough to be done with their own cleverness, and then, while they waited, a period of adjusting their lives to God, severing all ties that held them, abandoning all prejudices that paralyzed, putting an end to every effort that was likely to conflict with the practical definite command and program and plan.

When the call comes, it is almost invariably to something new and surprising and startling, in the doing of which we seem to have to go back upon things that we have said and done in the past. The peril of the people of God is always that they shall be so wedded to yesterday that they are not ready for God's tomorrow; or that they shall be so busy today making their programs that when God brings His program, their own arrangements interfere with the carrying out of His will.

This is no easy conception of life. Waiting is far more difficult than working. It would be a much easier thing for the church of God at this very hour of her darkness to call conferences and councils and make plans for tomorrow than to wait. Waiting requires strength. It demands the absolute surrender of the life to God, the confession that we are at the end of our own understanding of things, the confession that we really do not see our way and do not know the way. The waiting that says: "Until God shall speak we dare not move and will not move, we will not be seduced from our resolution to wait"; requires strength. There is only one motive that is sufficiently strong to bring us to the place of true waiting and that motive is love. Isaiah in effect said, "God works for men that wait for Him"; Paul in effect said, "Marvelous things does God prepare for men that love Him." Love is confident in the authority; love is eager for the command; love rests in the wisdom of God; love is the alertness that waits and moves immediately. No fear of God will produce this waiting in the soul. There may be a waiting which is the result of fear, but that will be the waiting of inertia, the waiting of incapacity, and the waiting that, presently, when a call shall come, shall have no preparation for advance. The waiting that is to have the alertness and eagerness and strength enough not to do must be the outcome of love. This is an hour and power of darkness. The supreme hour and power of darkness came two millenniums ago when the world in its cleverness crucified the Lord of glory. That was a darker hour than this. The situation was more hopeless and helpless than anything the world had known before or since when the rulers of this world, knowing not the wisdom of God, crucified the Lord of glory. So far as our lifetime is concerned, this is the hour and power of darkness. The similarity of our condition and those of the

days in which Isaiah's word was spoken is perfectly patent. This is a day in which it seems as though God had abandoned men and ceased to act. This is a day in which the cry is going up from many hearts, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down." This, then, is a day in which God is surely acting in ways that we cannot see. Gleams of light there have been. Great principles have been discovered, and in the light of them we have lived through all these weary months. Yet I do not believe there is any man in the Christian church who is prepared to tell us exactly what God means and what God is doing. But faith affirms its conviction that God has a meaning and that God is at work. There is a similarity between this hour and that condition of darkness to which Paul referred. Today the rulers of this world are crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to open shame. Then, by the sign and token of Golgotha and the unutterable darkness of the Crucifixion, we affirm our faith that this is a day in which God is preparing for those that love Him, things that eye has not seen and ear has not heard, things that have never entered into the heart of man and which can only be interpreted by the Holy Spirit.

What, then, is our duty today? Our duty is to wait for Him. Every activity which brings us into more perfect adjustment with Him is to be the eager occupation of our busy life and that combined with the resolute refusal to take any action which may prejudice His purpose.

During recent days the Congregational ministers of London have been gathering together to pray and to wait on God in the very sense which we have considered, that of seeking the adjustment of their own lives to the will of God. They are not creating machinery but seeking to be ready for God. That is the true attitude.

It is impossible for us to have lived through these months, critical as they have been and still are with new and sinister evils in our midst assaulting our souls with fear, without wondering.

That day of new conditions in this England of ours! That day of the new problems! Are we ready for it? Letters lie upon my table from men in the war and most of them speak of the new sense of life that has come to them. They are coming back presently. Shall we be equal to the call?

One peril that confronts us is that of making our plans and setting up our organizations. As surely as we do, we shall make ourselves unready for the day of God. What, then, shall we do? Wait for God. Our activity must be that of setting our own lives in right relationship to Him, of placing all our organizations at His disposal. Waiting for God means being free and alert so that when the breath of God moves over us and the voice of God sounds, we shall be ready for departure along the new highway which He will mark out for us. While God works and we wait, He is preparing for a working in which we must cooperate. The new working of God will be revolutionary, the breaking up of our ideals, the scrapping of our mechanisms. Today we must get ready for this. If we are thus to wait for God, we must love Him as we have never loved Him. The question that comes to us as we look honestly within our own souls is the question, "How are we to increase our love to God?" The central need of the moment is a new and passionate love for God, burning and flaming in His holy church. In proportion as that love comes, the church will be able to wait with the waiting that means alertness and readiness for service. Our love to God will be deepened by two things: a new and earnest cultivation of our fellowship with Him and a new and simple and definite obedience to Him.

How are we to cultivate our fellowship with God? By the contemplation of Christ. No man hath seen God at any time. The Son Who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared Him.

Would we see God's brightest glory?

We must look in Jesus' Face.

There must be a new contemplation of the Christ. There must also be a new consideration of human history from the standpoint of the Divine over-ruling; an attempt to focus upon the present situation the light of past situations. Do you not think that when Israel of old came down to the river which prevented her crossing into the land and the command was given to her that she should go across that river and take possession, that she was greatly helped in the interpretation of the problem by the history of the divided sea at the exodus? We are altogether in danger today of looking out with the men of the world, with the men of affairs, with the men whose only look is horizontal and never perpendicular. We are in danger of looking at things on the level, and there is no light anywhere. It is for us to be cultivating our fellowship with God by climbing to the heights and looking back and seeing how God has acted in the past, not in Bible history only, but in all history, for all history is divine. God has abandoned no nation utterly in all time. The man of faith who knows God, especially through Jesus Christ, will look out on the history of the past and the whole history of humanity and see it as a history of the denial of human cleverness and the proving of the folly of the wit and wisdom of the world even when it seemed at the point of victory. He will see everywhere an over-ruling providence, or, better, he will see the over-ruling God.

Let us cultivate our fellowship with God by considering the past and interpret the present hour of stress and strain and darkness, not by the things that are at our disposal in the material or the mental world, but by the activities of God in human history through the running centuries and the cycles of the years. Let us cultivate our fellowship with Him by practicing that which we hear referred to in every Christian service at its close: the communion of the Holy Ghost.

The final responsibility is not a communal responsibility. It is an individual responsibility. It is a responsibility that rests upon me. The cultivation of God must be personal, it must be lonely, and it must be intense. It demands time, it demands effort, it demands endeavor. The waiting for God of the whole church depends finally upon the waiting upon God of the individual members of the church. Through the busy rush of these terrible days, when every hour must sweat its sixty minutes to the death, we are failing unutterably if we do not find the hour of retirement, of separation, of quietness, that we may find God and cultivate our fellowship with Him. Waiting upon God, we shall learn to love Him more, and by loving Him more, we shall be more perfectly prepared to wait for Him.

That which must accompany that individual fellowship is quick, simple, ready obedience to every shining of the light at whatever cost and to every inspiration of the love at whatever cost.

In proportion as we thus love Him and wait for Him, we shall be ready for whatever may be the plan of God in the days to come.

Jeremiah 17:12. Sanctuary.

Jeremiah 17:12.

Sanctuary.

A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary.

Jeremiah 17:12

Jeremiah's prophecies were uttered when the religious and moral conditions of the ancient people of God had become idolatrous and profligate. They are full of the sorrow of his heart, and yet thrill with vehement denunciation of sin. Notwithstanding these facts, it is quite evident as one reads this book that in common with all the messengers of God Jeremiah lived and spoke with strength born of a perpetual consciousness that however chaotic the circumstances of the hour may appear, the foundation is secure. In our text we have a radiant revelation of the prophet's conception of the character of that foundation. At the center of all he saw an established throne. As I have indicated, he shared this conviction with all the great messengers of God, whose words have been recorded for us in the Scriptures of truth. There was a day when they said to David, "Flee as a bird to your mountain, for, lo, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" He replied, "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?... The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord, His throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men."

There was a day when Isaiah was passing from the first phase of his ministry into a larger and more trying one, a day when the throne of his people became vacant, and he said, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." So here Jeremiah is facing a ministry full of difficulty; his heart is failing, his flesh is trembling, he is afraid; yet the word of God, as he says, burns within his bones and he is driven forth. He goes in spite of fear and trembling, with a courage and heroism that almost startle us as we read the story. Why was he courageous in spite of fear? The answer is to be found in his declaration, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."

The conception of my text is that right relation to the throne of God is the place of sanctuary. Notice carefully that he does not say that the sanctuary is a throne, but that the throne is a sanctuary. If Jeremiah had declared the sanctuary to be a throne it would have been true; but it would have opened before our minds an entirely different aspect of truth. It then would have said to us that the sanctuary, using the word in the Hebrew sense, the place of worship and approach, was also the place of government. That is true, but that is not the message of the text. That is not the vision which made Jeremiah and all the messengers of God strong to face opposition and declare the truth. It was the conviction that the throne of God is a sanctuary, that if a man would find sanctuary he must find the throne; if a man would find the place of refuge, of quietness, of peace in the midst of trouble and turmoil and distress, he is not to seek it by the way of asking for a

solution, but by putting his life into right relationship with the established throne of the abiding government of God.

Since the days of Jeremiah all the externals have changed. Human ideals, the habits and manners of men, and the customs of the age are all different; but the essential stream of human life flows on, and the laws of its progress are also unchanged.

We take this text out of the midst of the prophecies, turning from the man who uttered it, and all the strange and appalling circumstances in the midst of which he found himself, and we take the words and declare them to be a statement of truth for us. "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." I shall ask you to notice, first, the meaning of sanctuary, and second, to consider the final declaration of the text, that the place of our sanctuary is the throne.

The idea of sanctuary is a very old one. Indeed, it is as old as human history. Wherever you read human history you will find this idea obtaining. In the architecture of ancient Egypt there are found what are called sanctuary temples. They were temples which consisted of one simple chamber, so simple that a person finding his way into it was hidden, and yet no enemy could be hidden from him therein. They were the sanctuaries into which men in hours of great stress and danger came for safety. In the history of the ancient people of God you read of how men came and took hold upon the horns of the altar, which means they sought and claimed sanctuary. Not only in the ancient history and the history of the Bible, but in the history of our own country we find the same story. In olden times every church and churchyard offered what was called sanctuary. We are close to an illustrious instance of what I am now referring to. Dean Stanley says of Westminster Abbey, "The precincts of Westminster Abbey were a vast cave of Adullam for all the distressed and discontented in the metropolis who desired, in the phrase of the time, 'to take Westminster.'" "That is to say, men in debt and danger, and discontented—I am quoting the words concerning Adullam—found their way in the olden days into the church or churchyard, and there were considered safe, and their confidence was respected.

What, then, does the idea suggest? There is a twofold note in this thought of sanctuary. Man's consciousness of his own danger and his desire for escape therefrom; his consciousness of unrest and his longing for a place of rest; his consciousness of peril and his desire after protection. The cry of man after sanctuary in all ages has been the cry of man in the midst of stress and strain and danger, of peril and conflict, and unrest; his cry for protection, for some place in which to hide himself, for some sphere in which the forces which have been buffeting, beating and bruising him will be unable to reach him. The idea of sanctuary is the idea of a place of quietness, of peace, of privacy, of protection. The deep meaning of the word is indicated in the fact that in all the instances I have quoted, and many others which I might have named, the thought of sanctuary is intimately related to religion—false or true matters nothing for the moment—whether the ancient religion of Egypt, or the revealed religion of Israel, or the religion of our own Christian times, the fact remains the same. When a man sought sanctuary he sought the things of religion. In that seeking is evidenced the fact that man associated with sanctuary the idea, first, of purity or holiness; second, of privacy, or perfect silence; and, finally, therefore, as a corollary to these two, the idea of protection, of being guarded from the things which were against him.

The idea of purity, of separation by holiness, sanctuary, in all these illustrations, was in the thinking of the men who sought it, a place in which there was no lie, no deceit. The holy of holies in the sanctuary of the Hebrews was a perfect cube, suggestive of regularity, of exactness, of integrity. Sanctuary, therefore, was a place which had no complicity with the evil things which made sanctuary a necessity to man. Man, in the midst of evil—whether in the sense of wilful sin, or in the sense of the limitations and calamities which follow thereupon—evil, hampering, hindering, bruising, battering him, wants sanctuary, a place where evil is not. He is seeking some place of purity that he there may find refuge from the forces of impurity which have disturbed his life and harmed him.

Sanctuary suggests not only purity, and perhaps this is the subconsciousness of desire—it suggests privacy, a place guarded by the forces of its own holiness from intrusion which is either inquisitive or revolutionary. It is a place of silence, a place of quiet—witness the great shrines of all religions, false and true. At the heart of every one is a place which few are permitted to enter, of which the chief characteristic is peace because there is privacy. In following me you will understand that I am not defending any form of religion. I am illustrating a truth. At the heart of many a religion in the place of silence, quietness, there is enthroned as deity that which is degrading. I simply ask you to notice the desire of the heart of man first of all for a religion untouched by evil, because evil has harmed him, and, second, for a place of quietness.

Men will take sanctuary in the most actual way even yet. You cannot walk through Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral without seeing some poor, bruised, battered soul getting quiet. I never see such in the great cathedrals but I experience a twofold emotion—prayer for them, that they may find the secret place of hiding, and the desire that all our churches might always be open for such to pass inside, and sit and seek that quietness and find rest.

Then as a necessary corollary to this desire after purity and privacy, and now perhaps I have reached the first sentiment of the man who seeks it, seeking sanctuary is seeking protection, seeking to be guarded against the things which have troubled and harmed. Overcome in the conflict, bruised and broken in the battle, the spirit of man flings itself toward some religion of purity, privacy and protection, and in so doing at least indicates the fact that by submission to its law of holiness and peace he will be protected from the forces which have been against him.

Such are some of the suggestions of the great word sanctuary. Today the strenuousness of life is more terrible than it ever was. In the age in which we live perchance there are fewer cataclysms, catastrophes, than in olden days; but if the hours red and horrible with tragedy are fewer than they were, the sum total of unrest is greater than it ever was. The strain and stress of life have invaded places which were characterized by immunity therefrom. We still sing,

Thou hast Thy young men at the war,

Thy little ones at home,

but even our homes today are invaded, and the little ones are touched by the competitive fever of the age in which we live. Never perhaps have men more keenly felt the need of sanctuary.

Never has the subconsciousness of common humanity more cried out after some place of rest, some relationship which will make the heart firm and steady, some attitude of life which will correct

all the feverishness arising from the complexity and strain of life. Where shall we find our sanctuary? This is background that I may bring you to the text.

"A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." A glorious throne. That is the sum total of the revelation of Scripture to men. There are many things included in that of which I am not going to speak. I am not going to attempt to dissect, or analyze, or find out all the component parts of the great truth. From Genesis to Revelation the one truth the Bible declares is that the throne of God is man's resting-place, the throne of God is the place where man will find the answer to his desire for quietness, to his passion for peace, to his search after sanctuary.

In a rapid survey go over the Bible with me. In the early Bible history the throne is unnamed, but it is always there. In the early movements chronicled for us I find men in relation to the throne, submissive, at peace; in rebellion against the throne, disturbed. The throne of God is everywhere. I come at last to the point where the chosen people make their great mistake, and I hear God's explanation of it, "They have rejected me, that I should not be King over them." I come further on until I find this selfsame chosen people in the midst of circumstances full of terror, Ahab and Jehoshaphat are the reigning kings. In the first book of Kings, for the first time in the Bible, the phrase, "the throne of God," appears. When the thrones of men which had been set up in folly were proven disloyal to the principles for which they stood, and suffering and darkness had settled over the people, the messenger of God reminded them of the one throne of God. The devotional and prophetic books are full of references to the throne of God. In the Gospel story Jesus speaks of the throne of God, and the burden of His message is always that of the Kingdom of God. In the Acts I see Him, the Son of man, having passed to the throne as the final place of His power. When I come to the Revelation, that last book of the canon, declaring the final movements that usher in the eternal state, the throne is mentioned more than in any other part of the Bible. It is the book of the throne of God and the government of God. It is the book of the Kingdom of God. Its one message to men is, if you would find sanctuary, find the throne; if you would find peace, kiss the scepter; if you would be safe, get into right relationship with the one abiding and eternal throne. "A glorious throne... is the place of our sanctuary."

Mark the suggestiveness of the idea. What is a throne? It is the symbol of authority. It is the basis of law. It is the place from which the laws which govern are uttered. It is more, it is the symbol of administration, and not merely the symbol of law. It speaks of rewards and punishments. It speaks of the fact that the laws which are for the governance of all submitted to it are enforced by its majesty. It is the throne of arbitration and the settlement of disputes. This is sanctuary. The Bible idea of sanctuary is not that men shall find peace by escape to the pity of God, but to the judgment of God. The Bible idea of sanctuary is not that man shall find peace because God as a Father takes him and lulls him to sleep while in his heart man is still in rebellion. The Bible idea of sanctuary is that man shall find peace when he returns to the will and government of God in submission. This is not to contradict the meaning and message of Jesus. Jesus came not to persuade God to have pity on men who to the end of their career would remain in rebellion; but to establish the law and make it honorable, to preach the Kingdom and, blessed be His name, to make it possible for any bruised and broken man, returning toward the throne, to be healed and made strong. The ultimate in the purpose of Jesus was to bring men to sanctuary by bringing them to the throne. "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Not only did Jeremiah speak of the throne, he used a phrase which runs all through Hebrew figurative speech. "A glorious throne, on high." Even in the Revised Version we have the rendering "set on high," the word "set" being introduced, as is shown by the italics, in order to indicate a thought. I venture to think that here, as so often, there is more grandeur, more rugged splendor if we translate literally, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Mark that Hebrew figure of height. It is but a figure, but it is a suggestive one. The figure of height runs through all Hebrew imagery, and is always indicative of safety. In Psalms 46, one of the great psalms which has become the common property of trusting souls, we read "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." You have noticed the marginal reading of the word "refuge," "high tower." Again in Proverbs it is written "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe"—set on high. It is a peculiar Hebrew figure of safety. How is this safety produced? By setting man on high above the things which are against him.

Go back to the threefold fact of sanctuary. Man coming to the throne of God comes to a throne on high and is lifted above the evil, therefore, into a place of purity. He is lifted above disturbance, therefore, into a place of privacy. He is lifted above enmity, and therefore, into a place of protection. This is sanctuary. It is this thought of height symbolizing safety that emerges in the wonderful words of Jesus with which we are very familiar, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself. But this He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die." He did not mean merely, "If I be lifted up a few yards from the ground on the rough Roman gibbet."

He meant, "If by that pathway of suffering and sorrow, I am lifted high above evil, high above distraction and enmity, I will draw men to Myself." As He was lifted to the place of the throne by way of the cross He was lifted to a throne on high from the beginning, and as men find their way to Him on the throne through the mystery of His cross, they find their way to purity which is above evil, to privacy which is above disturbance, to protection which is above enmity.

Yet there is another phrase, for the prophet has not said the final thing. "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary," "From the beginning." Again you are familiar with the phrase. It is one of those commonplaces of Scripture running from the first book to the last, from the first chapter to the final one, the simple phrase "the beginning." Take the highways of the phrase, "In the beginning God created." Come on into the sweet song of Solomon concerning wisdom, sung while the seeds of the decay of earthly kingship were already scattered, the song in which he sings, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth." In Isaiah's prophecy in the midst of the failure of earthly kingship, speaking of the one King, he declares that He sees "the end from the beginning." It is used by John in introducing the Gospel which reveals the inner life of Christ, "In the beginning was the Word." The Master Himself when correcting the casuistry of men who were asking Him questions about social order and quoting something Moses had said, swept behind Moses and said, "From the beginning," so indicating the permanence of the moral order. It is used by John again in the epistle, which has as its key words, life, light, love, showing from what source these things have sprung, "That which was from the beginning." Found again at the commencement and close of the Revelation of Jesus Christ which He sent and signified to His servant John, "The beginning." Some of you remember the words of Dr. Parker about that wonderful phrase. No words of mine

can as beautifully and forcefully convey their profound significance. He said, "The beginning, the remotest date that has yet been suggested. Science has its slow rising and slow falling centuries. Yet 'the beginning'—the dateless date—includes them all, and drowns them in a deeper sea. On that ocean millenniums are but tufts of foam."

"A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." That is to say, the government of God is based upon the reasons of things and finds its expression not in the rules of a passing hour, but in the principles of eternity. So that if God shall order my life for the next half-hour the reason of His ordering lies back in the ages that I cannot measure. That is Calvinism at its deepest and best and truest. That is the great fact which we still believe, that every flower that blooms on the sod under the Divine government has its roots of life and thought and suggestion far back in the ages we do not know.

Jeremiah had to preach to rebellious people, footmen to weary him, horsemen to tire him, in a land of peace, and amid the swellings of Jordan. How can he do this work in the midst of the opposition? How can he continue? "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." If this tiny, short life of mine is conditioned by the law of the throne on high from eternity, there is no room for panic in my heart. There is no room for fear and trembling. Let me but learn that law, let me but find the place of true relationship to that fact, and I have found sanctuary.

The fixed point in the universe is the unchangeable throne of God. The laws which emanate from it, the supreme will that enforces those laws, the infinite and unchanging wisdom which arbitrates amid all the conflicts, the certain wisdom and eternal youth which preside over the strife and battle, these, when my life is in harmony, create the only perfect sanctuary for human life. Our loyalty to the throne is the law of our liberty.

In the present life on every hand are mysteries that baffle and perplex. Oh, the perplexities and the problems about us. Let me not speak in generalities. Let me speak to one man or woman here. Buffeted man, tempest-tossed soul, the circumstances of the hour are circumstances of chaos. You cannot see how there is to be deliverance. It may be in matters material, mental, or spiritual. Here you are, an atom of humanity, and the surging sea of the multitude does but add to your unrest. You are seeking sanctuary, a place of peace, of privacy, of purity. Oh, to be high lifted above the things which seem to break and scar. Listen, this is the Gospel of hope, "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Oh, the inexpressible comfort of knowing that unseen by the vision that is physical, but surely apprehended by faith, "the throne of God is for ever and ever: the scepter of His Kingdom is a right scepter." And, oh, my soul, the deeper comfort when individual life is immediately related to that throne by submission to its authority. Then indeed is man able to sing:

Father, I know that all my life

Is portioned out for me,

The changes that are sure to come

I do not fear to see;

I ask Thee for a present mind

Intent on pleasing Thee.

How may I find that throne? It is not far to seek, for the King Himself, in grace and tenderness and compassion, is at hand, and without material sign you may find the King, and finding Him thou shalt find the abiding throne, the glorious throne lifted high from the beginning. If thy life and mine may be surrendered to Him, we shall have found sanctuary.

Jeremiah 18:3. The Potter's Work On The Wheels.

Jeremiah 18:3.

The Potter's Work On The Wheels.

Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought his work on the wheels.

Jeremiah 18:3

The figure of the potter and the clay is perennially attractive. Perhaps it has not been so popular in recent years as formerly. There is a note of severity about it, of which our softer age has been afraid. In every age characterized by strength the figure of the potter has been one of those most often used by the prophets and messengers of God. It is interesting to notice that in the Bible it is used by the men mightiest in their personal thinking and in the influence they exerted on their age. Four Bible writers use it, perhaps borrowing it from each other. Whether that be so or not, they are men of peculiar strength: Isaiah, a man of clear vision of God's uplifted throne; Jeremiah, a man of deep understanding of God's heart of love; Zechariah, a man who saw further than any Old Testament prophet, and whose book is a veritable apocalypse not yet fulfilled; and Paul, the man of massive thinking and keen penetration to the heart of the philosophy of the Christian religion.

This figure contains a deeper note than that of its severity, which, when discovered, explains and justifies that severity of which some of us have been afraid, and in the presence of which we still tremble. To refer again to the men to whom I have made reference, it will be seen that while they were men of a severe note, yet to speak of severity as their final note would be to misinterpret them altogether. The thunder of Isaiah perpetually merged into the plaintive wail of his tender love as he expressed the thought of God concerning the sinning people; Jeremiah's deepest and profoundest note was reached when he cried: "Oh that my head were waters"; Zechariah looks on to great consummations, to the outworking of the infinite love and pity; and although Paul, with pitiless scorn and sarcasm, tracks sin until we see it in its deepest and inner meaning, he is also the man who says: "I call God to witness I could be accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake." Wherever you find a man of strong outlook and severe note you find him using the figure of the potter sooner or later, but you also find him melting into tears, a man moved with compassion.

I want tonight, as God shall help me, to bring you back to this old and familiar figure, that we may consider its application to personal life. In the passage which I read to you from Jeremiah the figure is used in relation to national affairs. It is almost invariably so used in the Old Testament. We are perfectly justified in arguing from the nation, which is composed of individuals, to the individual lives, which constitute the nation. There are national applications even today of this great message, upon which I do not propose to touch. I desire to take the principle here revealed and apply it to our individual and personal life.

In the passage from which my text is taken the picture of the potter is given in all simplicity and clearness of outline. Jeremiah is seen going down to the house of the potter, and in imagination

we accompany him. If we have ever been to the house of the potter we have been in very close comradeship with Jeremiah, for among all the changes that have taken place in manufacture the house of the potter is almost exactly today as it was in the olden days. There have been some small changes in the matter of the wheel, but practically no change in essential things, the potter and the clay. So we may imagine we are standing with Jeremiah in that actual house, and seeing exactly what he saw.

Let us look at these things in all their simplicity, without any reference for the moment to the teaching suggested. What did Jeremiah see? He saw the potter, the wheel, and the clay. In the potter he saw an intelligent and capable worker; in the wheel an instrument by which the worker accomplished a definite purpose in the clay; and in the clay a capable material, something with which it was possible for the potter to accomplish his purpose. These facts constitute the essential revelations of the potter's house for all time concerning the relationship which exists between God and man.

The potter speaks first of God's authority, and we are afraid of the figure because we stay there. That is not all, the potter speaks also of God's interest and God's perpetual attention, and finally of God's absolute power. Looking at the potter as he sits at the wheel and places his hand upon the clay, I am conscious of his right and authority over the clay, but if I watch him more closely, I also see his keen interest as the clay changes its form under his fingers. If I watch yet more carefully I see his close and unvarying attention to his work; his eye is never lifted from the clay while the wheel revolves and his hand is molding. Having started with his authority and observed his interest and unvarying attention, I also recognize his power. Those hands which press so gently, or so heavily, are hands of power, infinite so far as that clay is concerned.

Turning from the potter, I look at the wheels upon which the clay is turned, and they speak to me of all the circumstances in the midst of which I find myself. I think that perhaps the truth concerning these wheels can be told most expressively in the words of Browning:

... this dance,

Of plastic circumstance,

This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:

Machinery just meant

To give thy soul its ben',

Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

The wheel is incidental, necessary but transitory, to be flung aside when the potter remains and the clay has found its final form and shape. The things of supreme moment are the potter and the clay.

The clay speaks of man's capacity and relation to God. It is of plastic nature; it can be molded. There are other forms of matter which you never find upon the wheel of the potter. There is never any attempt on the part of the potter to mold steel filings into form for beauty or for use. Clay is material which will take the impress of the potter's fingers.

These are the simplest lessons of the potter's house. There I see God and myself and all the circumstances of my life: the intelligent Master Workman, with the thought in His mind which no one has ever seen; myself of such a nature as to be able to express that thought for others to see it; and all the circumstances of my life, turning wheels, so swiftly turning oftentimes as to make me afraid, presently to be set aside when the vessel is fashioned. So in the potter's house, the simplest of all manufacturing centers and yet the sublimest, for here art and artifice meet, I learn the profoundest lessons of what man's relationships to God really are.

I shall ask you, then, to follow me as I attempt to lead you, first, to the discovery of the principle taught; secondly, to the recognition of purpose suggested; and, finally, to the knowledge of the Person who chooses to stand revealed in this ancient figure as the Potter. Unless these three things are recognized we shall surely rebel against the whole conception. If we simply discover the principle of this figure we shall be afraid. We must also find the Person of the Potter. It is this last quantity which we have too often missed in our consideration of this wonderful figure. We have too often preached the principle of submission to God's absolute sovereignty without reference to the character of God. I shall never submit myself to the principle, so frail and weak and afraid am I, until I see the Potter. If I can but see Him, and know Him, then as plastic clay I shall yield myself to His hand, knowing that in this figure, severe and strenuous, there is the music of infinite tenderness, and patience, and love.

On the other hand, if a man know the Person, and refuse to obey the principle, or accept the purpose, he will fail. The principle taught is that of the absolute sovereignty of God and the necessity for the submission of man thereto. The potter has a right which is absolute over the clay. It cannot resist his hand finally. It has no right to suggest to him what form or fashion it shall take. We hear much today of the rights of man. The first truth which the potter's house teaches is that of the rights of God. Our fathers expressed the truth in a way which we would never care to use, and yet it is sometimes well to go back and listen to the tremendous and overwhelming emphasis which they laid upon it. It is told of a pastor of one of the New England churches in the olden days that he almost invariably asked candidates for membership, "Are you perfectly willing to submit yourself to God whatever His will concerning you may be? Are you willing, if you knew it would be for His glory, to be eternally shut out from His presence?" That question is entirely out of place, since God has said that He willeth not the death of any sinner; and yet at the back of it there is a tremendous truth, of which we are in danger of losing sight—the truth that no man would have any right to complain, whatever God decided to do with him. We know what God would do, He willeth that all should come to Him and live. That is the purpose of God for all, but, knowing that, we must not minimize this other tremendous truth of God's sovereignty. Shall man challenge God? God has a right to take this whole world and annihilate it and sweep out the race that has condemned His law and turned its back on all His infinite love.

Therefore, man's right in the presence of God is that he should have no wish, no claim, no desire of his own, save only to discover the wish, the claim, the desire, the right of God.

But I can quite imagine that someone is stating a difficulty. The clay has no will, and I have will. The clay has no power to choose, and I have power to choose. I was created by this selfsame God with will and the power to choose. Therein lies disparity, and the figure is spoiled by the disparity. Not at all. The distance between God and man is greater than the distance between the potter and

the clay. The distance between the infinite will and the finite will is far greater than the distance between the finite will and the thing that lacks will. When you are working out your ratios of comparison you must be very careful to remember that when you compare the infinite with the finite in any form you have a greater distance to bridge than between the finite and finite in any form. What is will? The power to choose within limitation. Will answers a governing principle. It never acts, save with something at the back of it that drives it. Consequently, the highest exercise of will is the choice of the governing principle, the choice of that which shall be master. When God gave man will, He did so that man might choose his master, that he might either submit himself to the one eternal throne of God, which, in turn, is dominated by righteousness and love, or submit himself only to himself, to his own ruin. So far, man has will. Every man and woman, youth and maiden, and child will choose for himself his master, his ruling principle, and so his destiny. God allows man to make his choice, but when he chooses he is still acting under the government of God, and he cannot finally escape therefrom. He will choose truly if he does so by the principle revealed in the house of the potter, saying as he chooses: "Our wills are ours... to make them Thine." Any other exercise of the will is prostitution of the power bestowed, and must issue in the ruin of the one who makes such use of it. So that while there is a difference between the potter and the clay, on the one hand, and God and man on the other, the distance between potter and clay and the distance between God and man are not equal. If the finite man has a right to complete authority over clay, which is finite matter, much more have the infinite and eternal mind and will of God the right to claim absolute authority over the finite mind and will of man. Thus, the teaching of this picture as to principle is the sovereignty of God, and the fact that man's wisdom lies in unconditional and uncompromising surrender to that will of God, of which man's will is but the spark and offspring.

But there is purpose manifest as well as principle. "Behold, he wrought his work on the wheels." The potter has a thought in his mind for the clay, and he alone can transfer that thought to the clay. The clay is necessarily ignorant of the thought in the potter's mind, but can find that thought, and realize and manifest it by quiet submission to the hand of the potter. My brethren, when I pass from this great principle, which I confess taken alone fills me with fear, to notice that there is a purpose, my heart begins to find comfort. The potter, as the wheel revolves, is not dealing capriciously with the clay; his fingers are not working aimlessly. As I watch him in the beginning of the work I cannot see what he means, but he knows what he means, and as his hands rest upon the clay he is translating into the outward and manifest the thought of beauty and use which is in his own mind and heart. The clay gains in the potter; the potter gains in the clay. The clay is shapeless as clay, but the clay plus the potter becomes a thing of beauty and of use. The potter has in his mind a thought of beauty, which none but himself can see apart from the clay, but the potter plus the clay can express his thought so that others may see it. Here I think we touch one of the deepest mysteries of human life. Man is created that God may have a medium through which He can manifest the things in His own mind. Man is fashioned in His likeness, in His image, that those who cannot see the essential and eternal Spirit may yet see the things of the essential and eternal Spirit in man. How man has missed his mark, and yet by the redemption of Jesus Christ this great purpose is fulfilled. Paul declared: "We are His workmanship." What Paul really writes is, "We are His poetry," not that the Apostle meant we are His poetry, but His work of art, that through which He gives others to see the things of beauty resident in His own infinite mind. This same truth is expressed in Peter's words: "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for

God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." God gains in men that through which He can reveal Himself as the potter gains in the clay the medium through which he can express his thought. But the other side is also true. See what the clay has gained. It was but a shapeless thing, lacking beauty, lacking expression of anything that has refinement in it, lacking utility; but it gains from the hand of the potter form and shape and usefulness. Man alone is as the clay, lacking beauty, lacking true utility, making shipwreck of his own personality; but let man find God's throne and yield to it, submit his whole life to the hands of the great Master Potter, and he finds the poor clay of his life made into something fair and beautiful and full of use to God and to man. You came into this house tonight saying, My life is purposeless. Give it to God, and it will be purposeful. You said, These years have gone from me, twenty, thirty, forty, and I have done nothing. Yield to God and the Potter's hand will be upon you to mold and to make. It may be that the molding and making will not yet be recognized by your fellow men. That matters nothing. It may be that the molding and making will be that of a thing of use rather than of beauty. It may be that He will mold you to some service that men count menial. There is no menial service which the King appoints. There must be yielding to the Potter, but then, oh, soul of mine, when thou art so yielded purpose is the story of thy life.

We go yet one step further in this study. The thought of sovereignty is terrible, and the principle is enough to affright the heart of man. So also is the purpose unless I know the Person. Tyranny may have purpose, but I am afraid of purpose if you only speak of it. Tyranny may demand submission, but I am afraid of submission if you only speak of it. If you bring me to the potter's house and say to me, See the potter and his authority, and yield; see the potter and his purpose, and yield, I will not speak for anyone else, but I am afraid. I know there must be some authority, but I am afraid when I am asked to yield to this infinite authority, although I know there ought to be some purpose. But what is the purpose?

The figure of the potter's house is never perfect until you have passed beyond the principle and the purpose to the Person. Who is the potter? That is the final question before I can yield. There need be no argument, for the answer has been given by revelation in a Person. God is the Potter. Who is God? There is only one answer: "God is love." I might have given a hundred answers. I might have said God is righteousness, is holiness, is beneficence, but I want to gather up all the possessions and express them at once; and when I want to gather up all the characteristics and write them as character there is only one answer: "God is love."

I can submit to love. Now I am not afraid of the purpose. This is the quantity we have too often lost sight of when we have preached about the potter's house. Suffering one, how those hands of God have pressed some days upon the clay, and this clay is feeling, thinking, suffering clay. Oh, how these hands have pressed, but they are the hands of God, and God is love. That great truth is established. I am not going to insult God by arguing it. We know it. The thought of the Potter is love as He molds the clay upon the wheels, and remember He governs the wheels as well as the clay. There ought to be comfort in that for someone. He comes, not only with a thought of love, but with such a nature of love that all the process is a process of love, and if He break by the pressure of His hands it is but to make; if He crush, it is but to create.

I bring you to the principle taught in the potter's house and tell you that until you have learned it, until you submit to it, your life is failure. I bring you to the fact of purpose taught in the potter's house, and tell you, here is infinite comfort if you will but have it so; your life may be purposeful. If I leave you there I leave you afraid, so I bring you finally to the Person. Would we know what the heart of the Potter is we must see it transfixed with wounds upon the brutal cross. Would we know the real meaning of the Potter's hands we must see them with wound prints in them. Would we know the deep truth both as to principle and purpose we must lay our weary heads upon the bosom of God, and feel the beating of the infinite Heart. When I feel that, then I can trust, then I can submit to the principle, then I can consent to the purpose.

My last word to every man and woman, Christian or not, is this: to revel is to take the clay out of the Potter's hands and to render it purposeless and useless—waste—in the economy of the universe. Oh, the wrecks in the potter's field! Vessels half formed, and marred and flung away. The potter's field is full of wreckage, lives that might have been fashioned to forms of beauty, but that they would not yield to the hands of the Potter.

I cannot leave my story with that solemn word of warning. I am perfectly willing that you should charge me with fanciful interpretation, but the potter's field is last mentioned in Scripture in strange company. They bought the potter's field with the price of Him Whom they priced, and they called it, little thinking how deep the significance of their calling might be, the field of blood. Are there some wrecks in the potter's field in this house tonight, men and women who are saying, I have been spoiled and flung away. I am waste in God's universe. The potter's field has been purchased with blood. I come back to Jeremiah, and I read that when the vessel was marred in the hands of the potter he made it again another vessel. Blessed be God, He came to the potter's field, and He gathered up the wrecks to make them again. There is another chance for you, my brother. By the mystery of His betrayal, by the mystery of His denial, by the mystery of His being sold for the price of a slave, the potter's field is bought, and though you have missed your purpose by disobeying your principle, the Person, the Potter Himself, has come down to the midst of the wreckage, and by the price of His own mysterious life has bought it, and the wreck can be remade. But you must begin with the Person and submit to the principle, and find the purpose. May God help us all to do so.

Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:2-4 Sour Grapes.

Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:2-4

Sour Grapes.

In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

Jeremiah 31:29-30

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Ezekiel 18:2-4

Divine religion has no more insidious and deadly foe than misrepresentation, whether in the lives of those who profess it or in the interpretation of its sacred writings.

Nothing can be more disastrous in its effect upon men than a false doctrine; that is, a misinterpretation of what God has said to men, resulting as it must in a false conception of God and of man's relation to Him. And I am growingly convinced that amongst the most pernicious misrepresentations are those which are popular, general, superficial, based upon some isolated passage, and resulting from a conception due to superficial observation. General, popular, superficial, are words I have used of set purpose. These general impressions, resulting from a glance at things upon the surface and expressing themselves in some passage of Scripture, which seems to square with the opinion formed as the result of such superficial observation; these, after all, are far more deadly and perilous heresies than those more familiar ones of the Christian church against which we so often protest.

It is to one such misinterpretation that I desire now to direct attention, because it is so common, and because it is in many respects doing harm. I refer to the popular quotation and interpretation of that proverb which occurs in both of my texts; "... The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Let me say immediately that the statement is not true. It is constantly quoted today, glibly quoted, in the course of conversation in order to clinch an argument. It is constantly quoted in order to prove the helplessness of a man because of his relationship to his father. A man has yielded to certain courses of vice, certain habits of meanness, and either he himself or someone else will say in excuse for him, "... The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." That is to say, this man cannot help these things because he has inherited the tendency from his father.

It is constantly quoted also in regard to that most pernicious and evil doctrine that God punishes children for the sins of their fathers. Neither of these statements is true.

Let us consider, then, first the history of this proverb; "... The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"; in the second place, God's answer to the proverb as we have it here in Holy Writ. From that twofold consideration, let us finally attempt to state the resulting truths which are of importance to ourselves.

Let us first take the proverb itself. What is its place in Scripture? There is a reverent yet mischievous worship of the Bible which leads people away from its spiritual value and corrective force. Let me give you a characteristic illustration of what I mean. It is said that the Abyssinian church, having canonized all the names in the Bible that were the names of good men, proceeded to canonize Pontius Pilate because his name is in the Bible, and he became Saint Pilate." That is a very grotesque illustration of what I mean. Sermons have sometimes been preached upon this proverb as if it were true, because it is in the Bible. Let us see how it comes to be in the Bible. It is found twice and only twice—once in Jeremiah and once in Ezekiel. The prophecy of Jeremiah having been uttered somewhere about the time of Ezekiel's, perhaps a little earlier, I refer first to it. This particular proverb is found among those which Jeremiah uttered in the last days before the fall of Jerusalem. It was a wondrous ministry that ministry of Jeremiah, because it was a ministry foredoomed to failure. Others of the prophets spoke the great Word of God, always in hope that the Word might be listened to and obeyed, and that there might be some improvement in the circumstances of the people as they turned to God; but Jeremiah had to face the certainty that men would listen to him, and then laugh at him, and sin again. Nevertheless he had to go on proclaiming the great message. It was a ministry of failure. If we study his prophecies carefully, we discover this most interesting and wonderful fact, that in the darkest days, when Jeremiah was in the dungeon, his prophecies broke out into their most optimistic notes. The prophecies of hope were uttered from the dungeon. It is in the midst of these prophecies of hope that this particular proverb is to be found. At the close of chapter thirty-one, the great message of hope is singing itself out; through all the darkness the prophet was looking toward the light, from the midst of adversity he was gazing upon a restoration. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel.... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will build the city...." These are the opening words of three strophes. He was looking on to wonderful days that are yet to be. But, remember, he was in the dungeon, he was in the prison, he was in the midst of the most dark and evil hours of the history of Judah. "Behold, the days come.... Behold, the days come.... Behold, the days come.... In those days ye shall no more say, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every soul that eateth the sour grapes,... it shall die." He was looking to the days of restoration when men shall return to true conceptions of God, and he declared that in those days false proverbs shall cease.

I turn to Ezekiel, and there I find the text again. Ezekiel received his great call to prophetic ministry six years before the fall of Jerusalem, but never exercised his ministry in Jerusalem. Away yonder in Babylonia on the banks of the River Chebar, in the midst of the influence of Babylonish things where he saw those mystic representations of God, the revolving wheels, the burning electron, there this wonderful prophet of hope exercised his ministry. While he was doing so, there visited him certain elders from Jerusalem who came to talk with him about the situation. The prophet

received the elders of Israel, and among other things, he said to them, "Why do you use this proverb in Jerusalem? The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. What do you mean by it?" All chapter eighteen is in refutation of that proverb.

When the proverb was born I cannot say, but here it came into use. This is its first appearance in biblical history, and its last; but it has persisted in the speech of men until now. The days in which we first find the proverb were days of national ruin, days of national disaster, of spiritual deadness and moral turpitude. There is an acidity about it that bites. It is striking and suggestive. I can hardly recite it without feeling my teeth are on edge; "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." I go back to the day of Isaiah, the great prophet of the theocracy, and I hear him singing a song of a vineyard, and the owner of the vineyard says he has planted a very pleasant vineyard with a very fruitful vine. "... he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and behold it brought forth wild grapes." I wonder if someone took hold of that thought of the vineyard, and said, "Yes, and the fathers have eaten the wild grapes that are green and acrid. The fathers in the days of Isaiah not only produced wild grapes; they ate them; and as a result, the children are suffering, their teeth are set on edge." The men of Israel, whoever formed the proverb, were using it in that sense of excuse for their sin of reflection upon God. It was the utterance of a word of despair, "We cannot help it. Jerusalem is going to pieces. Zedekiah is playing the fool; punishment is falling upon us. We cannot help it.... The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

The proverb is used today in exactly the same way. That use of the proverb persists in the most remarkable way through the millenniums, and we hear it still. Sometimes it is used with more flippancy than in the case of these men; sometimes with the same despair. Many a man will look into the face of the Christian worker and say, "Look at me. See what I am. I cannot help it. My father has eaten sour grapes, and my teeth are set on edge." Another man will say, "What does God mean by this? I am suffering for my father's sins." It is important that we should consider God's answer to the proverb. First, its presence in Holy Scripture is due to the fact that it had to be denied. It is only to be found in the Bible in order to be contradicted, in order that, like a base coin, it might be nailed to the counter forever as counterfeit and untrue. Yet it is current still. Let us listen to the answer. Jeremiah answered the proverb in two ways. First by foretelling a day in which it would be abandoned altogether; and second, by giving it the lie direct. Now notice carefully the two verses. First we have the prophecy of abandonment. "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He was looking on, as I have already said, to the days of restoration, to the days of the new covenant, and though the most part of Jeremiah's prophecy may be unfamiliar to many Christian people, that part of it is quite familiar by reason of the fact that it is quoted in the New Testament. "I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." In those days, the days of the New Covenant, men will not use a proverb like this, said Jeremiah. In those days of repentance, repentance on the part of men and consequent repentance on the part of God; those days when men, repentant, shall turn to God, and God, repentant, shall turn from judgment back again to mercy; those days in which there shall pass away forever more false conceptions of God; this proverb will have no place in current speech.

Thus, by predicting a period of abandonment, Jeremiah denied the truth of the proverb; and then proceeded to emphatic denial, by statement of the opposite truth, that everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Then, in order that there may be no mistake, he borrowed the figure of the proverb itself; "... every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Then when we turn to the prophecy of Ezekiel, perhaps uttered a little later than this of Jeremiah or it may be almost at the same time, we have a remarkable illustration of biblical exposition. In Jeremiah 31:30 are the words: "... every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." Ezekiel 18 is a sermon on that text, an exposition of it. Let us consider that eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel in order to see what are the things the prophet said in answer to this proverb.

First of all he laid down one fundamental fact; "... all souls are Mine...." At the close of the chapter he stated a final fact; "For I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner." Between that fundamental fact and that final fact he elaborated his argument, taking illustrations from life.

What is this fundamental fact? God says, "... all souls are Mine;... the soul of the father... the soul of the son..."; equally, separately, individually. God declares in that word by Ezekiel that He is not distanced from any man by the distance of that man's father. All souls are Mine; that of the father, and that of the son. God is as near to the son as to the father, to the father as to the son. The father may have as close relationship with God as the son; the son may have as intimate dealings with God as the father. That is indeed fundamental, for if that be grasped, the whole difficulty is dealt with, and that is why it is placed at the forefront of the argument. "... all souls are Mine...." Every soul can have direct, first-hand, immediate dealing with God. It sometimes seems almost too wonderful a statement to find in the Old Testament. It is the culminating doctrine of the New. In other words, full of mystic beauty and tender poetry, it is the thing that Jesus told a woman of Samaria who was a sinner, making His application of the fundamental truth that in every life there is individual possibility for worship; neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain set apart, not here nor there by appointment, but where, anywhere, the spirit of a man goes out to God, there God is.

Therefore, no man is shut off from God by the distance of his father, and no man is brought near to God by the coupling-link of his father. "... all souls are Mine..."; the soul of the father, the soul of the son equally.

Then he proceeded to that remarkable argument by illustration, in which he does not merely take individual men, but takes them in the line of their descent. Remember, he was dealing with a Hebrew people, an Eastern people, who understood a great deal more about the solidarity of the race than we do; who believed in the peculiar continuity that runs from father to son down through the generations; who realized that a son is linked to that which is gone and responsible for that which is to come—a great truth, but a great truth which may be abused, as it was here. With that in mind, notice how the prophet traced the descent. He said in effect, here is a man, a good man, and a true man, and a righteous man. He lives. That man has a son. He is evil; he turns from his father's ways of goodness. He dies because he is evil. Watch still the line of descent. That evil man has a son who is good. He is true, he is righteous. He lives. Now we talk about the principle of heredity skipping one generation and going to another. That may be quite true. But God says, however true that is, there is another truth, and that truth is that every single man stands in immediate relationship with God and can have dealings with God. He will be judged ultimately not

by the things inherited but by the things he did, in view of the immediate force at his disposal, which is the force of his right of access to God. A good man lives because he is good. A son turns to evil courses; he is not spared for his father's goodness but is judged for his own acts of evil. He has a son who turns back to goodness; he does not die for his father's evil; he lives because of his own goodness. All of which means that to turn from evil is to live; to turn from right is to die.

The prophet then went a good deal beyond the question of descent; he dealt with purely personal things. Here is a man who says, "I am handicapped by what I did; I am not blaming my father, but I am blaming those years that the canker-worm has eaten. There is my past. There is my sin. I cannot get away from it. It masters me still." To that man God says, "I put Myself between your past and you; and if you will turn from that past to do right, you will live."

Another man says, "Yes, I know I am going wrong today; but I used to be right; therefore I am still all right." God says, "No, you will be condemned, whatever you did yesterday, because of the sin of today." If my past was one of wrong and I want to turn to right, God comes between me and my past. If my past was right and I turn to wrong, God cuts off that past of right and does not reckon it, but deals with me for what I am.

If that be the answer to the proverb according to Jeremiah's statement and Ezekiel's argument, what is the answer according to Christ? The answer according to Christ is the fulfilment of what these men foretold. It is stated in Jeremiah's prophecy that He will introduce a new covenant whereby the law shall be written upon the heart. That new covenant is fulfilled in Christ. Infinitely the most beautiful poetry in Ezekiel's prophecy is the story of the river that flows from the temple of God. Is there anything more beautiful in the story than this: "Everything shall live whither soever the river cometh"? In Christ that mystic prophecy has been fulfilled, for through Him the river of the water of life is flowing freely. Everything liveth wherever the river comes. In Him men are brought to a recognition of God and of their right of access to God. In Him men are brought into actual dealing with God. So that for a man to sit down and excuse his sin, or utter his blasphemies against heaven, or wail in an agony of despair in the words of this proverb, "... The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," is to deny the teaching of the Bible, and to deny the message and the mission of the Christ.

Let us attempt in a closing word to gather from this meditation one or two essential truths. I put the first into this very definite form. God never punishes children for the sins of their fathers. Nowhere in the Old or New Testaments is it stated that God punishes children for their father's sins, except the children continue in the sins of their fathers. I know the passage that has been quoted, and I go back deliberately to it in the Book of Exodus. In connection with the giving of the law to the people, in the fifth verse of the twentieth chapter I read, "... I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children"—but we must not stop there—"upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate Me." Continuity in the sin of the father will bring continuity in the judgment and punishment of the child. And then, as if in very deed, as one of the prophets said, "judgment is ever one of God's strange acts," mark how the rest of the world runs—"and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love Me..." and that does not mean thousands of individuals, but of generations. But there must be continuity in love. Where there is continuity in sin, there is continuity in judgment. Where there is continuity in love, there is continuity in mercy.

I pray you remember in passing in this connection, for the subject has many side issues, that a distinction must be made between punishment and chastisement. It may be in that larger operation of God with the race, that I do suffer pain as the result of sin in some of my forefathers, but that is not punishment. I am permitted by that very suffering to share in the healing process of the race. Punishment is the pain of disease; chastisement is the pain of excision. The difference must always be borne in mind. Because we are members of a race, a sinning race, most humbly and reverently, and yet with all confidence may I say it, those of us who name the Name of Christ and who enter into fellowship with Him who came to bear the sins of others, are permitted to have fellowship with His sufferings, to make up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ. There are men today who understand that in their suffering, resulting from the wrong-doing of their fathers, they are not being punished, but they have come into cooperation with the great passion of God through which He is cleansing not a man alone, but a race, and is moving toward the establishment of His ultimate Kingdom. God never punishes a child for his father's sin except a child continue in that sin.

That leads me to another word. Someone says, "All that is true, I grant you. But there are some children who continue in their father's sins because they cannot help it." That is quite true. I admit that. That is the operation of the law of heredity. It is a perfectly true thing. We cannot escape it. That is to say, it is true if we shut God out of account; if we put God merely at the back of a process of law, and know nothing of Him in personal, actual experience. If God is merely One through whose propulsion all things proceed, and I am merely one "within the grasp of law," it is no use talking to me. I cannot help it. There is fire in my blood. There is poison in my mind. The devil in solution was transmitted to me, and I cannot fight against it. If there is no Christ and no Bible and no Christian religion, then heredity is the last word, except, perhaps, as we may balance it by environment. But in the name of God we have our Bible, we have our Christ, we have our God; and the Bible declares that God is the deepest fact in human life for every man. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews said, "... we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto a Father of spirits, and live?" A most wonderful word revealing the relationship of every man to his own father and to God. My father was the father of my flesh; he was not the creator of my spirit. I am related to my father in the flesh. He transmitted to me the forces of the flesh but had nothing to do with the creation of my spirit. My spirit in its first creation was of God. God has bound Himself to humanity in a strange and marvelous mystery, whereby He is the creator of the spirit in the case of the procreation of every human being, an appalling and a wonderful mystery; He creates the spirit. If you inherit your tendencies in that delicate and marvelous thing, your flesh, your body, from your father; underneath it is yourself, your spirit life, which your father did not generate but which God did create. Am I to be bound by the accident of flesh and blood, or am I to hear a voice that bids me turn back again to the Father of spirits, that through Him I may receive the power that shall be superior to everything else, and live? Blessed be God, it is ever strangely marvelous and majestic and inexplicable; but it is the operation of the spiritual law. The good man lives; the bad man dies; the good man lives.

Before the prophet had done, he who looked upon the face of God upon the banks of the Chebar must sing of mercy as well as of judgment. Before the prophet had concluded he sang, "The Lord loveth not the death of a sinner." Therefore, to turn to Him is to find power for life against all the

evil that inheritance gives to me. And more, against my own past, for if I have done wickedness and will turn to Him, I shall live.

Let me gather up all the things that are in my heart in final words, and let me apply them. If your teeth are on edge, do not blame your father. Whosoever eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. If your teeth are on edge, you have eaten the sour grapes.

"Yes, but my father did eat them, and I had a tendency to sour grapes before I was born." Is that so? Then God is greater than your father, and the forces that He places at your disposal are greater than all your tendency toward sour grapes.

"Yes, but I have eaten them myself. I plead guilty. God help me, I am guilty. I have eaten them. My teeth are on edge, and I have contracted a liking for sour grapes! Though I hate them, I must have them."

God is greater than one's liking. Get back to Him. He will put Himself between you and your father, and between you and your past, for the river of God is flowing, and there is life wherever the river comes.

Ezekiel 18:4. Individuality In Religion.

Ezekiel 18:4.

Individuality In Religion.

Behold, all souls are Mine.

Ezekiel 18:4

The Bible is unified by the eternal principles which it reveals. Every great principle of religion finds explicit statement somewhere in the Sacred Writings. Elsewhere that particular principle is always implicit, and has occasional manifestation in some special application. In the words of this text I find the central Biblical statement of the fact which demonstrates the supreme importance of individuality in religion, and that, of course, means the supreme importance of individuality everywhere. The words were uttered by the prophet in correction of the mischievous suggestion of an entirely false and untrue proverb, which, by the way, is still current in common speech notwithstanding its absolute falseness. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." These people were blaming their fathers for their sufferings in exile; the inclusive answer to the false proverb is in the text, "All souls are Mine"; the particular application of it to the heresy embodied in the proverb is found in the chapter.

My present purpose is to examine the truth contained in the text, not in this particular application, but in the very broadest way. We shall consider, first, the explicit statement of the text, "All souls are Mine," and then one or two relative truths which must be borne in mind lest we misapply the teaching of the statement itself.

Still by way of introduction, let us note the two principal terms of the text: the word "souls" and the personal pronoun "Mine." The Hebrew word here translated "souls" is a very common one in the Old Testament. There are occasions on which it is used concerning the beasts, but the occasions are few. There are occasions on which it is used in reference to the spiritual nature of men; these occasions are more, but by no means in the majority. There are occasions on which the word is used concerning personality in its entirety, and these far outweigh all other uses in the Old Testament. All souls, that is, all persons, all individuals, are Mine. The possessive pronoun "Mine" is related to the title immediately preceding it, "As I live, saith the Lord God," that is, the sovereign Lord, Who is in Himself the essential One, of unlimited might. The double title suggests the might of God, and the fact that He is sovereign in His Lordship.

From that explicit statement we make three deductions which seem to me to be supreme, and inclusive. If this indeed be true, then every individual soul has personal relation with God; every individual soul has personal rights in God; and it follows by a sequence from which there can be no escape that every individual soul has personal responsibilities to God. These are the facts which the text suggests, and the recognition of which—if that recognition produce a corresponding attitude of mind, will, and heart—will issue, first, in revolutionizing the life of the individual who

yields to the truth, and ultimately in reconstructing society as a whole and realizing the great Divine purpose in humanity.

First, every individual has personal relation to God. I do not say may have, but that every individual has a personal relation with God. That personal relation consists, first, in the fact of being; second, in the potentialities resident in the being; and, third, in the peculiarities that mark off the individual from all other individuals.

I am what I am, not by my own choice, not by the choice of my parents after the flesh, but by the choice and election of God. That is fundamentally true of human nature. I am speaking of human nature essentially, not as we know it experientially, but of what it is in itself. In the deep, essential fact of human nature there is intimate first-hand relationship to God. The underlying fact of every human life, the spirit, has an immediate relationship with God, which is independent of everything that has gone before. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, "We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" I have nothing to do now with his question, or this argument; I have something to do with the essential conception of humanity which there finds incidental expression. It is that the individual has had a parentage on this earth which is of the flesh; but that the individual in the deepest, essential fact of his or her personality has but one Father, who is God. In an infinite mystery, God has united Himself with the human race in the process of its procreation, so that wherever a child is begotten, God acts, and creates its spirit-life. It is equally true that each human being has relationship with God in capacity. The capacity of the individual is partial, but it also is definite. Every man has something that he is qualified to do naturally; every woman has something she is qualified to do naturally. Happy is the man or woman who has discovered the one thing he or she can do, and is doing that one thing well. It does not matter whether it is working in a carpenter's shop, or preaching the everlasting Gospel, or sewing with deft fingers—the great thing is to know the capacity, and remember that it is a Divinely bestowed gift.

All human beings have relationship with God in being and capacity, which implies relationship with God in potentiality. Potentiality is more than capacity. It is the force in capacity that makes it, not dynamic merely, but kinetic, that makes it do the thing it is able to do. That living force in his nature which enables the individual to do the thing for which he is fitted is also a Divine bestowal. The supreme, final heinousness of sin, therefore, is not that men do what they like with their own, but that they prostitute Divine gifts to base and terrible uses.

Peculiarity also marks Divine relationship. By that I mean that the very partial nature of the individual which speaks of incompleteness, nevertheless speaks of relativity, and, therefore, is Divinely arranged. I am incomplete; there are things I cannot do; but there are things I can do. My friend who stands by my side cannot do what I can do; but he can do things that I cannot do. Both what he can do and what I can do are necessary in doing some greater thing. Peculiarity is a Divine gift, and lest I forget it when I come to the application, let me now say, no man should allow himself to be laughed out of his peculiarity; it is his glory; it creates the possibility of his contributing something to the general good.

The individual soul, then, has personal relationship with God in being, in potentiality, and in peculiarity.

Every individual has also personal rights in God. This is of His grace. So far as human thought can go—and it goes a very little way unilluminated by revelation—it is conceivable that such a God as is revealed in the Bible, a God of might and wisdom, might have created individuals in His own likeness, having capacity, potentiality, and peculiarity, and then have left them to themselves. The Biblical revelation, however, declares that what God has created He has not abandoned, that He retains His relationship, and gives to all human souls rights in Himself. These rights may be described in three ways. The individual has the right of access to God, the right to all the resources in God, and—in view of the condition in which men are living today—the right to redemption in God.

Every individual has the right of access to God, and that by the grace of creation. God's grace did not begin with sin, it antedated sin. In the presence of sin it took on a new form, that marvelous form that wrought redemption. But grace existed before sin, and in the grace of creation God put Himself at the disposal of all souls, so that every soul has the right of direct, immediate access to Him, that is, access without mediation. He is to be found of them that seek after Him. He has placed Himself at the disposal of the individual. While it is an almost vulgarly awkward way to put it, it is still true that I have God all to myself when I need to have Him so. Indeed, I never really find Him until I find Him so. He is so infinitely and beautifully jealous in His love of the lonely one that He will brook no interference of any other if He is to reveal Himself in His glory to the one who is seeking Him.

Every soul has this right of access, and this includes the fact that every soul has a right to the resources in God. Here grace is seen in government. All the wisdom and all the strength of God are at the disposal of each individual life, that it may find itself, realize itself, and contribute its part and portion to the great whole which is included in the mind of God. All the wisdom of God is at our disposal; then we need not blunder. All the strength of God is at our disposal; then we need not stumble. All the resources of God are at our disposal; then it becomes base iniquity, arrant blasphemy to blame our earthly fathers because our teeth are set on edge. Nearer and closer than any earthly relationship is that of the God Who places His unfathomable wisdom at our disposal, and also the resources of His inexhaustible strength.

So far, I can conceive that in the heart of some Christian people who are thinking theologically, and also in the heart of some who are not Christian people, but who are thinking out of the agony of their own souls, there is protest against what I am saying. The protest is that men do not find their way to God, do not avail themselves of the wisdom and might of God, nor can they. They are right in the protest insofar as we have gone, but do not forget that there is another fact. God has provided and placed at the disposal of all sinning, failing souls what I cannot more adequately or better describe than by a phrase of the Biblical revelation, "plenteous redemption." Every individual has the right to the redemption provided for Him in God and by God. Through the appropriation of that redemption he passes into the place where he may avail himself of the resources in God, and, finding that the veil is rent, may have access immediately to the presence of God.

These two things involve a third—every individual has personal responsibilities to God. We have intellectual responsibilities to God; we have emotional responsibilities to God; and, finally, we have volitional responsibilities to God.

Our intellectual responsibilities toward God are perfect honesty and yielded obedience to whatever of the essential light of truth shall break in on our lives. Perfect honesty intellectually is the first responsibility. The one type of mind against which God Almighty has set Himself, as the revelation proves, whether in the old or in the new covenant, and supremely in the Person of Jesus, is the hypocritical. We have but to remember the burning, scorching, blasting words of Jesus to recognize that they were all spoken against hypocrites, people who act, who play a part, who dissemble, who try to keep up an appearance which is false to the inward fact of their personality; people who profess to believe something that they do not believe. With the hot and angry protest of honest agnosticism God is never angry; but against the calm, canting profession of belief by a man whose heart is away from his lips, God makes His protest. The first responsibility of the soul toward God may be expressed in other words: God requireth truth in the inward parts, which means intellectual honesty in dealing with Him. Then He also requires ready obedience to whatever light or truth may break out in the individual soul. God does not ask you to walk in the light He has given me. God does not require of me that I shall walk in the light you have received. God does require of me and of you that each of us shall follow the gleam the moment it breaks on our souls as the result of our honesty in seeking to know His mind and His will.

Our responsibility is not intellectual alone, it is also emotional. We are responsible for surrendering ourselves to this God in the proportion in which we discover Him, and for having our surrender take the true form, adoring worship. Someone may say, Surely that is a condition which is not essential. That is the mistake we have made too long. We have treated worship, adoration, and prayer, as though they were nonessential things. Perhaps we have been willing to admit that in certain circumstances, and in certain places, they do add something of beauty to the life. Yet, really, these are the essential things of life. No man has found the real meaning of his own life until he has yielded to God in adoring worship. The soul prostrate before God is never prostrate anywhere else. The man who knows what emotional surrender to God is—prostration, true worship, and absolute adoration—comes out from the presence chamber erect, strong against all the forces that insult God and blast humanity. Our responsibility, therefore, is emotional.

Centrally, and finally, it is immediately admitted, and therefore not argued, that our responsibility is volitional; and this expresses itself in appropriating our rights in Him, choosing His redemption in order that we may take hold of His resources, and that in order that we may practice the presence of God and find constant access to Him.

The whole point of the discourse and declaration is that every individual is to say for himself or for herself, The Lord Almighty has said, "All souls are Mine"; then I have relation with Him, I have rights in Him, I have responsibilities toward Him.

In conclusion, and as briefly as we may, let us attempt to group the related truths. Let us endeavor to encompass the Divine thought, not only as it is here in the text, but as it is interpreted by the Biblical surrounding. "All souls are Mine." Every unit is related to the unity. All souls are God's; but He has not made a mass of individuals who live alone, or are intended to live alone. Trench says that the phrase, "the solidarity of humanity," came into current coinage after the French Revolution. That may be so, as it was so; but the idea behind the phrase was not born then. If the idea behind the phrase had been realized by humanity, there would have been no French Revolution. If the idea behind the phrase had been realized by humanity, there would have been

no war at the present moment. The solidarity of humanity means that in the Divine economy every individual soul is related to the whole race. That great, wonderful word, too often almost sneeringly employed today, the commonwealth, has within it this thought of the interrelationship of souls. Every soul, having individual relation to God, rights in God, responsibilities to God, is, nevertheless, incomplete; and for the completion of the individual life the lives of all others are necessary. The capacities within me are not for me, they are for you, for others. The capacities resident within others are not for those who possess them, but for me. God's outlook on humanity is not on an aggregate of individuals, but on a great corporate whole, a race, a family, in which, if one member suffers a tremor, the pain reaches to the extremity of the commonwealth; in which if one member rejoices, the ripple of the merriment spreads over all the faces. Every unit is related to the unity in the Divine creation.

Consequently, the law that God imposes on me is not merely for the perfecting of my personality, it is in order that I may fit into the body corporate and fulfil the meaning of my life in right relationship with my fellow men. There at once we touch the whole question of the limitation of individual liberty. There is no such thing as individual liberty if by that we mean enslaving other people, and wronging other people. I am free, always provided that my freedom does not mean the harming of my brother man. I repeat, therefore, the law of the unit is in the interests of the unity. Of course, it is for the realization of individual fulness that God imposes His law on me. By law here, I mean not merely the Decalogue, but that law which is immediate, the light that shines on me that you cannot see, that you are not intended to see, and have no right to see; that inner word of God to my own individual spirit that meets me, halts me, checks me, encourages me. God deals with me in law, that I may realize all my own life, and that in order that I may fit in with all the other lives, until from the whole realization of humanity there shall come the possibility of the expression of the whole fact of Deity.

Again, the claim God makes on all is for the sake of each. There we have the other side of the great ideal. The limitation of corporate freedom is found here. There is no such thing as corporate freedom which excludes the rights of the individual. No association of employers or union of employees is to be free to interfere with the individual conscience of individual employer or employee. I know this is a difficult thing to say; it is a problem in economics, but it is a Divine law. No nation in its corporate State-life has any right to say to an individual man, You must sacrifice your individuality, and give yourself up entirely to the will of the dominant power. There are limitations to corporate freedom in order that there may be realization of corporate fulness and beauty. God has set the bounds of the habitations of the nations of the world spiritually and mentally, as well as geographically; and in every national idea there is a contribution to international realization. We cannot, in the last analysis, do without anything that is other-national than our own. It may be an amusement for half an hour that you and I should sometimes laugh at the liveliness of a Frenchman, or that he should make merry over our dulness. When God has done His business with the race, He will need the glory of the mercurial temperament of the Frenchman as well as our own stolidity. Or, to take the narrower outlook, that peculiarity of a man's conscience that you are trying to destroy by your machine is needed in order that your machine may have in it the last touch of excellence and beauty. The claim on all is for the sake of each, as the claim on each is for the sake of all.

From that glance at the Divine thought I make one or two human deductions. In view of this belief no man can judge his brother. I do not believe there is a person who objects to that view as a view; but I wonder how many of us live by it. We are always judging each other, passing our condemnation on others, on the views they hold, the clothes they wear, their peculiarities. If we once grasp this Divine teaching, we shall forever be silent, we shall never again pass judgment on our brother. Every man will rather judge himself in the interest of his brother. Every man will sit in severe judgment on his choices, his actions, his deeds, in the interest of other men. All judgment is finally before the throne of God. I must not judge my brother, because we must all appear before the judgment seat of God; but I must judge myself, and it must be done before that judgment throne, for it is the only judgment throne.

This conception of life—so vast as to include the whole race, so intensive and particular as to grip the soul of every honest individual—is an everlasting condemnation of unjust attitudes towards others. In the fourteenth chapter of Romans there are very suggestive applications of this great principle. Paul there says that we are not to judge our brother because he eats meat and we are vegetarians. He says we are not to judge our brother because he is a vegetarian and we eat meat. He says we are not to judge our brother because he observes holy days—let me be modern—saints' days. Free Churchmen are not to object to the man who observes his saints' days, and those who observe saints' days are not to hold in contempt those who observe no particular days, because they observe all days. There is to be no contempt, no judging. Paul says of every man, "To his own Lord he standeth or falleth"; and then Paul utters the great word of his Christian confidence, "He shall be made to stand." We thought that man would surely fall because he is not a vegetarian. No, he will not fall; his Master will make him stand. We thought that man would surely fall because he was so particular to observe saints' days. It is not so. God fulfills Himself in many ways, and He fulfills human lives in a thousand different ways. Let us be done with unjust attitudes toward others.

There is one other thing we learn. From this vast conception of life so particular and intensive in its application, I learn the necessity for cultivating individuality, always remembering the larger relationship, and always leaving God to deal with others. The individual is to define and yield to the facts of relationship with God, to realize and use the resources that are in God, which may be done by appropriating the redemption that is provided for him in Christ Jesus. So may we enter into the spacious life to which men pass only by the narrow gate and the straitened way.

I address my last sentences to the peculiar person (whom nobody quite understands) whose spiritual apprehension is certainly strange to my thinking, whose mental attitude seems all at an angle. Dear heart—man, woman, youth, maiden—deal with God! Give Him His chance to fulfil Himself in you and you in Himself! Remember that all souls are His, and in your separate individuality respond to His government, claim His resources. As individuals do so; then, lo, without any acts of Parliament, and without any more strife, the strange chaos of aggregated individualities will merge into the cosmos of the Kingdom of our God.

Daniel 6:3. Daniel, A Man Of Excellent Spirit.

Daniel 6:3.

Daniel, A Man Of Excellent Spirit.

Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

Daniel 6:3

The story of Daniel is very old and fascinating. All who had the advantage of godly training, and that supremest advantage in the life of a child, a mother who told Bible stories in the early days, remember how they loved the story of Daniel. I believe that as I read it for our lesson, in the heart of every hearer, there came again the consciousness of the old fascination and the old interest. The story of Daniel is fascinating because it reveals the possibilities of godliness in the midst of the circumstances of ungodliness. Daniel and his friends in that age long ago, were loyal to God even in the land of their captors, and amid all the enticements of the court. In such circumstances perhaps the subtlest of all temptations assail the man of faith. It is so much easier to float with the stream than to stem it. The principle of accommodation appeals so strongly to that lurking desire for ease which is one of the sure evidences of the fall of the human race that it needs very definite courage to resist, to be godly amid ungodliness, to take a definite and positive stand for principle where everything seems to be against principle. The key to Daniel's splendid fidelity may be found in the statement of my text, repeated in other parts of the book, "an excellent spirit was in him." This statement literally means that in Daniel spirit predominated, was uppermost, was enthroned. We are accustomed to use the word "excellent" with other values and intentions, all of which may be right in certain connections. For instance, we say that "excellent" means fine, noble, admirable; and we are justified in thus defining it; but the etymology of the word has another signification. Excellent is something that excels, goes beyond, predominates, and the word translated "excellent" in our text carries exactly that meaning. We may with perfect accuracy read our text thus—it would not be rhythmic or admirable as a translation, but at least it would be accurate—"A spirit that excelled was in him," a spirit that projected was in him. Not flesh, but spirit was the chief thing. This is evident at the very beginning of the story of Daniel. To him, it was not the king's dainties or wine from the king's table that were the principal things, but rectitude, which means life harmonizing with the infinite, the true, the eternal. The principal thing in Daniel was not the physical, though he was fair, ruddy and splendid; spirit was the dominant factor in the personality of this man. Daniel was not a man who thought of himself within the physical as possessing a spirit; he thought of himself within the spiritual as possessing a body. "An excellent spirit was in him." He was a man who began life in the spiritual, and from that center governed the material. He was not a man who began life in the material, and from that circumference crushed and bruised and killed the spiritual. In other words, Daniel was a man proportioned after the pattern and ideal of God. In himself, and in all his relationships, he recognized that the supreme quantity, the supreme quality, was spirit. He was "a man of an excellent spirit."

Let us, then, examine the qualities of spirit manifested in the life story of the man in whom spirit excelled and was the principal thing. I want to say four things about Daniel as revealing what life is, where spirit excels, is dominant, is enthroned. This man of excellent spirit, in whom spirit excels, was, first, a man of purpose; second, a man of prayer; third, a man of perception; and, finally, a man of power. The first two things tell the cause; the second two describe the effect. The cause, or inspiration, of all this man's life story is found in the fact that he was a man of purpose and a man of prayer, and the effect is seen in the fact that he was a man of perception and a man of power. Purpose and prayer, these are the words that indicate our responsibility. Perception and power, these are the words which indicate what will follow in some way in the life of every man in whom spirit is dominant, and who, therefore, is a man of purpose and a man of prayer.

Daniel was a man of purpose. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat." Notice carefully what this means. Purpose is at the beginning of every thing. Directly after finding himself in a place of peril "he purposed in his heart." This is the matter of supreme importance. Thousands of men drift into evil courses for lack of a definite and positive committal of themselves to some position, for lack of having purpose, something settled in their hearts. To delay in the moment of the first consciousness of perilous surroundings is to compromise presently, and, unless we are very careful, it is finally to apostatize. Daniel speaks to us today in no uncertain tone, and the message he utters at the very beginning is:

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone,

Dare to have a purpose firm,

Dare to make it known!

That may be doggerel, but it is philosophy—the deepest secret of life for every young man or woman. I would to God that I could impress that thought on all young people! Purpose in a man's life is all-important. It affords him anchorage in the time of storm, creates for him a base in the day of battle. To have committed oneself to some definite thing is always of value in every walk of life. When a man has formed his purpose he is halfway to victory. That is so with a boy who is looking forward to his life work. When he knows what his purpose is, he is halfway to victory. He is not all the way to victory. It is quite possible to have formed that purpose, yet never to reach the goal; but it is equally certain that the goal cannot be reached without purpose. The first thing for a man to do is to define the inner and deepest thing in his life. Underlying his life somewhere, every man has a purpose in the Divine economy. Daniel found it, named it, announced it, stood by it. It is quite impossible for a man to live without a purpose of some sort. Purpose lies at the back of will, and purpose operates through all activity. Some men have a score of purposes, but never one named, defined, announced, to which they are committed. In matters political, social, in all departments of human life, it is the man who has some definite purpose who is likely to arrive somewhere. I am sorely tempted to use an Americanism. I will. It is the man who has a purpose who gets there! As in the smaller, weaker, lower things of life, it is true a man needs a purpose definite and announced; so also it is true supremely in matters of the spirit, in things of Christian life and service.

Daniel's purpose was a very simple one, and yet it was sublime: simple in its expression, sublime in its great underlying principle. What was the simple purpose announced as he came down into the midst of the Chaldean court and its corruption? I will not touch the king's dainties; I will not drink the king's wine! That is the simplicity of the purpose, but not the sublimity of it. What underlay it? "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties nor with the wine which he drank." He purposed in his heart that his spirit was the supreme thing. He would not permit fleshly indulgence of any sort to rub the bloom from spiritual life, to weaken the nerve of spiritual endeavor, to dim the vision of spiritual outlook. He purposed that he would not defile himself; he was a man of excellent spirit, offspring of God, kin of the eternal, child and heir of the infinite; and he said, "My purpose is not to defile myself." Purpose found expression in his case in refusing the things that were likely to weaken the tabernacle of his flesh, and so defile the indwelling spirit which was himself. Daniel's deepest purpose was loyalty to God, expressed in separation from the corrupting influences of his position. Because he stood there at the beginning, he was strong and victorious through all the coming days.

My brothers, I urge on you the importance of having a purpose and declaring it, of committing yourselves absolutely and positively, not merely in the sanctuary, but everywhere and always, to some clearly defined position. To-day, amid the allurements and enticements of a godless age, let every man purpose in his heart that he will be loyal to Jesus Christ. That is the sufficient purpose for all life today. You and I live in a much easier age than Daniel lived in, with forces at our disposal far more potent than had Daniel. This age may be more complex in its temptations, more subtle and insidious in the way it is likely to spoil men, but it is also an age in which true life is become possible because of the simplification of the purpose. The simplicity of the purpose for each of us is that we commit ourselves to Christ. I am His avowedly; His confessedly; I will follow Him. That is the first and the simple purpose to which I invite every man. Remember that this purpose of loyalty to Christ, formed in the heart, confessed with the lips, is simply the center from which a man is to correct everything else in his life. For Daniel the deepest purpose of all was loyalty to the God of his fathers, and the expressed purpose was his refusal to touch the things that were likely to corrupt that loyalty to God—likely, therefore, to defile him. That was but the beginning of things—the king's wine and the king's meat. There would hardly be a day that Daniel would not have to defend his position and declare his loyalty to God. Some of the youths had to affirm their purpose when Nebuchadnezzar set up his image. The purpose was the same in every case.

I am a little afraid lest I make this thing look complex when I want to make it simple. Purpose loyalty to Christ, affirm it; and then from that center you may begin to construct your circumference and set the externalities of your life right. I meet scores of men who say, I try, but I fail. I want to be a Christian, but this or the other thing stands in my way. I reply, You are not to do these things in order to become Christian; you are to become Christian in order to be able to do these things. Do not attempt to construct your circumference in order to be in right relationship with your center. Find your center in order to correct your circumference. We have not forgotten how impossible it is to form a circumference until we have found the center. It is said that Giotto could make a perfectly round O. Well, he was the only man who could ever do it, and (forgive the skepticism of this) I have never seen one he made. But I am perfectly sure in the moral realm, in the life you and I have to live, we shall never make the circumference of life true and beautiful until we have found

the center. The first thing is that the man has a purpose in his heart, and that purpose, to crown Jesus Christ. I will begin there, and then, if the king's meat and the king's wine are likely to interfere with my loyalty, I am to refuse and stand upon this central purpose of life.

Daniel was also a man of prayer. Nothing stands out more clearly than this fact. When the interpretation of the king's dream was asked, Daniel called his friends together into a compact of prayer, asked them to pray with him, that he might have the necessary light for interpretation. As the story moves on, it reveals the truth that he was a man who had regular habits of prayer, who three times a day turned his face toward old Jerusalem, thought on God, spoke to God. Here we touch the secret that underlay his fulfilment of purpose. Strong purpose is powerful in execution only as we are dependent on God. The heart may be firmly determined on loyalty, but unless we know how to lean hard on God the forces against us will prove too much for us. A man meaning to do right and depending on God is absolutely invincible. If the purpose has been formed in the heart, what next? Be men of prayer. What lies beyond the fact of a man's praying? First, his sense of personal limitation; second, his profound conviction of Divine sufficiency. What is prayer with these things lying in the background? It is the use of the means of communication between a man's weakness and God's power, between man's limitation and God's sufficiency.

If we desire to live this life in which spirit excels, the life of victory and of power, it is not enough to have purpose. You and I must recognize our limitations, frailties, weaknesses. In the days of our young manhood we feel so self-sufficient. When the eye is bright, the step elastic, the will buoyant, we think we can do the high thing, the noble thing, in our own strength. Oh that God may reveal to us at once that this is not so, that sooner or later, the godless life is always a failure and a wreck! Was there ever a man of stronger personality or individuality, apart from Christ, than Saul of Tarsus? Yet he confessed, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." He declared that though he willed, purposed, the high and the true, in execution he stooped to the low and the false. That is not the story of his high Christian experience, but the story of what he was apart from Jesus Christ. It is the story of every man who has not learned the deep secret of prayer. His own limitation, the fact that the forces of evil about him are too many for him, is one of the deepest and most important lessons any man can learn. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Side by side with this there needs to be the set conviction of the strength and the sufficiency of God in every human life. Let me put this in the very simplest way so that it may be helpful to some of you. The lot is cast in this great city. Centered in London is every pernicious thing that is likely to blast young life. You have come up to this city, some of you with the great advantages of godly parentage and home training, and some of you have the greater advantage of having been born in the city and so of being familiar from childhood with its allurements and its vices. Be that as it may, sooner or later, unless you learn the secret of dependence on God, you will be wrecked and ruined on one side or other of your nature. I shall never tell you that all you have to do is to realize your own manhood, and fight the battle and conquer. I am here to tell you that evil is too strong for you, that the forces that lure are the forces that ruin. In your own strength you cannot overcome. If that were all I would be silent. But there is another truth, the truth that Daniel knew, the truth that God and Daniel were stronger in combination than all Chaldean corruption and idolatrous evil, the truth that you and God in London are invincible against all the forces that will sweep against you.

Doubtless I speak to some who have fallen, who have sinned, and they know it. I take you back to the point of your fall, and tell you that your fall was due to your independence. Had you been a dependent soul, trusting in God, recognizing His power, communicating with Him by prayer, always leaning hard on Him, you would have won where you failed. Yet how often young men say, I have failed and I could not help it. That is partly true and largely untrue. Even if you have purposed solemnly in your heart you will be loyal to Christ, you cannot help failure if you are attempting to fight the battle in your own strength. But if you and I know what it is to trust in God's sufficiency, and to pray, there is no temptation we may not overcome, no advance of the evil one that we may not repulse. Man dependent on God is absolutely invincible. Evil cannot master me if I have attached myself to the infinite resources of God, and if that attachment is maintained by the prayer life. Form habits of prayer. Daniel prayed with his face toward Jerusalem every day. I urge you to have special times, special seasons; I urge you to continue in prayer.

But there is another word about prayer. When Jesus swept away the Temple at Jerusalem, He made all the earth a temple for the true worshiper, and not merely in this house or in your own private Bethel, not merely at the appointed moment, but wherever you are, with the eye unclosed and the word unuttered, you can pray. The Puritan fathers talked very much about ejaculatory prayer. I pray God that we may form the habit of it. Realize that when peril confronts you, without waiting for time or place, in the midst of your daily vocation, you can pray; and in the moment of such praying the answer of prayer is with you. The great word of the Hebrew epistle is, "We may find grace to help us in time of need." At the back of that phrase we have a Greek phrase, which we can safely translate by an English phrase with which we are all familiar: "Find grace to help in the nick of time." Right there, when peril threatens, there I may have grace to help. The strong man in London is not the man who says to Jesus in the morning, I will not forsake Thee today, and then goes out to fight his battle alone; he is the strong man who says to his Master in the morning, Lord, lead me today lest I fall, and then prays in the city, in the office, in the warehouse, in the most subtle place of peril, that of loneliness. Everywhere grace to help awaits the cry of the praying soul. Purpose first, and prayer perpetually.

Then follow the two results I have mentioned. First is a spirit of perception. There is no doubt that the gift of interpretation which Daniel received was especially bestowed by God for special purposes. The immediate application to us is that to the man who has made his purpose and prays will be given a clarity of vision which will enable him to accomplish the Divine work allotted to him. It may be, as in the case of Daniel, that of interpretation, or it may be in some other form. The thing of importance is that the man who has purpose and prays will be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. Have you not felt that you need spiritual perception to discern between right and wrong, and that quickly? How often a man says, "I did it before I knew it; I fell before I was conscious of the temptation." But to the man of purpose and prayer come a growing keenness of insight, sensitiveness of soul, quickness of perception in the commonplaces, and a keen vision in the crises of life. Special illumination from God flashing on the pathway saves him in the moment of his peril. Habits have to be formed, whether they are good or evil, and on the basis of purpose and of prayer a habit of quick understanding of the will of God in matters of life and conduct and a keen insight in the subtleties of temptation come to a man.

Finally, Daniel was a man of power, first, as we have seen, in small things, but also in great things. I am not suggesting that if you take this position of purpose and maintain it, take this life of prayer

and follow it, that if you have this quick, keen perception of God by the Holy Spirit, you will come to a place of wordly power. It certainly is remarkable that this man held office in three kingdoms—Babylon, Media, and Persia. The man of purpose, the man of prayer, the man of perception, was recognized by the men of his age and trusted, and put into places of power, and, as the text says, "the king thought to set him over the whole realm." I am not saying that this kind of promotion will necessarily follow in every case; but I am saying that the man of purpose, of prayer, of perception, becomes the man of power—power that enables him to say no. It is a very old story (some of you are tired of hearing it—it was told you in Sunday school) the story which says that the man who can say no is the strong man. It is still true. Sometimes it takes more courage to say no than to lead an army. The highest courage is not the courage of the battlefield; it is moral courage, the power to say no. I am not giving you an ethical lecture and advising you to say no. I am here to say to you: Be a man of purpose, of prayer, and you will be able to say no. What nerves a man to say no in the presence of temptation is the fact that he has taken his stand and is a man of purpose, is a man of perpetual prayer, and, therefore, a man of perception, seeing the issues, understanding the virtues, and able to say no when the moment comes. Our age wants men who are superior to it, not men who are driven by it. Men who are superior to the age are men in whom spirit excels, men in whom spirit has its anchorage in purpose, its source of strength in prayer, its ability to lead in perception, its consequent power in all departments of life.

My last word shall be as my first. For the Christian man the principle has been focused in a Person, so that true purpose is loyalty to Christ, true prayer is communion with Christ along the pathway of life, true perception is submission to Christ and the answering illumination of the Holy Spirit, true power is co-operation with Christ in the commonplaces and crises of all the days. I pray for you, my brothers, as I pray for myself, that we may be men of excellent spirit, men in whom spirit is crowned, enthroned; and that we may cultivate purpose and prayer so that we may find what it is to be men of perception and power. The age waits for such men, and wherever they are to be found the result will be that others also will be led into true life.

Hosea 12:3, 4. The Healing Of Life.

Hosea 12:3, 4.

The Healing Of Life.

In his strength he strove with God; yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him.

Hosea 12:3-4

The story from which our text is taken is a very old one; it has often been the subject of meditation and that in many applications. Yet it is wonderfully fresh and suggestive, and that because it brings us face to face with some of the elemental things of the soul. I expect I shall be perfectly accurate when I say that the youngest person in this house who heard me read the story had heard it many times before and had read it many times before; yet I do not hesitate also to say that they heard it again tonight with interest. The reason for this is that it makes direct appeal to the deepest things in human life. I repeat that this story of a distant age and of other climes brings us face to face with the elemental things of the soul.

It is the story of a man alone with God in the night, facing the inward and hidden things, keenly conscious of their presence and power. It is the story of a man who desired to be alone with God in the night and had deliberately arranged for such an experience. After having dispatched the droves of cattle in the day to meet his brother Esau, he took his wife and children back again over the Jabbok on to the other side to be away from the danger zone. He had stood there watching them, until they had disappeared into the quietness of the night, and then he had deliberately sought to be alone with God.

On the Divine side, it is the story of how God responded to the intention of this man, of how He stooped down to meet him on his own level, appearing to him and touching him as a Man. That is the story. That is the whole story. That is the marvel of it. A man away from his fellows and alone with his God.

Jacob desired to meet with God that night as we have said; but he did not quite know what that meant, he did not understand what it involved; and he never could have known perfectly what that meant, could not have understood what it involved, had it not been that God respected that desire and responded to the intention; and moreover that He did so by taking the form and fashion of a man and so drawing near to the seeking man.

This story, so old and so familiar then, is arresting and wonderful, among other reasons, because it gives us the account of one of the earliest theophanies, or appearances of God to men in human form. To my own mind there can be no question at all that the Man who drew near to Jacob that night, was none other than the Angel Jehovah, the very Son of God, taking that form at that time in order to draw near to that man, because there was no other way by which he could effectually be reached and mastered.

The story is full of interest also because the transactions between Jacob and Jehovah that night were definite and decisive. They came into touch, nay, into grips with each other. God and the man were set upon a purpose, apparently in conflict, but in reality one. The issue was victory for God and therefore for the man.

This, then, is the story. A man alone with God in the night, desiring to be alone with God, finding himself alone with God, though for a while not knowing that it was God Who had drawn near to him. Presently, when the crimson flush of morning was upon the sky, knowing that he had really been with God as he had desired, this man departed, and limping back to his loved ones, said as he went, "... I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." That is the wonderful story.

Let us then give ourselves once more to meditation of this familiar, strange, and revealing story. I do not now use that word "meditation" carelessly. I use it quite carefully, remembering the definition of it which I once heard from the lips of Dr. Griffith-Thomas. He said: "Meditation is attention with intention." Let that be the nature of our meditation. We will take time to study the story, not merely because it is an interesting one but in order that we may give attention to some of the things it reveals, intending to submit our lives to a like process and to discover from our meditation some of the true, deep secrets of life, that we may come to a fuller realization of them. I pray that for a little while there may be given to us that grace of detachment which shall enable us to separate from each other and from all lower interests, that so we may be as surely alone with God as Jacob was by the running Jabbok. I know it is difficult, but I know it is possible. It is made more difficult in that I as His messenger stand in some senses between you and Him. Yet may God grant that the shadow of my personality may be entirely blotted out by the light of His conscious presence, and that I may not in any way hinder your coming into close fellowship with Him while we consider the old story once again.

I suggest that we observe: first, this man's sense of need; second, this man's sense of opportunity as it came to him that night; third, the business of the night between this man and God; finally, this man's sense of realization when the morning broke.

First, then, let us consider his sense of need. Here I am greatly helped by all that to which I have been making reference, our familiarity with the whole story. Jacob that night was face to face with his past. That past was marching back upon him in the form of Esau to confront him. It was twenty years since he had passed by that way. Twenty years before he had left home, then a man of seventy years of age. He had been compelled to hurry away under the shadow and cloud of a great deception. Now he was coming back, and he was realizing the troublesome fact that a man's past is not always behind him. Again and again a man's past swings round before him and marches directly upon him. That is what was happening to Jacob that night. All our language concerning him in this regard is merely the attempted expression of our conceptions of infinite things. These statements are the paradoxes of the spiritual life.

Jacob that night was facing his past. The meanness by which he had taken advantage of his brother's hunger to obtain his birthright; the perchance greater meanness by which he had deceived his father and obtained the blessing of the first-born.

These are the hours that we all know, hours when the past that we cannot undo, though we would like to do so, comes back confronting us again.

In that hour of the night the need of Jacob was not only that occasioned by the fact of that marching upon him of his past; his need was occasioned by the fact that that marching upon him of his past was menacing his future. This man was a hard, astute, bargain-driving, clever man with that material cleverness that succeeds anywhere with material things. Yet on this night, face to face with his past and his future, the underlying depths of his nature powerfully and persistently asserted themselves. Let us listen to him: "... with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." That is, translated into modern speech, I started out twenty years ago with no capital, and now I am coming back a wealthy man. Nevertheless, he was troubled, disturbed, afraid. His trouble that night was not occasioned by the thought of his cattle and his property; not principally with the thought that the mother with the children may suffer, though that did trouble him. He was principally troubled by the fear that he might be excluded from the land of his fathers, from the very land which he knew was his in the economy and purpose of God. All the future within the Covenant made with Abraham and Isaac seemed menaced by the past; and, therefore, the man was distraught, troubled, perplexed.

Yet, I am bound to say that I personally do not think that this reveals the deepest need of the man as he himself felt it. The more carefully I ponder the story the more I believe that on this night Jacob was conscious of need more profound than any of these things can possibly measure; that he was conscious that his own life was somehow wrong in itself; that he was hot and restless in the deeper consciousness of the soul. He had been disappointed, he had become embittered. His experiences with Laban had been unsatisfactory in every way. The two bands which he possessed did not give him rest of soul. You may ask me what right I have to imagine that he had any such feeling as he took his way to the place of loneliness with God. I reply that my conviction is based upon what he said in the morning: "... I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." That is the language of a man who knew there was disease in his life, that there was something wrong with the central fact of his own being. It was the exclamation of a man who knew fever and restlessness, who knew that ache at the center of his being which no bands could satisfy and to which no material success could minister.

This is the picture of Jacob as I see him at the close of that day. Laban had marched away from him in the morning. Esau was coming to meet him. He had manipulated his possessions so as to appease his brother, for the past of his wrongdoing was confronting him. There was anxiety in his heart about Rachael and the children. But these were not the principal reasons of his trouble. His deepest agony had no relation to Laban, to Esau, or to the wife and children. It was an agony concerning his own soul. Therefore, he did what men constantly do under stress of circumstances; he said, I will stay here a little, alone with God. God is ever the last resort of the soul, self-troubled, restless, consciously diseased. How good a thing it is that even under such conditions He is willing to receive us.

Let us now observe what the story reveals of the sense of opportunity that came to him. There can be no question that to Jacob it was a wonderful day, a strange day, a mystic day. Things happened to him that day that were most strange. He had heard of such things before perhaps in the experience of his father Isaac or of his grandfather Abraham. Indeed, he had also known something of the kind in a dream twenty years before on the very day that he had left his home.

At the beginning of the chapter, two verses tell the strange thing that had happened in the early morning. Laban had left him. The parting had been by no means a pleasant one. Much bargaining had gone on between them. There had been fierce recriminations. Jacob had spoken out at last all the bitter things he had been thinking about Laban. Then there had been the building of the heap of stones and the naming of the place Mizpah; and the covenant of suspicion, the Lord watch between me and thee, the idea being not that of the watching of a shepherd but that of a policeman. Each had practically said to the other, "that heap of stones is a sign that you are not to rob me any more, and that I will not cheat you any more!" So at last Laban had marched away.

Then Jacob saw angels in the early morning. Where they were I cannot tell; what form they took I do not know, but to this man there was given a vision of angels perhaps sweeping across the sky before his astonished eyes. Then he said: "This is God's host!" The sight of them, as we have said, reminded him of the dream of twenty years before. He called the name of that place "Mahanaim," the place of two hosts; Laban's host had gone, but God's host was near. He was conscious of the two hosts. Then the business of the day went forward, but the impression of that morning vision would remain with him until eventide.

Look at him again in the midst of the business of the day, in the midst of the technicalities—while he was arranging the presents for Esau with that cunning which characterized him, sending one drove at a time in the hope that one drove would appease Esau and if one drove would appease Esau, and if one drove would suffice, Jacob was not the man to give two—in the midst of all the astute arrangements, he suddenly broke out into prayer, and this was the way the prayer he prayed commenced: "... O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac...." God was all about him that day, breaking in upon his consciousness in different ways; in the morning by the vision of the host of angels when Laban had left him; in the middle of the day by the remembrance of the religion of his father and his grandfather and of God's relationship to them, a remembrance constraining him to prayer. So, at the end of the day he said, "Now let me stay here and be alone with this God. Let me set past, and future, and this troubled self in right relation with Him."

Then came the surprise. It is only as we read this story quite simply that we catch the true and full force of this. We are not to imagine that Jacob knew immediately that it was the hand of God which was laid upon him. The statement of the story is undoubtedly the statement of Jacob's consciousness; "... there wrestled a man with him...." Let us be as realistic about this story as though we were reading it to a little child. This man had stayed behind for the express purpose of being alone with God; and he was surprised and startled because some man suddenly, mysteriously, was with him, coming from no one knew where, and no one knew how; and this stranger put his hand upon him in the night, and Jacob found himself in the strong grip of a man. "... there wrestled a man with him...." It is never said that he wrestled with the man. There is a sense, of course, in which he did, but his wrestling was the wrestling of defence against the attack of the stranger. A man had put his hand upon him. Jacob did not know what he meant, what he was going to do, or who he was.

In the presence of this strange experience, Jacob exerted all the force of his strength against the wrestler in the night. Mark the marvel of it, he was successful, so that the man wrestling against him did not overcome him, did not prevail against him. That was the business of the night.

The first matter which impresses me and which we should observe carefully, for its spiritual value is supreme, is that of the tremendous resisting power of Jacob. As a whole man he was invincible and invincible against the hand of God. God could not break in upon this strong will, so long as the man remained a whole man. The whole man was wrong, had been so for years; his central principle of action had been a wrong principle. He had faith in God and had never lost that faith in God. It was the central fact of his mental life. But side by side with it there had been such confidence in himself that his faith had never waited for God. He had ever been trying to help God and so had hindered Him. It was that inner strength of the man which was making for his ultimate ruin and which must be broken down if he was ever to find the real fulfilment of his own life. Yet Jacob in his own strength was that night invincible. There was no way to capture and realize his life save through the overcoming of that strength.

Does this story sound unlikely, contradictory? Let us think once again in the light of our own experience and in the profoundest mystery of our own lives. God ever stands outside human will as is necessary to the perfecting of human life. His one aim is to bring that will to surrender to its own election to His will. There are thousands of men who are resisting God as successfully as Jacob did that night.

At last, as the first flush of the dawn appeared, seeing that He prevailed not against him in conflict with his strength, He adopted another method, that of weakening his strength physically. God's power was limited in the struggle through that night, self-limited, held in restraint, in the first process of the conflict. Now He proceeded along another line, He crippled him.

That method does not always conquer a man, but it does give him a new opportunity. There are men, alas, whom God has crippled with the intention of crowning them, but they have never let Him crown them. That is the alarming, terrific fact that we have to face most solemnly. The last peril is that we may not only resist God while He is attempting to bring us by wrestling into subjection but also when He attempts to break in upon our lives in pain and sorrow and crippling. But Jacob did not fail here. He responded to disabling though he had held out in tremendous and invincible strength against the wrestling of the night. It was when he was crippled, I think as I read the story, that there broke upon him the consciousness that he was having dealings with One Who was not man. He then began to discover that the very thing for which he had remained behind had happened to him, even though he did not know until that moment that it had happened. The hand of the man upon him was the hand of God.

Many a man, when desiring to meet with God, has got into grips with Him, and yet has not recognized the hand upon him as that of God. In the commonplaces of everyday life, oftentimes the very things that batter and bruise, until we halt by the way, are the result of God's hand upon us, and yet we do not recognize it. So it was with Jacob.

When the Man, the Wrestler, at last said, "... Let me go, for the day breaketh," Jacob said: "... I will not let thee go except thou bless me." That was not said in any strident voice! Hosea tells us the story of that cry. With his strength he strove against God, and God did not win over him in that struggle, neither did he master God therein. Then God crippled him, and at once he prevailed over the Wrestler, not by his strength but by his weakness. He prevailed in the moment when submitting with strong crying and tears, he said: "... I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Now with close attention let us follow the events. Said the Man to him, "... What is thy name? And he said, Jacob." It is more than interesting, it is vital to the story that we remind ourselves of the meaning of this name. We read it and to us it is just a name, but it was a Hebrew word with a very clear meaning. Heel-catcher, supplanter, trickster! That is what Jacob means. Then said the Wrestler to him, "... Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel"; no more trickster but one under the mastery of God. It is of equal importance that we should remember that Israel does not mean prince; the word "prince" has really no connection with the word at all. Thou shalt be called Isra El, one ruled by God. That is what the Wrestler said to him.

Once more let us look at this matter closely. In the moment when Jacob found his strength gone, he became conscious that the touch upon him was not merely the touch of a man but the touch of God; and that he was in the very presence of God. Then he said: "... I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." In that "I will not" of weakness, there was almightiness of strength; in that submission to God, he found his way into the place of power. When weakened, he flung himself upon God, claiming His blessing, he was crowned.

Finally, what was the sense of realization that came to him? What did that night really mean to him? We have the answer from his own lips and then from the pen of the chronicler. From his own lips this is the story: "... I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Then from the pen of the recorder, this is the answer: "And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." I do not think that very many words in the nature of application are necessary. The story powerfully conveys its own teaching. As we said at the beginning, we have given ourselves to a reconsideration of this, supremely desiring in the process to have direct and personal dealings with God. The reasons for this desire have brought us into closest sympathy with the theme. For us, also, there is a past that we want to be dealt with; there is a future which is menaced by the past; and deeper than all others, there is the sense within our own souls that we need some healing touch, some infinite and eternal medicine for the soul that will make fever end and bring us new strength and peace. We need healing of life. Is not that the truth concerning ourselves? I will not commit others to that statement if they object, but that exactly represents my own sense of need.

Then be it ours to remember that all this need in the case of Jacob was met in the experience which he described on the declaration he made: "... my life is preserved."

Let us begin at the first point, our need as to the past. God puts Himself between a man and his past. We are familiar with the sequel. When the morning broke and Jacob went forward to meet Esau, he found that no present was needed to appease him. God had dealt with Esau. Esau met him with love, and tenderness, and brotherly affection. That sequel is illuminated for us by a quotation from another part of the Bible:

When a man's way please Jehovah,

He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

In the moment when we really submit ourselves to Him, He puts Himself between us and all in the past that haunts the soul. It may be, and indeed assuredly must be, that while He puts Himself between us and the past, we shall yet undergo chastisement resulting from the past; but it will be His hand, and it will be only such as is necessary for the making of our lives. All that is possible for

us here and now. What in the past is haunting thy soul, O brother mine? I pray that you in this moment let God come between you and your past! He can do it, and He can do it in such a way as to give your conscience perfect peace. God does not deal with the past in the life of a man by some kind of good-natured beneficence which says, "We will say no more about that past!" That is not God's method. It is impossible to him, Who is as surely Light as He is Love. But by atonement, by the mystery of the Cross, by the wonder of the passion; by that which can only have illustration in human history by the Cross of Calvary. God in His pain stands between man and his past gathering into His own being all the sin and its issues and annihilating all in the compassion and passion of His love. That is the only place of rest for a troubled conscience. Nothing less than that can give true peace to the sinful soul. I dare not say that it does not satisfy me for it does. In that sense also, with regard to my past, I am prepared to say, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

It is equally true that God stands between us and the future. There are some of us, it may be, who are not especially concerned about the past; we know its failure and shortcoming, but we have trusted His grace, and there is no haunting phantom out of the bygone years that comes to haunt the soul. But the days ahead are threatening us. We see things in the future which are not the result of love and peace but which are threatening our hope, our confidence, and our very life. We are almost afraid to take one step forward, so great is our foreboding of ill. Then let us resolutely dare to put God between ourselves and our future, knowing of a surety that He Who met the man Jacob by the Jabbok that night so long ago and by the correction of his past made his future possible, is the God Who will undertake for all of us who put our trust in Him.

Yet finally and supremely, this personal dealing with God means, if we yield to Him and allow Him the mastery and possession of our lives, that He will deal with the deepest malady of the soul, with that inner heart trouble, that disease, disease, that fever that spoils the life. It is by dealing with that central trouble that He strengthens us for all the future has in store for us.

I thank God that I am able to make that announcement knowing that all about me are those who know the thing is true, for they have found God's healing and so have entered into His peace.

If someone imagines himself or herself to be lonely, let such an one remember that his or her need has already been met in the experience of thousands of trusting souls. There is no temperament that He has not met and satisfied, no peculiar form or fashion of human heart-trouble, soul-malady, spirit-agony, that He has not already healed.

If, then, we will but yield ourselves to Him as He stands confronting us in Christ with the break of the first day that follows the night of our struggle and submission, the sun will rise upon us, and we shall know that having seen Him face to face, our life is healed; and we also shall be able to call the place of our yielding Penuel, the face of God, because it shall be the place where strength weakened becomes strength realized, the place where the old supplanting nature is changed into the victorious life of those who reign in life, because they are ruled by God.

Amos 8:11-13. Famine For The Word Of God.

Amos 8:11-13.

Famine For The Word Of God.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst.

Amos 8:11-13

Technically, the prophet Amos was an untrained man. He declared, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees." In the language of our age, he was a layman. Yet Amos was a prophet in the one and only sense of the word, as again his words indicate in the verse following the one just read, "And the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel." His prophecy as preserved for us is unique in its method. None other of the Hebrew messengers adopted exactly his plan. He spoke finally to Israel. He began, however, far away from Israel, and gradually came nearer, until he spoke directly to Israel. His first message was concerning Damascus. Then in turn he spoke to Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Moab, and Judah. At last he came to Israel, and if his words had been burning words to the nations lying about, they were scorching, flaming words when he spoke to Israel.

The message of Amos had for the men of his time a twofold significance in addition to its direct words spoken to them. First, it revealed the fact that God maintained His government of all the nations, and not merely of Judah and of Israel. In the second place the message of Amos made it perfectly plain to those who had ears open to hear, that privilege creates responsibility, for the mildest things he said were said to Damascus, the farthest away, and the fiercest things were said to Israel.

The words of my text constitute the final statement of the judgment that is falling upon Israel. There is to be a famine, not of bread or of water, but of the Word of the Lord. There is to be consequent upon this famine a great restlessness. Men will travel from sea to sea, from north to east, striving to find the Word of the Lord, and will not be able. There is to be as the issue of this restlessness the absolute failure of the finest and best in the life of the people. "The fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst." This is a new word in the prophetic message. Judgment has been described oftentimes as the coming of a sword, as the coming of a plague; but this man sees more deeply, and announces judgment which is no longer a material judgment, but a spiritual one; speaks to them no longer of the locusts and the fire and the plague and the sword, but of the lack of the Word of God. That, according to Amos, is the final fact in God's judgment upon a guilty people. Not the thunder of cannon, not the march of armies, not the devastation of lightning, and thunder, and hail, but of famine of the Word of God.

We shall think of three things: first, the famine suggested; second, the restlessness ensuing from the fruitless search; and, finally, the issue in the fainting of the fair virgins and the young men.

First of all, then, this famine of lack of the Word of the Lord. I think, brethren, we need to be very careful in reading this message to understand its true meaning, or we may fall into an appalling mistake upon the very margin of our consideration. The prophet did not mean to say that there would be on the part of God a capricious withholding of His Word. He did not mean to say that the famine would be because God did not speak, or because God had nothing more to say to men. That is a surface interpretation, and I believe it to be as false as it is pernicious, and as pernicious as it is false. His description of the famine indicates rather a condition of man in which he is incapable of discerning. The difference is essential and radical. Not that God ceases to speak, but that man loses his power to hear. Not that God withholds His Word from men, but that men hear it, and never hear it.

What, then, is this condition of being without the Word of God? No message from the unseen that man hears or recognizes, or believes in. No word speaking to the deeps in a man's life. No authority laying its command upon the life. That is famine of the Word of the Lord. Think of these things in separation from the line of our study for a moment, and ask whether any men are in that condition. Are there men who say there is no message from the unseen, men who never hear the voice that speaks to the deepest and profoundest thing within them, men who live upon the surface of things? If so, they are men living in the midst of a famine of the Word of God. No consciousness of the infinite, no ear that catches its music, no heart that feels its thrill. That there are multitudes of such it is impossible to deny. What, then, is the reason?

In the case of this message of Amos, what was the cause of the famine? "They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, As the way of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again." The sin of Samaria was the worship of the calf. The men who swore by that calf and said, "As thy God, O Dan, liveth," were the men who passed into the place of famine for the Word of God. The substitution of the creature in any form for the Creator, constitutes incapacity to receive the Word of God. If a man shall substitute nature for God, a priest for God, a ceremony for God, then, though the Word of God be speaking to him by a thousand voices, he hears none; though the light of God flash on him from every point of the compass, he walks in the darkness; though all the mystic influences of the Divine immanence are about him; he is unconscious of them. No voice, no virtue, no vision, no victory, a famine of the Word of God, because a man has stayed with something short of God. It is possible there is someone in this congregation who is living in the midst of a famine for the Word of God. It may be even as I attempt to deliver the message there is nothing in it for you. Words, empty words, a meaningless occasion, an opportunity for curiosity. You are in the midst of a great famine, famine for the Word of God; and the reason is that you have compelled the capacity in your life which ought to take hold of God to cling to something short of Him. As Paul puts it in writing to the Romans, you have substituted the creature for the Creator, and having fastened your life upon something short of God you have become hardened to the touch of God, unconscious of the fact of God; and though His Word is living and quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, it fails to affect you.

The sealing of the Bible always follows idolatry, and the issue of such idolatry is famine, and the result emaciated, emasculated humanity. I am sometimes told that the Word of God has been sadly neglected for many years—and, alas, I am sure it is true, but it is declared that the reason is that men outside the Church and within the Church have been indulging in what we speak of as Criticism, Higher and Lower. Nothing of the kind. The thing that has sealed the Word of God to the believer is the believer's unbelief and disobedience and idolatry. If we could rid ourselves of our idols, the famine would be over, and the Word of God would be living to us again. It is our own idolatry that robs us of the consciousness of the living sustenance of the Word of God.

But follow on, and notice how the prophet describes the fruitless search. He says, "They wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it." How does that apply in our own day? You may make the statement in another form. Wherever a man has lost his capacity for the Word of God, cannot discern it, does not hear it, does not appreciate it, almost ceases—hear me carefully in this apparent contradiction—almost ceases to desire it, wherever that is true, there results in the life of that man, woman, community, a great ceaseless searching restlessness; and I believe that the restlessness of our own age is due to the fact that our age is in the midst of the famine of the Word of God, a famine following upon its idolatry, national, social, and individual.

But is there such restlessness? Think with me for a moment. I maintain there is an ignorant restlessness. By that I mean a restlessness that does not understand itself in any measure, and I believe that that ignorant restlessness which is unconscious of the meaning of its own fruitless search is that of nothing less than a search for the Word of God. Men do not know it. They would not so name it; but every attempt to satisfy the life without God is in the last analysis an attempt to find the Word of God. I suppose the old illustration, the most familiar perhaps, the most sublime in Scripture, is the natural one that comes to the mind at this moment. Paul's great word to the Ephesians, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." What did the apostle mean? Why link these two things together? Because they are bound together, because in the underlying meaning of the attempt to get some kind of satisfaction out of wine is the cry of the soul after God. And all the restlessness of this ignorant age is the panting of the human heart after the Word of God. There are men and women running from north to south—from north to east, to be true to the figure of my text—from sea to sea, from land to land, in ceaseless, roving restlessness. What do they want? Ask them and they tell you, some new sensation, some new thing, some new thrill. What do they really want? They want the Word of God, they want God Himself, communicating to them through the Word that they may find the sustenance of their spiritual life. Oh, the restlessness of the worldling in London, as understood from the upper spaces, is the panting of the heart, in ignorance, after God. In such ignorant restlessness God is not recognized, and no sin is admitted. God is not talked of. It is a little out of date to talk of God among such people. They dismiss the word. Religion is taboo! God is not named, and sin is never mentioned. There is a great famine in the land.

But then there is a semiconscious restlessness in this age, and you will find it in all the attempts to substitute something that is seemingly religious for God, and the Word of God. We are hearing a great deal about the new thought in religion. The whole movement, including Theosophy and Christian Science, what is it? It is a fruitless search after something to put into the place of God. It is the cry of the soul after God. It is semiconscious; but do you want to know wherein lies the

radical famine of all these new things? I will tell you in two sentences. God without government. Sin without guilt. God, oh yes, we believe in God, but not in the God of the throne, and the God of the white light, and the God of holiness, and the God of government, and the God Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and the God Who can by no means look upon sin, and the God Who claims the whole strength and mind and passion of a man. Not that God, but some sickly, sentimental ideal which is the God of these new movements; and the supreme revelation of their idea of God comes in that second sentence of mine, sin without guilt. Sin, oh, yes, it is the under side of good! It is the necessary shadow cast by light! It is a process in the evolution of the race! It is an infirmity, and the man who is a sinner is more to be pitied than anything else. Sin, oh, yes, but no guilt. The man is not to blame. There is to be no terror in his heart as he thinks of God. There is to be no shame in his face as he thinks of sin. And all these things are the false substitutes of a semi-ignorance, and they leave the heart hot and restless, wandering in the deserts, seeking for the Word of God. But I want to say to you tonight that a doctrine of God that leaves out government never gives the heart rest, and a doctrine of sin that does not admit guilt never heals the open sore of humanity's wound. There is no rest. It is a fruitless search. But I am afraid I am bound to go further, and say that there is a conscious search after God which yet finds no answer. Our age is full of the lust of people who call themselves spiritual for new things. New preachers, new movements, new setting of truth, forsooth! God is honored with the lip, but not with the life; and even among these people sin is lightly, slightly treated. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean this. I know some people who would have me think of them as being pre-eminently spiritual, who are marvelously particular about the tithe, and mint, and anise, and rue and cummin, who have signed pledges not to touch everything they do not care much about, and yet who are forevermore neglecting love and charity and rightness, and the things which are the things of the holy God. And I think this last state is the worst of them all, because there is more light and less obedience among these people. In the midst of the famine they finger the Word of God, they do despite to it by making it minister to their own preconceived notion, never hear its deepest note, never catch its profoundest sound, never measure their lives by it. It is a poor business, and they are living in the midst of the famine, a famine for the Word of God.

Do you hear what Amos says: "They shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it"? This is perfectly true. Materialism is a perpetual lust, an unanswered agony of desire. Sensualism is a deadly opiate. Novelty is a pernicious irritant. It is a fruitless search. There is no substitute for the Word of God, directly heard by the spirit of man and obeyed. Restlessness is fever. Fever is a destroying fire.

I turn, finally, for a moment to the last thought. What is the issue of it all? The prophet speaks of the fair virgins and the young men; and you see at once, beloved, that that is a superlative method of treating his subject. He does not say a word of the effect produced by the famine of the Word of God upon the full-grown man, tending toward arrest of development. He does not say a word concerning the effect of the famine upon the aged, merging toward the shadows where the light ceases. He chooses the fair virgins, the young men, those who are the strongest and best, the most hopeful, those most able to endure. He takes them as illustration, and he makes his illustration absolutely superlative by his choice. Not, I repeat, the man who is in the midst of the battle, and presently expects to lay down his weapons. The prophet does not speak of the effect of the famine upon this man or upon the age, but upon the fair virgin, with the bright and beautiful

cheek, and the lustrous eyes, and the light of hope. The young man with the strength and vigor of his young manhood upon him, the youth for whom the fingers of morning are ever busy, laying on their gold and vermilion. These, what of them in the day when the Word of God fails, what of them? They shall faint for thirst. If I may venture with all reverence to put the statement of the prophet into another form it is this, that the best without God fails, that the finest capacities lacking their true inspiration faint and pass and perish. It is a superlative illustration, a daring one, an arresting one, one that has appealed to my own heart as I have prayed and thought of my message.

Follow the issue naturally. If this be true of them, what of the rest? Where the Word of God fails, what happens? Morning is overcast, noon is a tempest, and night is starless. And yet—oh, the terror of it!—we tremble if we hear of the possibility of an army's invasion. We blanch with fear if we think that plague is about to visit our shores and our cities. We are afraid of the failure of the harvest. But when we speak of the famine of the Word of God, even we who name His name are in danger of being interested and nothing more. And yet the greatest disease that can come to a nation, the final judgment of a nation, the thing that presages its decay and disintegration and downfall, is famine of the Word of God. Find me a nation largely composed of men and women and little children who do not hear the voice, or see the vision, or feel the touch of God, and I will find you a people marching to ruin, despite their armaments and their policies, and their banners and their boastings. "Lest we forget." It was a prophetic word. "A famine of the word of God," carelessness about what He says and thinks, with a restless search after something, which does not understand the meaning of its own endeavor, and ends only in the hectic flush and the devouring fever. I am bound to say that I think we, as a nation, are living right there. There has been a famine of the Word of God.

Now hear me as I utter my final word. The prophet of today, like Amos, cannot, if he climb the mountains of vision and see from God's standpoint, be blind to the sins of other nations; for he can never forget that God is the God of all the nations. The prophet of today will see quite clearly the cruelty of Russia, the frivolity of France, the rationalism of Germany, the civic corruption of America. But the prophet cannot forget the relation of privilege and responsibility, and he cannot forget the fiery, burning, searching words of his Lord, that it is to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the cities that heard His voice, Capernaum, Chorazim, and Bethsaida. Russia will have a far better chance in the final judgment of the nations than England, because England has had infinitely more light. Feeling as I do that the thing rests almost as a burden on my heart night and day that we are living in the midst of a great famine, not of bread, but of the Word of God, what is this famine? It is a curse upon our idolatries. Do not forget that, like all the curses of God, it is an effect following a cause. God never curses capriciously. The curses of God are the harvests of man's own wrongdoing. If we have lost our sense of the Word, and our love for the Word, and our confidence in the Word, and our appreciation of the Word, why is it? It is God's judgment, but it is an effect following a cause. To turn from the cause will be to disannul the effect. And how shall we turn from the cause? By turning from our idolatries to the living God. You notice the emphasis I am inclined to put upon this, which I think is the prophetic emphasis. I am not saying we must turn to the Word of God to be corrected from our idolatries. I do not think that is the order. We must turn from our idolatry to find the Word of God. If we are gathered to study the Word of God we had better begin by putting our idols away. The Word of

God will be a sealed book to me, though I desire to teach it, unless my idols are set aside. Granting, for the sake of my argument, that the teacher himself has defined his relation to God, and the idols are broken down, and God reigns in the life, he cannot teach it to you if idolatry remains in your life. Holiness guards the wicket gate to the Word of God. As it is true that if iniquity be in my heart, God will not hear me, it is equally true if iniquity be in my heart, I cannot hear God. The first condition for the study of the Word of God, the fundamental condition, the absolute condition is not the intelligence of the schoolman; it is the clean heart, and the pure soul, and the temple in which no idol lives or hides. If the idols are broken down, if we are governed absolutely in the temple of God by the will of God, then there is no famine in the land. God's Word flames with light, and thrills with power, and is food for the hungry soul as much as ever. But you can read it, study it, analyze it, tabulate it, and remember it, and die for lack of it if in your heart the idols remain, and the impure thing abides. May God in His infinite grace and mercy and power take His own message out of all my words, and speak it to your hearts.

Amos 3:3. How Can A Man Walk With God?

Amos 3:3.

How Can A Man Walk With God?

Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?

Amos 3:3

The sermon tonight is a sequel to that of last Sunday evening, and the text is a starting point. In that sermon we considered what God requires of a man as that requirement is revealed in the message of Micah: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The Divine requirement, then, is to walk humbly with God, loving mercy and doing justice.

The text this evening, taken from the prophecy of Amos, is the first of a series of seven questions which the prophet asked in order to illustrate the relation between cause and effect, each of them showing that an effect demands and demonstrates a cause. These are the questions:

Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?

Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey?

Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him?

Shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all?

Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid?

Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?

The force of the illustrations may thus be summarized. Communion proves agreement. If you see two people walking together you know they have agreed. The lion roaring demonstrates the prey. Do not forget that Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa, a man used to the desert and the hills, to vineyards and to sheep, living the agricultural life of the time; and almost all his illustrations have that desert background. He was accustomed to the sound of the roaring of the lion, and so he says, I know when I hear the lion roaring that the prey is in sight; the cry of the young lion proves that the prey is caught, possessed; the fall of a bird into the snare proves the setting of the gin; the spring of the snare proves that the bird is taken, the trumpet in the city proves the alarm of the city; calamity in the city proves that God is acting.

The purpose of the prophet was to vindicate the authority of his own message. He went on to declare that his prophecy proved that the Lord had spoken to him. Let me say immediately that with that application of my text I have nothing more to do. As I have said, the text is a starting

point.

We begin by admitting the principle: an effect proves a cause. Two people walking together prove that they met, that they agreed ere they started. Consequently, the text is intended to show that you cannot have an effect without a cause; you cannot have two people walking together unless, in the sense of the text, they have agreed. If we change our text from the interrogatory form we may read it thus: Two who walk together must have agreed. Therefore, we may once again change its form and get at that phase of the truth that we desire now to emphasize, as we read it thus: Two must agree if they are to walk together. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The Lord hath shewed thee what is good; to humbly walk with thy God. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" God and a man must agree if they are to walk together.

That brings us to our special theme. Granted that God requires of a man that He should walk with Him, we inquire, How can a man walk with God? How is the necessary agreement out of which such walk proceeds to be insured?

Eliphaz, that wonderful old Easterner, gave Job the highest and best advice when he said: "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace"; but Job's answer was very pertinent, coming out of human experience: "O that I knew where I might find Him." Our business for this evening, then, is to investigate what is necessary if a man is to begin to walk with God, and to continue to walk with God.

In attempting to answer these inquiries, How can a man walk with God? How can agreement be insured? I will, first of all, consider this conception in itself a little more fully, that of walking with God; and, second, I propose to deal with the condition which is revealed in the question, agreement between God and a man if they are to walk together.

With the general conception we need not tarry for very many minutes. The thought is persistent in the Biblical literature. It emerges in that radiantly beautiful and comprehensively final biography, one of the greatest biographies in all the Old Testament literature, found in that apparently most uninteresting chapter in Genesis, the fifth chapter, the chapter of the long names, and the perpetual, monotonous tolling of the knell of death. Right in the heart of the chapter is the briefest and most inclusive biography, "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." That is all we know about Enoch, and there is more in it than we shall discover, even if we give all the remainder of our life to careful thought on the subject. There the phrase emerges in Biblical literature. It often recurs in the apostolic writings, especially in the writings of Paul, who was constantly thinking of life as a walk with God. It finds its fullest and richest interpretation and expression in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, that being a theme with which I am not going to deal at any length; but we will come back to it, God willing, on a subsequent occasion. While we need not tarry long with the conception, there are some of the fundamental suggestions of the phrase of which we do well to remind ourselves. Let us first take the words walk together, and consider them. The word walk is perfectly simple, yet it is full of suggestiveness. Walking implicates life, volition, effort, direction. Apart from life, there is no walking, and there can be no walking which is not preceded by volition. We have never walked anywhere without willing so to do. Although we may not wish to go, we will ere we do so. Walking is the simplest exercise; there seems to be nothing in it—until we have ceased to do it for three months and then try again, when we find there

is much in it! Walking implies effort. It always means direction. We walk toward somewhere. Even if you walk in a circle, you are ever going round toward the starting point. These are simple things, but they are fundamental to our meditation.

The word "together" is a more arresting word, quite simple, quite common, yet here almost startling. Literally, it means, as a unit. I might read my text like this: How shall two walk as a unit, except they have agreed? That is the root meaning, and the use of the word shows that it suggests a walk of perfect unity in all the fullest, deepest senses of the word. The question which the prophet asked was not, How can people walk together in an occasional or casual way, except they have agreed? Even in such cases there must be a measure of agreement; but if there is to be continual walking, perpetual walking, consistent walking together, there must be agreement which is profound and deep. This word "together" will help us to understand the word agreement presently. It is to walk as a unit, two persons to walk as though they were one.

What, then, is the conception? We all recognize that this is a figure of speech. What is the fact for which the figure stands? What is it that we intend to suggest, that Micah intended when he spoke about walking with God, that the Old Testament historian intended to suggest when he declared that Enoch walked with God, that the New Testament writers intended to suggest when they declared that we were to walk with God? What is the fact suggested by the figure? The conception is of God and a man moving together as a unit, in perfect time and perfect rhythm. Two lives, the life of God and the life of a man, united in volition, willing the same thing; united in effort, putting out strength toward the same end; united in direction, moving toward the same ultimate goal. A man walking together with God is a man willing one will with God, working one work with God, journeying toward one goal with God.

Therefore—for the moment leaving out of thought the Divine save as it influences the human—it is the picture of a man going toward the Divine destination, but it is infinitely more than that. It is a picture of a man moving toward the Divine destination along the Divine pathway, not choosing his own way to reach the ultimate goal, but marching along the pathway on which God Himself is marching. It is a picture of a man moving toward the Divine destination along the way of the Divine procedure in the power of the Divine fellowship. Therefore it is a picture of God and a man having identity of interest, having combination of resources, having fellowship of effort; God and a man having identity of interests, the master passion of the man that which is the master motive of all the Divine activity; God and a man having a combination of resources. Let me use the word that is haunting me, and which I want to use—and I halt only because it seems almost irreverent, and yet I trust it will not be so—God and a man pooling resources. We have become used to that phrase in recent days as we heard of three great nations pooling resources in order to reach one great issue. God and a man pooling resources! God bringing in all His infinite resources and placing them at the disposal of a man with whom He walks! That is the amazing thing. Never forget that if that is an amazing thing, there lies within it the claim that man shall place all his resources at the disposal of the God Who walks with him. Again, God and a man having fellowship in effort. This is a value full of wonder. A man making his effort with God; God making His effort, toward the ultimate goal, with a man.

One other thing is suggested, the last I am going to mention. The figure suggests finally mutual humility. The necessary humility of God, necessary, or He never could accommodate His goings

to a man's slow footsteps; the necessary humility of man, necessary, or a man could never hope to keep pace with God. "Walk humbly with thy God" was the word of the text last Sunday evening. From the New Testament, in its most stupendous passage in some ways, comes this great word, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." It may be that if I were discussing mutual friendship with a man I might not emphasize this so strongly, yet even in human friendship there must be mutual humility. If I am to walk far along life's pathway with you, my friend, my comrade, there must be humility in my heart and in yours. The very simplicity of the figure enables us to see that this must be so in the case of God and a man, God stooping, humbling Himself, accommodating His steps to the faltering, trembling walking of a man; a man humbling his spirit in order that he may walk with God along the pathway.

So we pass to the second matter, which, after all, is the supreme one in our present consideration. In order that there may be this walking together with God there must be agreement. Let us try to understand this condition.

The root idea of the Hebrew word is to fix upon by agreement or appointment. The marginal reading in the Revised Version runs: "Shall two walk together, except they have made an appointment?" I believe it was Dr. George Adam Smith who translated it, "Shall two walk together, except they have kept tryst?" That helps us, but it is altogether too narrow, it does not include enough. The idea of agreement is infinitely more than that of meeting at a certain point; it is that, but it is infinitely more. I take this word and trace it through the Old Testament, and see in what different ways it is used. It includes far more than our word "agreement." It is translated, to meet; that is what the margin suggests, to meet at a stated, fixed, time or place. We never use our word "agreement" in that sense. If I were going to make an appointment with you for tomorrow, using this word in this sense, I might say, We will agree at the British Museum at twelve o'clock. That would be in harmony with one Hebrew use of the word. It includes the place appointed, and the time fixed, and the fact of meeting there. The same word is used to indicate a summons in a legal sense to a fixed tribunal, and the thought is that of a judge who meets at an appointed place a person summoned to appear before him. It is translated also to direct, the idea being that of authoritative marking out of place and way by consultation, which consultation, when it has come to decision, is to be the binding law of the journey. Once again, I find the Hebrew word is translated to betroth, and within it lies the idea of that mutual surrender of life to life and love to love which creates the marriage relationship. All these things lie within the Hebrew word. As Amos used it, it was a far fuller word than our word "agreement" suggests.

What, then, is the general and inclusive conception of this word "agreement"? Ideally it refers to that perfect affinity and adjustment which makes one unit of two. That perfect affinity, not necessarily perfect likeness, it may be complementariness in nature, which brings two persons together into unity. That is the ideal conception. Initially the word suggests a method by which that is brought about; a place where those two persons come together; a time when they come together; and all that responsive habit of soul to soul and life to life that makes the coming together a perfect articulation, agreement, unity. So that when Amos asked his question it was no surface question. He did not mean merely, How could two persons walk together, except they met? He meant that, but something far fuller.

When we apply this idea to man and God, we see how deep this question is, and what profound things it suggests. Apparently it suggests a difficulty, for an insuperable barrier exists between man and God that never can be broken down or overcome by man himself. How can God and a man meet together, agree together, walk together except they have agreed? If I have said it seems to suggest a difficulty, let me now say something else concerning man. I am not now using the word man as it applies to myself, or to any man in this house; I am using the word in its ideal sense. I am using the word as I find it in the Bible: "Let Us make man." No man here is fulfilling the ideal that lay within that great word of Deity. I am now speaking of man ideally, as the idea emerges in the account of the creation, with all it there connoted. Then I make this declaration: man ideally, according to the first Divine intention and purpose, was in perfect agreement with God. The ideal of humanity that came out of the Divine mind, the thought that was in the mind of God when He said, "Let Us make man," was an ideal, a thought, of a being in perfect agreement with Himself, having closest affinity with Himself, being perfectly adjusted to Himself, being in absolute articulation with Himself. That is the meaning of the phrase that follows the words I have quoted, "In Our own image, after Our likeness." It may be that someone is challenging me and saying, You are basing a great deal on that word in Genesis. What right have you to say that was the meaning of that word in Genesis? I reply, Once in the process of the centuries and millenniums a Man walked across this human stage. Once one little part of this world was illuminated by the presence of a Man Who fulfilled the Divine ideal; it was the Man Jesus of Nazareth, Whose incarnation was not the incarnation of God only, but also of God's ideal in humanity. In Him alone we have seen what God meant when He said, "Let Us make man." It is because of that I say that man ideally is in perfect agreement with God, has affinity with God, is adjusted to God. The capacity for that affinity, that adjustment, lies within every human being. That is not the last thing to be said at that point; but it must be said and insisted upon. The trouble with our England has been that we have been thinking of ourselves, not as those who think too much of ourselves, but as those who think too little of ourselves; and the very selfishness which has been the root inspiration of so much of our living, leading us along pathways of childish triviality into things that have cursed and blighted and blasted us, that very selfishness is born of a low, ignoble, conception of life. O may it not be, may we not pray this prayer among our other urgent prayers today, that out of this darkness and this hour of calamity men may be brought back to a larger understanding of the tremendous dignity of their own manhood and womanhood! The Man of Nazareth is the revelation of that for which God makes man. So that if a man shall tell me that if he becomes a Christian he will have to run counter to all his natural propensities, I say, No, the propensities which lead him away from God are unnatural, things of evil, distortions, abominations, because they spoil him. A young man from Oxford once said to me, I am going to be a Christian because I believe it is right; but everything will go against the grain. I replied, No, sir; everything will go with the grain; you have been going against the grain all your life. The word of Augustine is sublime truth: God has fashioned us for Himself, and therefore the human heart cannot find rest until it finds rest in Him. When the prophet demands, and when we insist on the demand in a higher relationship than that in which the prophet made use of it, that there must be agreement, we are insisting that a man must come to himself, and in coming to himself he will discover that there are within him by Divine creation capacities for affinity, for adjustment, for articulation with God, for thinking with Him, living with Him, moving with Him; for being one with Him in a fellowship that is perfect.

To leave the matter there, however, would not be to be true to experience. Man actually is alienated from God, dislocated, in every way divorced. I said that a man walking with God is one who has identity of interest with Him, combination of resources, fellowship in effort. Take the life of any man today, apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, and you find there is divorce of interest, divorce of resources, divorce of effort. Man naturally—and now I use the word in its doctrinal sense, in its Pauline sense—is not in affinity with God, is not walking with God. It may be that he sings about God, that he never takes the name of God in vain, that he worships externally in the house of God; but he is not seeking first the Kingdom of God; he is not placing the resources of mind, body, and estate at the disposal of God for the accomplishment of God's will; he is not moving in effort along the same line with God.

Therefore, what do we need, what does a man need? He needs some method by which he can be brought into the agreement for which he was made, but which he has missed. He needs some place where he and God can meet and meet anew. He needs a time of coming together. That is what every individual needs, and I pray you remember the message is an individual one. If I have used the word "man" generally, I have not intended to use it generically, but in the sense of the text of last Sunday evening, "He hath showed thee, O man"—always the individual man. My own soul is in review as I speak. Verily I am made for God. Yea, verily, I have not known God by my nature or by my choice, or by my will. Yea, verily, therefore, if I am to walk with Him I must find some trysting place where He and I can meet, and meet, not merely in a superficial, casual way, but in some profound action by which I can be again adjusted to Him in will, in thought, in purpose, in pattern, in life, in all the actualities of my being. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?"

I am going to say again as I close what I said last Sunday evening: This is not the Gospel. There is no Gospel in my text. It is investigation, it is inquisition. The whole time of our meditation on the text has been time—if there has been any true meaning and value in it—in which we have been finding out the need for the Gospel. The Gospel is not here. But we have a Gospel, and the Gospel begins with emphasizing the truth revealed in the investigation, for the Gospel begins with Jesus, of Whom I have spoken, Whose name we know so well, of Whom we thought in a passing moment as the one ideal and perfect Man. That is where the Gospel begins. But Jesus merely as Example brings me no Gospel. If you tell me that is the perfect Man among all the ages, and that if I will conform my life to His, then I shall walk with God, I shall say in answer, I cannot do it, I cannot conform my life to His, I cannot copy Him I love, I cannot reproduce in this life of mine all the fair and wondrous strength and beauty that shone and flashed and flamed in His life. I emphasize that further by declaring that if this Jesus of Whom men speak so often today, this perfect Example, has done no other than reveal that example, He has done no other for me than mock my impotence as He reveals my degradation. I cannot stand in His presence without knowing how entirely, utterly unworthy I am. Can you? Are you among the number of those strange men who write and talk of Him, and whom I sometimes meet, who admire Jesus and patronize Him? Whenever I meet Him I am compelled, as by comparison I look in on my own soul, to say I am unclean, I am a leper. I may have many things in which to boast if I compare myself with other men. I think I could compare myself with some of you quite advantageously; but, so help me God, I have given up the business, because I have seen the light that shone in Judæa and Galilee, and through all the centuries, and I am ashamed. There is a Man walking with God. There is a Man

moving in the Divine direction, one with the Divine will, co-operative with the Divine purpose, in the Divine strength. God and a Man walking together! There is a Man in perfect agreement with God. All that He was in the deepest truth concerning Him I find that I am not. There is no Gospel in my text. There is no Gospel in Jesus as Example.

But we have a Gospel, for remember that the One on Whom we looked and grew ashamed, did not consummate His human life as He might have done if all He had sought was to give the world a perfect example. If Jesus had wished only to give the world an example He would never have descended from the Mount of Transfiguration. That was where His perfect human life was consummated. There in the light and glory He was prepared for entrance into the life that lies beyond, without death. The Sinless One had in Himself no reason to die. By transfiguration, metamorphosis, complete change, He might have passed out into the strange, wonderful, mystic life that lies beyond. But He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. He trod the way of the valley where the lunatic boy was in possession of a demon, and He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, and gave Himself with all the strength of His purity to the buffeting and bruising of sin and malice and evil, and in a mystery unfathomable, and, therefore, blessed be God, sufficiently deep for all my sin to find in it cancellation and oblivion, He went by the way of the Cross and the way of Resurrection to the eternal and supernal heights. That is the Gospel!

Consequently, that Cross, my brother man, is the "trysting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet." That Cross is the place where I may come into agreement with Him, be reconciled to Him, discover anew the meaning of my own life, and receiving from Him absolution for all my sin, may receive also the energy and the life which will enable even me, tremblingly but yet surely, to walk with God.

Where shall I meet with Him? You may meet with Him right where you are. When may I meet with Him, in some special evangelistic meeting? This is an evangelistic meeting. In the after-meeting? There is no after-meeting; this is the after-meeting. Then by coming out? No, by sitting still. By signing a card and sending it in? No, by doing nothing that other men may see. There where you sit you may at this moment have direct dealing with God in Christ by saying to Him what I venture to declare you have sung hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times; but now by saying it and meaning it as you never have before, the central actuality of all your life:

Nothing in my hand I bring,

Simply to Thy Cross I cling;

Naked, come to Thee for dress,

Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly,

Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

If some in this congregation at this moment will make that the language of their inner life, then they will reach the trysting place, and presently, down these aisles and through yonder doors and along the darkened streets of London they may walk with God. And you also, young man, my brother, whom I honor as I see you wearing the King's Regimentals, presently in France, in the trenches,

you may walk with God. But there is no walking with God unless there be agreement. There may be agreement through Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Habakkuk 3:17, 18. Jubilation In Desolation.

Habakkuk 3:17, 18.

Jubilation In Desolation.

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls;

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

This is an arresting text. There is rhythm in its movement and a vividness in its description which compel our attention, yet that which is most impressive is the contrast between the conditions described and the experience claimed. The conditions are these:

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls.

And the experience is this:

Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The earlier part of the text constitutes one of the dreariest pictures man ever drew. To summarize in a word, it is the picture of a scene of desolation. Yet that is preliminary, it is the introduction to something that is to follow. As we read the statement through, we find that the figure in the foreground is radiant and exultant, and all the dreariness in the background serves but to fling up into clear relief this figure in the foreground. As we proceed, we discover that the dirge is but the

prelude to a plan, and if we summarize the conditions by the one word "desolation," we may express the experience by the one word "jubilation." This is the mystery, the arresting wonder of the text, that these two things are brought together, jubilation in the midst of desolation. If we were reading this for the first time, or if we found it in any other literature than this, we should be driven to inquire, Was this man a fanatic? Was he deluded? Or did he speak a wisdom of which this world knows nothing when he crowned the song which describes desolation with the song which expresses jubilation? We believe that this is a song of the higher wisdom, and that the singer was a philosopher in possession of the true secret of life.

Let us observe at once that he did not begin on this level. I turn back to the opening of this prophecy, and I find the same man speaking in other terms and in other tones:

O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save. Why dost Thou shew me iniquity, and look upon perverse-ness? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there is strife, and contention riseth up. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore judgment goeth forth perverted.

That is the tone with which the prophecy begins; yet it ends with the song of jubilation in the midst of circumstances of desolation. To that matter we shall return again presently.

Having affirmed our belief in the wisdom of this man, let us consider the ground of his confidence as it is suggested in his psalm; and let us consider the joy of his experience as it is expressed therein, and then turn again to a consideration of that process of faith by which he rose to this height from the depth which is revealed in the opening of the prophecy.

First, then, as to the ground of his confidence. At the head of the third chapter of the prophecy of Habakkuk we find these words: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, set to Shigionoth."

We are at once arrested by this strange, mystic, suggestive word "Shigionoth" at the opening of the psalm. There have been many opinions concerning the meaning of this word. It has been suggested that it was a description of poetry that was almost incoherent, a series of expressions having little connection with each other. In that suggestion there may be an element of truth, but it is by no means finally satisfactory. The word is found in only one other place in our Bible, and that is over Psalms 7, where it appears in the singular form, whereas in this case it is in the plural. In a comparison of these two psalms we cannot now indulge, but such a comparison reveals two qualities which seem to be quite opposed and yet to be an underlying unity. Dr. Thirtle, in a recent volume on the Psalms, has suggested that the title means loud cries merely and that the thought must be interpreted by the nature of the psalm. In Psalms 7 we have the loud cries of a man who had passed through a period of pain and anguish and trial, and was celebrating his deliverance therefrom. If we take the whole of this psalm of Habakkuk we shall find that it is a series of exfoliations of God.

Its first great note is the uttering of the name of Jehovah:

O Jehovah, I have heard the report of Thee and am afraid;

O Jehovah, revive Thy work in the midst of the years.

The prayer is, "Keep alive Thy work" rather than "Revive Thy work." This opening cry was the prophet's reply to the revelation which had preceded it. Let us go back briefly over the whole prophecy. Habakkuk was confronted by the problem of prevalent anarchy; he declared that there was no justice, no equity, no right dealing; and out of the midst of his overwhelming sense of the iniquity of his own times he cried to God, and, in effect, he said, Why art Thou doing nothing? God answered him in the secret of his own soul, as He declared to him, I am at work, but if I told you what I was doing you would hardly believe Me. I am employing the Chaldeans, people outside the covenant, as My instruments to punish My own people. When the prophet heard this, with new astonishment he argued with God, How canst Thou employ a man more wicked than these Thy people in order to punish them? Then he said, I will away to my watch tower and wait and see! And while he waited God declared to him the true principle of all life: the puffed up soul is destroyed, but the righteous live by faith.

This is the history of Habukkuk's triumph over the appearances of the hour. The man had cried to God, and God had answered him. Now he said:

I have heard the report of Thee, and am afraid:

O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years.

The method of that work I cannot understand. I thought Thou hadst forsaken us. I made my protest. Thou hast told me how Thou art working, and I am still puzzled! But, O Lord, keep alive Thy work, even though I do not understand its method and cannot observe its secret. "In the midst of the years make it known, only in wrath remember mercy."

Then, immediately following this opening prayer, there is a great psalm of worship of God:

God came from Teman,

And the Holy One from mount Paran,

and so in mystic sentences, many of them defying all our attempts at exposition, he rose to the heights of Divine contemplation and extollation; until at last from the heights, turning his eyes again to the desolation, he said:

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Thus out of the midst of adverse, perplexing circumstances the prophet had been brought face to face with God, and in communion with God he had reconsidered the present in the light of past history and of the presence of God. If you will examine the psalm at your leisure you will find that while there are things in it which defy exposition, this man was clearly looking back, reviewing the way along which God had led His people, even to that hour of darkness and difficulty. As he looked back and remembered the way along which God had led them, he said, in spite of all the desolation, my heart shall be filled with rejoicing, and I will extol God.

Can we not see some of the things that were presented to his mind? Attempting to put ourselves back into his place, to stand side by side with him in the midst of the desolation already apparent, and presently to be even more so, I think we can discover some of the sources of his confidence.

This song is in the future tense; the prophet was describing the terrible desolation that would come with the coming of the Chaldeans. How dare he rejoice? It seems to me that these are some of the arguments which produced his joy.

First, he knew that if everything were destroyed, God is able to create anew all that shall be needed for the sustenance and fulfilment of life. To grant the first miracle of creation is to see that everything is possible, that even the desert may blossom as the rose, that even the high mountains of difficulty may be brought low, that even the deepest valleys of life may be lifted to the height of the everlasting hills. That is the simplest proposition that the man of faith will make when his eyes are turned from the oppressive circumstances of the hour to God Himself.

As this man reviewed the history of the past he was warranted in believing that God was able to send supplies from sources other than he knew. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine; although there be no promise of spring, although all that we have done shall wither and produce no fruit, God is able to supply our need from resources of which we know absolutely nothing. Habakkuk would remember the way God had guided His people; he would remember how in the wilderness, which the great Leader Himself had described as a great and terrible wilderness, God had hidden resources; that quails were supplied, and water provided from the flinty rock. This prophet would remember also the experience of another prophet, who in the reaction after a tremendous victory sat beneath the juniper tree and said, Let me die, and not live. And he would remember that in that hour of strange desolation angel ministers brought him bread and water. Consequently he said in his heart, God can supply all that is needful from resources of which we know nothing, and this song was the result.

Did he not also know as he sang this song that God was able to multiply the little and make it last through the distress? That was the wilderness experience, in which the shoes of the pilgrims did not wax old. That had been the experience of the widow who found that the little meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse had never grown less until the distress had passed. Or may he not also have argued that, if there should be no supply of his need, no meeting of the physical need of the people who put their trust in God; if He created nothing new, sent no supplies from sources other than he knew, if He did not even make the little last till the distress were overpast, then, if necessary, God could sustain without food?

Unbelief springs in the heart of this congregation when the preacher suggests that; but it is unbelief! Sight will never believe such a thing possible when faith affirms it. Faith does not affirm

that to be the ordinary method of God; faith does not declare that it is likely God will sustain men without food; but faith does declare that it is possible for God to do so. This man would remember how Moses on the mount for forty days had been sustained, how Elijah on Horeb had been sustained, and he would say, Although all physical means of support and sustenance are denied, I will rejoice, for if it be necessary for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose and the carrying out of the Divine intention, God—and the emphasis must always be there—is able to sustain life even without food.

Yet I do not think that this method of argument created the full inspiration of the song. It was the song of a man who, having seen all these things, yet rose to higher heights. It was the song of a man who had come to the conviction that although all these things should fail, God Himself could not fail. It was the song of a man who but a little while before had imagined that God was inactive, indifferent, but who had discovered in the process of honest communion with God that He was active in spite of the appearances of the hour. He had discovered God anew in communion, and now he rose to the height of this great song, and declared that although material support of life should be withdrawn entirely, yet in God is still found fulness of life, a complete joy, permanently satisfying, and absolute and undisturbed peace. Rising above the surrounding desolation, he extolled God, and though in different language, expressed exactly the same philosophy as did Job when, in a moment of rare illumination, he exclaimed, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

In the second place, let us consider the joy of this man's experience;

I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

His knowledge of God produced his confidence in God, and that confidence in God immediately and inevitably produced joy. The words he made use of are remarkable words; "I will rejoice in the Lord." I hope I shall produce no shock when I translate them literally. Take the first Hebrew word and express it quite literally, and this is it: I will jump for joy in the Lord. Take the second of the words and translate it with equal literalness, and this is it: I will spin round in the God of my salvation. Does that seem as though I were spoiling a great passage? I think some of these passages need spoiling in this way in these pre-eminently respectable days when congregations are shocked if a man say Amen! Exuberant joy, a bounding joy was this man's experience, and in these words we have such joy expressed. This was no cool, calculating word. I will jump for joy in Jehovah, I will spin round with delight in the God of my salvation. Do we know anything of that emotion in the midst of desolation, not when the ordinary activities of everyday life are prospering, but when it seems that there is the most calamitous failure everywhere, no blossom on the fig tree, no fruit on the vine, the labor of the olive failing, the flock gone from the field and the herd from the stall? It is all Eastern; I should hardly know how to express that in the language of London, but you business men know. Perhaps we might employ a modern word, bankruptcy. Everything gone, yet will I jump for joy in the Lord, I will spin round with gladness in my God. I believe that one thing the Church most sadly lacks today is exuberant, buoyant joy in the Lord God. I do not forget that a woman laughed at a king who danced before the Lord; but I thank God that the king danced before the Lord. This word of Habakkuk was compelled by the joy that sprang within him. This was not imitation joy. It was that of a man filled with delight even in the midst of circumstances of desolation.

If I have thus laid my emphasis on the nature of the joy, let us carefully mark the sphere of the joy. "I will rejoice in the Lord." "I will joy in the God of my salvation," not in circumstances but over them, not in the part that is seen, but in the whole that faith alone can comprehend. Not in circumstances can I rejoice oftentimes, but if I have this clear vision of God it is given to me to rejoice over them; if I simply look at them my heart will be depressed, filled with a sense of sorrow; but if I see the whole, the ultimate, the unveiling of the purpose of God; if I really believe that the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the fruit; if I have seen God and know that His purpose is a purpose of great love, then surely I may triumph over circumstances, not in self, but in God.

That takes us to our last consideration, that to which I referred at the beginning, and on which I have touched incidentally. How did this man climb to this height from the level on which he began? The whole value of this prophecy on the side of human experience is its revelation of a process. As a revelation of the method of God it is a most surprising prophecy and one which we need to study. So far as man's experience is concerned, the prophecy is of value because it shows the process. How did Habakkuk arrive here? First, through doubt in which he was absolutely honest; second, through trial in which he waited; finally, through communion and the revelation of a secret which he obeyed.

First, through doubt in which he was honest. The picture presented at the commencement of the story is that of prevalent anarchy, the silent God and a man doubting. Let no man be angry with Habakkuk for doubting. I would utter a paradox: it is only the man of faith who really doubts. There is no room for doubt unless you believe in God. Blot out God and everything is certain, mechanical, fixed; twice two are four—and you may as well be buried. If the eye has ever been lifted, and the soul has ever been conscious of more than the dust, then there must be the hour of questioning—if you are afraid of the word "doubt." What is God doing? Why is He so silent? That is where this man started. Forgive me if I modernize my story. He did not then start a society of men who had found relief in doubt. He did not talk to other men about his doubts. He talked to God about them. That was his first step toward the heights. If a man is oppressed by the difficulties by which he is surrounded, if he talk to the dwellers in darkness he and they will abide in darkness. If, on the other hand, he will tell the doubt to God there will always come an answer. That is the way of triumph, that is the first upward step, that when a man doubts God he tells God so. That is fine agnosticism. Habakkuk was in the midst of doubt, and he said, O Lord, how long shall I cry of violence and Thou dost not answer?

The answer was very surprising, so surprising that we cannot understand the surprise until we get right back into the Hebrew atmosphere and realize the exclusivism of these people. God said, Behold, the Chaldeans; I am bringing them to do My work, I am employing forces outside the covenant. That was the first answer. If some of us will begin in the midst of a dark outlook to talk to God like this, telling Him we cannot understand what He is doing, it is very probable He will give us the same answer: Do not try to measure all My going by the statistics of the Christian Church; find Me at work beyond the borders in which you have thought confine Me. We still say that God must do everything through His Church. He wills to do so; but if the Church fail, God cannot; and He will then gird some Cyrus outside the Church, and employ the very wrath of men outside the covenant to praise Him, and make the remainder to be restrained. So this man beginning in the depths dared to speak the thing he thought, that God was not at work, and this was the answer.

Second, he found his way higher through trials during which he waited. There was the approaching foe, the Chaldeans actually coming; presently they must sweep over the country, and everything must lie in desolation. He looked on the coming desolation, and saw that God was acting, but he could not understand God's method. What then did he do? The most difficult thing of all:

I will stand upon my watch, and set me up upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak to me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint.

I have complained that He is using the Chaldeans, I know He is doing it; I will wait the interpretation of events in explanation of the mystery that I cannot fathom. I will wait. I think some of the apparently simple injunctions of the Bible are the most difficult to obey. Take this one: "Be still, and know that I am God." It sounds so simple, until I begin to do it, and then I find that it is the hardest thing in the world to be still. The most perfect exercise of faith is to wait, to wait patiently for Him. That is what this man did. I will look forth to see what He does. I will wait.

In that waiting God came again, and said to him:

Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.

God thus said to the waiting man, I will give you a secret that will enable you to wait; I will strengthen you in the process of your waiting. This is the secret: "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith." That was the secret of all secrets. The final step to the heights is that of communion with God, and a secret given, which must be obeyed. The righteous shall live by faith. Apply the principle, Habakkuk, to all that puzzles you. Yonder are the Chaldeans coming, the scourge of God; they are coming in pride, their soul is puffed up; know this, they cannot abide, they also must pass and perish. I will make their wrath to praise Me, and the remainder restrain. Let the principle of your life be faith, and you shall live... a great word without any qualification, because qualification almost invariably lessens the grandeur. My righteous shall live by faith.

Immediately the word was spoken the man answered it. He believed and rested on God, with no explanation of the circumstances in the midst of which he found himself other than the declaration of the overruling of God, the abiding government of God. He experienced no amelioration of the conditions, desolation was imminent, but the song reveals him acting on the secret whispered to his soul; and there rose loud cries of rejoicing, extollings of God, and all this out of the rapture of a soul that by faith had taken hold on God, and knew—if I may use New Testament language to interpret Old Testament experience—that "to them that love God all things work together for good."

This is a study of Old Testament times. Let me, therefore, quote to you from the words of a New Testament apostle:

We have the word of prophecy made more sure; where-unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.

Peter was here thinking of the vision of the holy mount, and referring to all the ancient prophecies, he declared that in Christ they were made more sure. The great principles revealed in this Old Testament story abide, only to us they have been made more sure in Christ. In Christ we have the ratification of everything we find suggested in this psalm of ancient Hebrew time.

Let us be personal and particular in the case of our own need. This is not a message primarily for those who are in circumstances of prosperity, and who see light everywhere. Let them rejoice in the Lord for prosperity, and walk in the light by His fear. Some are in circumstances of adversity, confronting apparent desolation. I speak with such, and in all tenderness and all reserve, not out of an experience which is in perfect harmony with that of Habakkuk. I do not think I have ever risen to his height, but I see the glory of it. Can we rejoice in the midst of desolation? All the arguments in favor of his rejoicing are made more sure for us by Christ. Suppose all be swept away on which we depend. Our Master is able to create for our sustenance. He has resources of which we know nothing out of which He can meet our need. He can lay His multiplying hand on five loaves and two fishes so that they will meet the need of thousands. He can, if it be necessary, sustain without bread. If all these things are to fail, and by reason of this failing, this transient physical life of ours shall droop and wither and die, yet there will be infinite music in our Master's word to us: "I am with you alway." If Habakkuk of old could rejoice in God revealed to him, as by comparison in the twilight only, how much more may we rejoice in Him as He has been revealed to us in the grace and truth and glory of the only begotten! "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, Rejoice."

How shall we rise to this height of triumph over all circumstances? First, by recognition of the fact that amid the prevailing conditions which appall us Christ is at work. Is not our Master making this appeal to us today, that we trust Him even though He seem to be using strange instruments? Let us see the goings and victories of Christ, and dare to affirm them as such, even though we may not have been the instruments in His hands for the winning of these victories.

To summarize our meditation in a final word, What is the value of it? I would state it thus. Our joy is in proportion to our trust. Our trust is in proportion to our knowledge of God. To know Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to triumph and excel. May we be led into fuller knowledge and so find fuller faith and so enter the fuller joy.

Then shall we be able truthfully to sing:

Though vine nor fig-tree neither

Their wonted fruit shall bear;

Though all the fields should wither,

Nor flocks nor herds be there;

Yet God the same abiding,

His praise shall tune my voice;

For while in Him confiding,

I cannot but rejoice.

Haggai 2:4. Be Strong--And Work!

Haggai 2:4.

Be Strong—And Work!

Be strong... saith the Lord... and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:4

These words were uttered about two thousand five hundred years ago, yet they come to us and to our day with a pertinence which is almost startling. This is not surprising, for our times have much in common with those of the old Hebrew prophets. There are certain senses—the statement must be made guardedly, and received guardedly—in which the prophetic writings make a profounder appeal to us than do the apostolic writings. Men today know so much more than they do, with the result that they begin to question the things they know. That was the condition in the time of the prophets. Therefore these prophetic writings are powerful in the conditions addressed, in the principles recognized, and in the appeals made. So from this ancient writing we take out these words and find that they are living and powerful words, coming to us not faint and far from that Eastern land and that bygone time, but with an immediateness that gives us to feel they are verily the word of the Lord to us.

In the book of Ezra we have the account of the laying of the stones of the second temple. A decree forbidding the work having been obtained from Artaxerxes, for fifteen years the house of God lay waste, with that almost appalling aspect of desolation, not of a structure battered and bruised and beaten, and in some senses made beautiful by the tempests and time, but of a structure commenced and never finished. At the death of the king this edict lost its authority, but the people did not proceed with the building, urging difficulty, danger, and poverty as reasons. Yet all the while neither danger nor difficulty nor poverty prevented them from building their own houses, and ciled houses withal, houses of beauty and luxury. To such a people the messages of Haggai came, and this brief prophecy of only two chapters tells the story of how he delivered these four prophecies in conjunction with Zechariah, and how the people arose and built the house of the Lord.

In our text three things are found with which I propose to deal: first, the need revealed by the command to "work"; second, the responsibility resting on the people in view of the need; finally, the encouragement which was given to them in order that they might take up that responsibility and meet that need. The need was to build the house of God. The responsibility was that they should be strong and work. The encouragement was the promise and covenant which God made with them: "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts."

The house of God has been neglected. We can imagine men saying: Why build this house? Why not wait? Why not leave the building to our children? The question was answered by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. One supreme answer was given to all such inquiry. It was

the answer of the final, fundamental fact of all human life, the fact of God. In one of his sermons at our Mundesley Bible Conference my friend John A. Hutton said something which those of us who heard him will never forget, and said it in such a way that we shall never forget. Speaking of the spies who went out to spy out the land of Canaan and afterwards described themselves as grasshoppers, Mr. Hutton said that those men thought they were looking at the facts of the case, but that they were not looking at facts, but looking at circumstances; and he declared that there is but one Fact, and that is God. All other things are circumstances related to that Fact. That is the underlying truth which made necessary the building of the house of God in that bygone age. God is the age-abiding Fact, the ever and everywhere present Fact, and men who forget Him are leaving out of their calculations the supreme quantity, and therefore their findings are inevitably doomed to be wrong. A science that forgets God is blind, seeing only that which is near, and at last boasting itself that it has no interest in anything that is far. The philosophy that excludes God is equally incomplete, and therefore incompetent. Science starts with emptiness of mind, a perfectly proper attitude. Philosophy starts with a question, What is truth? a perfectly fair method of operation. But science proceeding to the discovery of the facts will inevitably finally touch God. The question is whether it will dare to call Him God when it finds Him? Philosophy attempting to account for things and to give us the true wisdom of life must take God into account. The question is whether it will ultimately do so or not. The one fact from which there is no escape is the fact of God. God is not distanced from human life. In Him we live and move and have our being. God is not uninterested in human life. If the great revelation of these sacred writings is to be trusted, there is absolutely nothing in which God is not interested. In passing, let me urge very seriously those of you who have not been reading the Old Testament recently to read it once more, without prejudice, simply to see it as revealing God's interest in the common things of life, the commonplaces of life. It is the Old Testament that teaches you that God puts human tears into His bottle. It is the Old Testament that tells that God knows whether the garment you wear is a mixture of wool and something else or not. The Old Testament tells us that God is interested in the fringes that people wear on their garments. Trivial things, you say. That is our God! He is the God of the infinitely small as well as of the infinitely great, not alienated from any part of human life, knowing our downsitting and our uprising, our going out and our coming in; near to us in the casual as well as in the critical, numbering the hairs of our head. That is the supreme fact of life, and the fact from which there can be no escape.

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there:

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.

What unutterable folly, then, on the part of humanity or of man if it or he leaves God out of calculation.

Because God is the final and fundamental fact in human life, therefore He is the supreme obligation. To do His will is individual salvation, is social salvation, is national salvation. One human life perfectly poised toward God and adjusted toward His good and perfect and beneficent will is a human life realized, fulfilled, and progressively glorious. A society, which the Church of

God ought to be, discovering His will, walking in the way of it, obedient to the light that ever shines more and more unto the perfect day, is a society within the boundaries of which there is no lonely soul, for when one weeps, all weep; when one laughs, all laugh. A nation seeking righteousness rather than revenue, eager to glorify God rather than to maintain its face in the world, is a nation great, secure, impregnable, mighty with essential might.

The supreme obligation on human life is its relationship to God, therefore it is important to build His house. In the days in which Haggai exercised his ministry the building of the house was entirely material. The house was the true rallying point for the people, the place of worship, the place where men gathering together did not seek the presence of God, but remembered His presence, recognized His power, reminded their own hearts anew of the abiding fact of His covenant with them and of His perpetual care of them. Moreover, in that ancient Hebrew economy, the house of God was essentially the house of prayer for all nations, as our Lord Himself did say in the days of His flesh, quoting from the ancient prophecies. Then how supremely important it was that the house should be built. There, for fifteen years, having been raised but a few feet in all probability from the ground, the first few courses laid, it had stood desolate, overgrown with verdure, moss-covered, a perpetual revelation of the fact that people who bore the name of God had largely forgotten Him. The supreme need in that hour was not the rearrangement of policy with surrounding nations, not the rediscovery of a lost art, not increase in commerce; the supreme necessity was that the house of God should be built, the sacramental symbol of the nation's relationship to Him.

To-day the house of God is no longer material; it is living, it is spiritual, it is the Church of God, the Church of God which is the house of the living God. In this world of ours the Church of God in the Divine economy is an institute of praise and prayer and prophecy. An institute of praise, a living temple of living souls whose eyes are toward the light, whose faces are irradiated with joy, who are living in the midst of the sorrows and desolations of time as men and women who have found mastery over sorrow and desolation in their fellowship with the unseen and eternal. That is true of the Catholic Church, the whole Church, and in that function of the Church all the things that divide us cease to be, and we realize that the building of the Church of God is of supreme importance in order that there may be maintained in the midst of the sorrows and sins of humanity a living testimony to the gladness and holiness which are possible to men as they live in right relationship with God. Nothing, therefore, can be more important than this building of the Church, the building of it stone upon stone, of living stones brought into touch with the Living Stone, Whose precious-ness is made over to them that they may share that precious-ness and bear testimony in their glad, pure, consenting life to what the Kingdom of God really means in the world.

Whereas the house of God today is no longer material but spiritual, the material is still a very real symbol of the spiritual. When the Church of God in any place in any locality is careless about the material place of assembly, the place of its worship and its work, it is a sign and evidence that its life is at a low ebb.

Let us not, however, lose sight of the larger matter, the necessity for the continuation of the building of the spiritual house of God. There is nothing this nation needs more than that the Church of God itself should be more clearly seen. Therefore there is no work more important than that of the continuity of the building of that spiritual house which, in the life of the nation, is not to

be dictated to by the nation, but to exercise its threefold function of praise, prayer, and prophecy, and so contribute to the true essential strength of the national life.

These words spoken in the olden days by the prophet indicated, not only the need, but the responsibility. The spiritual value of this old-time story is here most marked, most definite. These people were to "be strong"; that is the first thing. And they were to "work"; that was the second. These two things cannot be separated. There can be no work apart from strength; there can be no strength, such as the prophet referred to, which does not express itself in work. "Be strong... and work."

This charge to the people was a suggestion of their weakness, the weakness that had prevented, and still was preventing, them from building the house of God. We discover the elements of the weakness in the most simple way by looking at the prophecy. In the first place their weakness consisted in the fact that they were careless about this matter. They said: "It is not the time for us to come, the time for the Lord's houses to be built." That is so startlingly modern that I hardly know what to say about it. It is not the time! The modern man will not speak so simply; the modern man will say that it is not the psychological moment. That means the same thing. Whenever, in the presence of superabounding need, man says, It is not the psychological moment, know well that the cleverness of his argument is revelation of the carelessness of his heart. The time is not come; we are waiting for the time, for some moment electric with inspirational opportunity. People who wait for that moment never find it, and do not want to find it.

Another element of weakness to which the prophet drew attention is revealed in the question he asked: "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your cieled houses, while this house lieth waste?" The second element of weakness in the life of the people was luxury and comfort; they were dwelling in their own cieled houses, and perchance discussing ever and anon in their social gatherings the neglected condition of the house of God. The set time had not come to build it; but the time had come to build their own houses, and to ciel them with beauty.

There was yet another element of weakness. We discover it by another question: "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?" The third element of weakness was contempt for that very house which lay unfinished, and contempt for any man who suggested that it ever could be restored to its ancient glory. This contempt was born of a great past, of which the people were always talking, and in which they rejoiced, to the neglect of the present, with its terrific responsibility and its glorious opportunity. The collateral writings to this prophecy reveal some of the reasons for the contempt. The sacred fire was no longer burning, the shekinah glory was no longer manifested, the ark and the cherubim were no longer in their places, the urim and the thummim had been lost, and the spirit of prophecy was silent. All these things were absent. The people looked back to the days when these things were there in all their glory, and they held the present in supreme contempt, both as to its conditions and as to the idea that it was possible to restore the lost glory.

I say again, the picture is wonderfully modern. We still have the carelessness which says, The time has not come. It expresses itself often in prayer for revival. The revival is here, if we will but have it so. I pray you talk no more about the indifference of the nation; talk if you will of the indifference of the Church to its own evangel, its own gospel, its own living powers. The set time has not come, so men still say.

Then there is the weakness resulting from comfort. The Church of God today is suffering from material prosperity within her own borders. Things which our fathers spoke of as luxuries we speak of as necessities. For all spiritual service we are being rendered weak, anemic, enervated by the cieled houses and the comforts of our lives. The old Spartan heroism of our fathers, the simpler life, and the great poverty, have largely passed away. It is not the time to build the house of God, but it is the time to build our own cieled houses and dwell in them.

Another element of weakness present with us is our perpetual looking back and sighing for departed glories, for the voices of preachers of other days, for the prayer meetings that once were held, for all those peculiar manifestations of the presence of God in past days. The old men are sighing for these, and looking with contempt on the present hour, disbelieving in the possibility of revival and the building of the house of God.

Said the prophet to these men, and now says the word of our God to us, "Be strong." If we would know what our strength is we may know it by examining our weakness. Over against every element of weakness we are to place an element of strength. Over against carelessness what shall we put? Listen to the voice of the prophet. "Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways." One of the first conditions of real strength will be obedience to that command, the consideration of our ways. The people were living in cieled houses, in great material prosperity. But look more carefully: "Ye have sown much, and bring in little." But they had brought in very much, they were wealthy! "Ye eat, but ye have not enough"; but they always had enough to eat! "Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink." But they always had enough to drink! "Ye clothe you, but there is none warm." But they always had plenty of clothing! "He that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." But they had not discovered the holes! Mark the satire of it all. The prophet was declaring that in spite of all their getting they lacked the supreme possession; in spite of all their eating, there was hunger never satisfied; in spite of all their drinking, there was thirst never quenched; in spite of all their clothing, there was chilliness of soul that found no warmth; in spite of all their earning, there was a lack which nothing out of the bag into which they put their wages could provide! How true it all is today! The consideration of our ways is, indeed, the first necessity if we would be strong.

The second element of strength under such conditions was consciousness of the weakness of the house of God in its ruin, its devastation, of the fact that it stood there unfinished. Twice over the prophet said with infinite pathos: "This house lieth waste." I wonder when the one hundred and second psalm was written. It seems to me it must have been at a time in connection with this exhortation, or else the prophet was remembering it:

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion;

For it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come.

How did the psalmist know the set time had come? what was the sign for the arrival of the set time?

For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,

And have pity upon her dust.

In that hour, when these men really looked at the ruins, and the ruins entered into their heart and created great contrition, the set time came; they were then beginning to feel the element of strength.

Yet one other element of strength is revealed in the story. It is confidence in the promise and power of God: "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.... The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." When they believed that, they arose and built.

The second part of the responsibility is revealed in the words: "and work." Work was to be opposed to idleness. That needs no argument. Work was to take the place of theorizing. I think that needs, if not argument, at least careful consideration. Far be it from me to speak with disrespect of efforts that may be in themselves most sincere; but sometimes I am appalled at the time we waste in considering things and theorizing about things, calling conferences to consider the situation, attempting, on the one hand, to express Christianity in terms suited to the modern mind forsooth, as though the modern mind mattered; and, on the other hand, to consider the difficulty of the situation.

"Work" is the word of the Lord to us. We cannot travel a hundred yards from this place without finding some opportunity, if our eyes are open, to build the house of God by the capture of a soul, by a kindness, by a word of love, by a ministry of immediate help. In the work of building the house of God nothing is mean; the whole glorifies every part. That least thing you are doing, apparently so unimportant, is of supreme importance when you place it in relationship to the whole.

The last note of the text from the ancient prophecy is one full of encouragement. The prophet not merely drew attention to the need, not merely called to strength and to work; but in the name of God spoke to them this word of God: "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." Therefore, the things missing did not signify. These things also might be restored, the very things over which men were lamenting.

All this is most immediate and pertinent. "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." There is no need for us to gather together and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit. There is no need for us to cry in our agony, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." They did that also in the days of Isaiah, and God answered them: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion." If I may reverently say so, it is as though God had said, Why do you call on Me to awake? I have never been asleep! It is you who are asleep. When today we gather together to pray to God to come among us it seems to me He would say, I am with you, even though you are unmindful of Me; even though you are not responsive to Me, I am with you. If we can but come to a new realization of that living presence and know that we have not to ask or wait for His coming, but that He is here waiting for us, then we shall arise and build. It is not true to say we need more of the Holy Spirit, but it is true to say that the Holy Spirit needs more of us. In that realization of the nearness of our God we shall find strength for all He is calling us to do.

The prophet named God by one of the great titles of the Old Testament, "The Lord of hosts." He is the Lord of all hosts. He is the Lord of His people who are called to work; He is Lord of the enemies who would attempt to prevent them from working, making the wrath of men to praise Him.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" He is the Lord, not merely of the hosts of the earth, but of the hosts of heaven also, the hosts of the spiritual world. He is Lord of all angels, all unfallen ones, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. Angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect under His dominion are filled with praise of Him and inspired by His love, and in some strange mystery which we may not understand are co-operative with His purpose even now. How many of us need the vision that was given to the young man with the prophet of old? Said he, "Behold, an host with horses and chariots was round about the city.... Alas, my master! how shall we do?" And the prophet said, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire.

So to Faith's enlightened sight

All the mountain flamed with light!

He is also the Lord of the fallen ones. When He was incarnate, how often they cried out to Him: "What is there between Thee and us, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Then came the answer of the One of supreme authority and almighty power: "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." All the spiritual forces of the spiritual world against us are held in check by the power of God; or to put it as I have so often put it here, for I love the truth, I joy in it: Satan cannot touch a single hair on the back of one of Job's camels until he has asked permission of God. If what the nation and the world supremely need is the building of the house of God, what the Church supremely needs is a new vision of God, a new consciousness of His nearness.

Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,

Circling us with hosts of fire!

The Lord and Master said to His disciples ere He left them, "Lo, I am with you all the days." In the lonely island washed by the waters of the sea John heard a voice, and the voice said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Then he "turned to see the voice which spake," and this is what he saw: "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breast with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters."

That was the last appearing of God to man, figurative, symbolic, suggestive, and that to help us to understand Him when He says, "I am with you all the days."

The command and the promise were alike enforced by the words, "Thus saith the Lord." "Be strong... saith the Lord... and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." That is overwhelming in compulsion and confidence. The story has often been told of Livingstone. When all alone, hemmed in by hostile tribesmen, waiting apparently for death, he wrote:

I read that Jesus said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Then follow these significant words:

It is the word of a gentleman of most sacred and strictest honor, and there's an end on't. I will not cross furtively by night as I had intended. It would appear as flight, and shall such a man as I flee? Nay, verily I will take observations for latitude and longitude to-night, though they may be the last.

When the morrow came he crossed without harm from the midst of hostile multitudes.

With all reverence, may we not say, as God says to us, "Be strong... and work; for I am with you"? "It is the word of a gentleman of most sacred and strictest honor, and there's an end on't." So God help us:

To the work! To the work! We are servants of God,

Let us follow the path that our Master has trod;

With the balm of His counsel our strength to renew,

Let us do with our might what our hands find to do.

Zechariah 4:6. The Divine Worker.

Zechariah 4:6.

The Divine Worker.

Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

The earlier part of the prophetic ministry of Zechariah was contemporary and co-operative with that of Hazzai. Its burden was that of inspiring the people in the rebuilding of the temple of God. In the book bearing his name there are five great messages, three of them according to internal dating were delivered during the building of the temple; the last two give no indication of the time of their delivery or writing. Of the first three messages the central one is apocalyptic. It consists of eight symbolic visions setting forth the history of Israel from the time of her trouble to the perfect restoration and realization of Divine purpose. The first of the visions was that of the shadowed places among the myrtle trees. The final vision was that of the chariots of might and of magnificence.

The text I have chosen is found in the fifth of these eight visions, that of the golden candlestick setting forth the ideal mission of the chosen people as light bearer to the world. There can be no doubt whatever that the first application of that vision is the prophecy that Israel must finally realize her mission in the world according to the purposes of Jehovah. As I understand this book, none of these visions has been fulfilled. The ancient people of God are still beneath the myrtle trees; they will not abide there; these visions must all be fulfilled. With this first application of the vision and of the text I am not, however, concerned now. The great principles underlying the history of the ancient people are, for the time being, embodied in the Christian Church. I do not mean to suggest that Israel is forever and wholly cast off, or that in the Church of God are fulfilled all the prophecies spoken concerning God's ancient people Israel. But, broadly stated, it is true that the principle of the Divine government, the illustration of its meaning, the proclamation of its fact, and the propagation of its power, are all committed to the Church of God. Consequently, we do no wrong to the sacred text if we borrow the symbolism intended pre-eminently to show forth the responsibility and privilege of Israel, and make application of it in certain respects to the immediate responsibility of the Christian Church.

There are three things, then, to which I desire to draw your attention. First, the implied mission of the Church, that of scattering light over all the darkness of the world. Second, the refused methods in the economy of God, "Not by might, nor by power." Third, finally, and principally, the secret of fulfilment, "By My Spirit, saith Jehoal of hosts."

With regard to the implied mission of the Christian Church, let us glance at the suggestive and beautiful symbolism of this vision of Zechariah. Wakened as from slumber by the touch of an angel hand, the prophet was challenged as to what he saw, and replied that He saw a candlestick all of

gold. We recognize immediately that this was a reference to something in the past economy of the people to which he belonged. Instinctively the mind is carried back to the sacred ritual of the Hebrew religion, through the temple which was then rebuilding, and the temple which had been destroyed, both of which were imperfect, faulty fulfilments of the Divine ideals of worship, to the tabernacle in the wilderness. A part of the central symbolism of that tabernacle was the golden candlestick, found not in the holy of holies, where were the ark and the mercy seat and the overshadowing cherubim, but in the holy place, where were the table of shewbread and, according to the ancient economy, the golden altar of incense. In that suggestive darkness was the great seven-branched candlestick, symbolic to the people who gathered around that holy place for worship of their own responsibility, perpetually suggesting that as the golden candlestick was the means by which the holy place was illuminated—for the holy of holies was illuminated not by the golden candlestick, but by the shekinah—so their responsibility in the world was that of shedding light abroad.

In the mystic book at the end of the New Testament, the writing of the Seer of Patmos, we find the visions of the seven churches unified by the presence in their midst of the living Lord Himself. Every church had as its symbol a golden candlestick, and the seven were unified by the fact that in the right hand of the Master were seven stars, the angels, the ministers of those churches—by that symbolism of light there was carried over into New Testament imagery the suggestiveness of the golden lamp in the holy place of the Hebrew religion. The scene of the revelation is a night scene. The churches are seen fulfilling their function of casting on the darkness of the days the light which is in them.

I go back to the vision of Zechariah, and I see the two olive trees and the oil; and I listen to the inquiry of the prophet, and to his honest confession that he did not understand the symbolism. The angel's answer was strange and mystic, yet surely clear, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts." Thus there is no need for human imagination or speculation; it is definitely stated that the oil supplying the golden lampstand, touched by fire and becoming light, symbolizes the supplying of the Spirit of God in order that the instrument may fulfil her function of illuminating the darkness and scattering light in the world. We remember again the sacred oil of the tabernacle. We remember again the stars in the right hand of the living Lord Who walked amid the churches; and, in this imagery of Zechariah, the sons of oil who stood one on each side of the lampstand, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the king and the priest; and we know how all that was therein symbolized, typified, prophesied, was fulfilled in Christ. We see in Him our Zerubbabel and Joshua, uniting in His own Person the two great offices of King and Priest, and by fulfilling their meaning, supplying to His people the Holy Spirit, that thereby they might fulfil their function of giving light to the world.

Moving a little away from the symbolism, or perhaps a little nearer to it to find its heart, the great truth suggested by the vision of Zechariah, by the golden lamp in the holy place, by the apocalyptic vision of Jesus Christ in the lampstand, the darkness, the light, is that the function of the Church of God may be inclusively and finally expressed thus: She exists to give light.

Have you ever noticed the first occurrence of the word "light" in the Bible? Have you ever noticed its last occurrence? It occurs first in the first chapter of Genesis; it is the word which ends the first Divine fiat, "Let there be light" Call to mind that vision of chaos, darkness, disorder, brooded over

by the Spirit of God, then the Divine word, "Let there be light." That was the first word, not of creation, but of the restoration of a lost order, and it produced the dissipation of the darkness. The first thing, without which nothing else was possible, was light. The last occasion on which this word occurs in the Bible is in the Apocalypse, in the fifth verse of the last chapter, "There shall be night no more... for the Lord God shall give them light." That is the picture, not of the millennium, but of the great and gracious Kingdom of the Son which lies beyond the millennium. It is a picture of the Kingdom of God re-established on the earth. It is a picture of the hour when all human sorrow, sighing, and sinning will be forever ended. It is not a picture of the heaven that lies beyond, but of this world won back to its allegiance to God. It is the picture of that hour when in perfect light, the light of the presence of the Lord God amid the sons of men, all lamentation and all sorrow shall forever have passed away. Between that first fiat and that final word announcing the shining of the light in the earth and consequently in the whole universe, Israel was the light-bearer, Jesus was the light, the Church of God is the light-bearer. The service rendered to God by Israel, by the Lord Himself, and by His people, is that of supplying light by the shining of which chaos turns to cosmos, darkness into light, sin and shame and sorrow flee away, and the great Kingdom of our God comes.

Standing in the midst of human history nineteen centuries ago, this Lord and Master of the race, having emptied Himself of the essential glories of the perpetual manifestation of Deity, and taken upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, in the midst of His ministry said, "I am the Light of the world." He also said to a handful of faulty, failing, feeble men, men of like passions with us, "Ye are the light of the world"; and He also said to them, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." Reverently to change the words of the Master that we may in the present hour of meditation understand His message, He said, You cannot be light save in the power of the Holy Spirit; "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

That takes us immediately to those two words which reveal the refused methods, "Not by might, nor by power." The difference between might and power is not at first easy to determine. There is a difference, but it is very difficult to define it. There is a twofold suggestiveness. First as to the word "might": the Revised Version has as a marginal reading, "not by an army." While that is very valuable and helps us, I do not consider it is final. I presume the Revisers made the suggestion because the Hebrew word here translated "might" is more often translated "army" than in any other way. It means force, of men or of means. Sometimes it means an army, the embodiment of might. Sometimes it means wealth. Sometimes it means virtue in "the ethical sense, and sometimes virtue in the sense of strength. Sometimes it means valor. Wherever we find it, it suggests resources: of an army, to fight our battles; of wealth, in order that the army may be maintained. All sorts of resources are suggested by this Hebrew word. For the purpose of carrying over what seems to be the special message here, I adopt that word, Not by resources. It is not translation, but I think it is fair interpretation.

Power means force, just as might means force, but never in the same collective massed sense. Power is persistent and purposeful force, as dynamic, strength, vigor. If I use for the first word, "resources," I would use for this word, "resoluteness"; and again this is not translation, but I think it may be accurate interpretation. "Not by might, nor by power"; Not by resources, not by resoluteness. These may be high, pure, mighty; but in so far as they are human they cannot

accomplish the work of God in the world. By might and by power, by resources and resoluteness, we may be able to legislate for England; but we cannot build the Kingdom of God. By splendid resources and magnificent resoluteness we can do much upon a human level; but by these things we cannot shine as lights in the world or bring in the Kingdom of God.

Briefly, comprehensively then, this is the meaning of the passage: Not by anything man can do, can man do anything for God. We are very far from believing that. If I were asked today to give what I think to be the reason for the comparative failure of the Church of God in missionary enterprise, I would say that we are terribly in danger of imagining that by our own splendid resources and resoluteness we can accomplish the work, and of forgetting the superhuman factor, without which the work of God can never be accomplished.

That leads us at once to the very heart of this meditation, to the most sacred and solemn and strengthening thing in all the word of the prophet, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit."

"Spirit," how well we know the word, and yet what vast significance there is within it which we have never grasped.

The first value of the word is its indefiniteness, the fact that it makes a suggestion to the mind that the mind can never finally comprehend. The Hebrew word, that wonderful word so constantly translated Spirit, *ruach*, really means invisible force, a force perfectly patent by the results it produces, but a force invisible, intangible, imponderable, which cannot be discovered by any method of the chemist or any cleverness of scientific investigation. The Greek word *pneuma* simply means wind, and is a figurative, poetic word. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth," to illustrate the working of the Spirit, He employed the word for Spirit which is the same as wind. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth. Wind, we are perfectly sure of it; but no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Yet even that breaks down, it is only a figure of speech. You can weigh the wind, you can register the weight of it, the pressure to the square inch, and it immediately becomes material; but through the material sign there is suggested the great essential reality which is at the heart of the universe and permeates everything.

There is a special value in the qualifying pronoun, "My Spirit." The first occurrence of the phrase in the Bible is in the declaration, "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever" that word which foretold the limit of the activity of mercy among the antediluvians. It is to be found occasionally in subsequent relations, until we come to the words of Isaiah, "Behold My servant... I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles"; and again we find it in the book of Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." At last we come to that flaming wonder wherein the Church of God was born, and then the great Apostle declared in the midst of the gift of tongues, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

By that Spirit alone can men accomplish the work of God in the world. Not by our splendid resources; not by our resoluteness of purpose touched with the dynamic of persistent endeavor, not by anything that is human; but by that selfsame mystic Spirit of God, intangible, imponderable, invisible, but present and potent, "By My Spirit saith the Lord of hosts."

Said Jesus, "I am the Light of the world. He was born of the Spirit, baptized of the Spirit, led of the Spirit into the wilderness; He went in the power of the Spirit to proclaim the Kingdom of God; He

offered Himself through the eternal Spirit unto God. Of Him, the meek and lowly, the Galilean peasant according to human measurement, the great central truth may be spoken: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah."

Said He to His own disciples, and through them to the whole Church to the end of the age, "Ye are the light of the world." They are born of the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit. They speak with tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance. They receive gifts which equip them for service in the Spirit. They are a spiritual company, and the power which makes them able to shine as lights in the world is the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

Now let us take this great essential truth so familiar to us all, which I have attempted to restate, and make application of it to the present time. The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions is the title which Dr. Mott has given to that wonderful little book which we have been studying together in our Missionary Study Circles. Its suggestiveness is full of solemnity. Dr. Mott, who has a right to speak on this matter, believes—and if I may venture to add my own conviction to his, he is absolutely correct—Dr. Mott believes that this is the decisive hour of Christian Missions. We have attempted here to consider that fact. What makes this the decisive hour of Christian Missions? The world's present unrest, the fact that God is saying to His people as never before, Now is the acceptable time; the activities of the Spirit of God everywhere manifest, the fact that the door is opened before the Christian Church to all peoples and nations as it never has been in the history of the two millenniums of the Christian Church. The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions!

What does the Church of God supremely need to remember at this moment? The truth embodied in my text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord." Neither by our resources of intellect, of wealth, of enthusiasm; nor by our resoluteness of effort, of propaganda, of cleverness. All these things are necessary, but none of them, nor the whole of them, can do God's work in the world at this critical moment.

"By My Spirit": let us make this particular and immediate. The Church of God can operate in any country or among any people only when the Spirit of God has prepared the way for her coming. If you look back at the history of Christian missions you will find that to be true. Wherever the Christian missionary has come and his work has been successful, bringing men out of the thralldom of darkness into the liberty of light, that missionary has been conscious that the Spirit of God had been at work ere he came; the Spirit of God was at work in the measure of light which existed in the religion of the people before he came; the Spirit of God was at work in proving to these people by generations of failure the insufficiency of the light they had. The Master said to His disciples, "Look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest." What did He mean? He spoke of Samaria, away from the Jewish covenant. If you had talked to the disciples they would have told you it was the most impossible, hopeless place wherein to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Did they not practically say so? Did they not ask permission to seek for fire from heaven to destroy the ungodly crowd? But that was not the view of their Master. Christ said the fields are white unto harvest, by which He intended to teach us that the fields which we look upon as most disappointing and barren, are white, we have only to reap; our work is not that of plowing or sowing, it is that of reaping. If we are to be successful in missionary work we are to go to a new country, to fresh territory, to unevangelized people, not imagining that we are going to do God's

work, but that God has been ahead of us, and not by our might nor our power in this respect, but by His Spirit the work is to be done, and that we simply go, saying as the early apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost."

The Spirit of God must choose and appoint the workers. I have touched on that in this pulpit before. I am almost over-whelmed by the sense of the solemnity of this great truth, and the awful danger there is of forgetting it. Nothing is further from my heart than to discourage anything which is of God; but I do feel we are in danger of hurrying out young people whom God has not called. I think the peril of the Student Volunteer Movement is in that direction. I have often been asked at student meetings to appeal to young men to go to the foreign field, and I always absolutely decline to do so, lest by my might or my power, youth or maiden should be lured to this work uncalled by the Spirit of God. Do we imagine for a moment that our Lord did not understand the sacredness of this whole matter? Did He say to His disciples; "The harvest is plenteous but the laborers are few, hasten therefore through Galilee and Judaea and try to persuade men to do this work"? No, a thousand times no! He said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest." Any man or woman who goes sent by a missionary board, persuaded by a Christian evangelist, or prophet, or apostle, uncalled by the Holy Ghost, is not only unable to help, but will hinder the progress of the work of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord."

We must also realize in this enterprise that it is the Spirit of God Who overrules occasions and events. We are to depend on Him; but we are also to act with Him. When the Church of God asks the aid of governments to protect her missionaries she is depending on the arm of flesh and is acting contrary to the genius and spirit of the Christian fact. It must be by the heroic, and yet perfectly safe, adventure, that trusts in the Spirit of God for the manipulation of difficulties and the bringing together of circumstances that the mighty work is done.

Finally, we must remember that in all our work it is the work of the Spirit of God to convict of sin, to turn the heart back again toward God; and when in response to His constraint men turn, it is His work to change the character and conform it to the image of His Son.

These things are not for the foreign field only, they are for us who are at home. What dire mistakes have I made in my own preaching because I have imagined that it was my business by argument and appeal to convict men of sin. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit"; by being content to take what He has commissioned me to say, and to utter it, knowing that the thing He said is true, "My word shall not return unto Me void"; and to understand that the word becomes the seed of harvest only as the Spirit interprets its meaning, fertilizes its letter, until it becomes the germ of life in the soul of a man.

I think this great fact explains the solemn injunction of our Lord to His first disciples, to which I have already referred, "I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high."

I realize that there are certain senses in which that word has no application to us; but there are senses in which it has immediate application and is of paramount importance. The sense in which it has no application is that when He uttered this word the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified. These men had to wait until Pentecost for the power of the Spirit.

Pentecost for us is not in the future, not in the past; this is Pentecost. The Spirit of God is here in all the gracious fulness and freedom and force which result from the accomplishment of the redeeming mission of the Son of God. I need wait no ten days for the equipment of power, or ten moments.

But the sense in which that word applies is that unless we have that power of the Spirit, then in God's name let us keep our hands off God's work and especially that most delicate, difficult, sacred work of the foreign field. Unless we know what it is to live the life of fellowship with the Lord in the Spirit, let us neither go nor give: "Tarry ye until ye be endued with power from on high." Let our going and our giving be in and by that Spirit, or let there be no going and no giving.

To my own soul the word is full of solemnity, reminding us as it does of the danger of depending on false strength and strange fire both collectively and individually. Yet the word is full of strength and hope, for that which Zechariah announced as the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," comes to us in this age with new meaning and more intimate values because of the fact to which I have referred, that the Spirit has been given in a new way, and new power is available for the doing of God's work. If we will, we may depend on Him and answer the world's woes with the message of His peace, co-operate with the Spirit in that activity in the midst of human life which is so patent at this hour, go through the doors the King has opened to claim the vast territories in His name.

Yet the last statement is this. The matter of supreme importance is that the superhuman factor, God the Holy Spirit, needs the human. Here is the infinite and appalling wonder: the Spirit by Whom alone the work is to be done cannot say the word of Christ finally to the people in darkness unless He can have my lips.

So let us not think of these missionary matters as though they were small and unimportant, or things we can take up as hobbies. We are in the realm of fire, of force, and of eternal things. May it be ours to recognize that only by His Spirit can the work be done, and that His Spirit can do the work only as we are at His disposal.

Zechariah 8:5. The Children's Playground In The City Of God.

Zechariah 8:5.

The Children's Playground In The City Of God.

And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Zechariah 8:5

One almost expects to hear someone say, "How Extremely shocking!" Some people would probably be surprised to know that the Bible says anything about children playing. This verse not only speaks of them playing, but surprises our prejudices by declaring that boys and girls are to play together, and even startles us further by saying that boys and girls are to play together in the streets! If not inclined to say, "How shocking this is!" I can quite believe that many would say, "Well, it certainly is marvelous." The prophet, inspired of the Spirit of God, knew perfectly well that people would say it was a marvelous thing, so he immediately continued, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts"—which being put into other words simply means, The thing which surprises you, that you look upon as marvelous, that almost shocks you, is the very thing upon which the heart of God is set. God believes in children playing, He believes in boys and girls playing together, and He believes in them playing in the streets.

This is a picture of the coming age. I do not mind at all what you call it. Call it, if you will, "the golden age." Call it, if you so please, "the millennial age," or if you prefer to drop back into the language of your childhood, speak of it as "the good time coming." It is a picture of the ultimate victory toward which men perpetually looked in the midst of the battle, of the final triumph which was a constant inspiration of earnest and consecrated service. Ever and anon these ancient Hebrew seers saw glimpses of the coming glory, heard notes of the coming harmonies. These men were not near-sighted. They were far-sighted in a far finer sense of that word than that in which we mostly use it today. They saw so far ahead that the things they saw have not yet come to pass. They saw a Kingdom established over which a King should rule in righteousness and in equity. They saw a Kingdom established in which a King should rule, and—mark well the language—not by the sight of His eyes or by the hearing of His ears: these are the bases of all judgment at the present moment. They very often lead us into error. This coming King is to rule in righteousness and equity, as one who knows perfectly and absolutely all the facts of the case. As these men looked on they saw nature at peace, and in the midst of it a little child at play. Let us notice the picture which my text suggests. Zechariah speaks of Jerusalem, Zion, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts. This is not a picture of heaven. It is a picture of earth. This is not the picture of a land and conditions beyond the clouds to which men will escape from peril and strife. It is the picture of conditions which are to obtain here in the world where today sinning and sighing and sorrow abound. This is the picture of conditions which will obtain when the prayer which Jesus taught us to pray, and which, alas, we too often pray carelessly, is realized. "Our Father Who art in

heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Therefore I say to you that for a glimpse of the Kingdom that is to come, I do not come to a Sunday service, but to a Saturday afternoon in a park. When I want to form some true conception of what God's Kingdom will be like, I do not go to a prayer meeting but to a playground. I think I have exercised my ministry here long enough for no one to charge me with undervaluing either the prayer meeting or the Sunday service. They are but means to the end, however, which end is the playground for the children. The establishment of the Kingdom of God, the building of His city, the healing of all wounds, the realization of all the forces that lie in human life, at their most perfect condition; all that, and more, is by suggestion within my text. I know there are discrepancies in both, but in the park and the playground you are nearer the Divine ideal for child life, and I come there, not because that exhausts the meaning of the coming Kingdom, but because it is the only thing like it today. If I come into commercial life, I find there very little like the Kingdom of God. In the commercial world "in that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLY UNTO THE LORD." That is a poetic figure of a great philosophy. If I come into the law courts today I find very little like the Kingdom of God. They are doing their best, but it is a very poor best. If I come into the political arena I think I see there men striving after the ideals of the Kingdom, yet we are in prison still, and hampered by the god of mammon. If I want a glimpse of the Kingdom upon which I can base all my interpretation, I haste me to the playground. Be patient with me if I make that personal. If I want my own heart to understand God's coming Kingdom I turn my back upon my study and get to that other room, which is as far from the study as I can put it, where all the noise is, and get amongst my bairns. There I am nearer to the Kingdom than ever I am in my study. Zechariah was a stern prophet, who had no soft things to say in the presence of iniquities; Zechariah was a poet who saw the coming glories. Reading his writings up to this point, you can hardly think of him as having time for a child, and yet suddenly, out of his deep heart, illumined by the glory of the coming days, there sings into the ear of all the centuries the most poetic description of the Kingdom that I find in the whole of the Old Testament. "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." I draw your attention, first of all, to what this text reveals as the thought of God for the children. Let us imagine for a moment that we are not in London. We will transport ourselves to that Kingdom which is to be, and to that city which the prophet saw. In that city we see, first, that God's ideal for the child is that the child shall play. It is a very significant fact that all the millennial references to the child are references to the child at play. "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den." That wonderful day when "the lion shall eat straw like the ox," and the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together in perfect peace, will be the child's playtime. Have you ever taken a child to the zoological gardens, and have you ever been strangely perturbed by the child's deep anxiety to climb over the rails and get in amongst the polar bears? It is a Divine instinct. The child wants to be where God intended it should be, and where God means it to be presently, at play with all the lower animals. "A little child shall lead them." It is the child at play, the child in the midst of nature, set there to play. I charge you that you do not whittle down this word "play" until you have spoiled it. Ruskin says, "Play is an exertion of body or mind made to please ourselves." I think that is a perfectly accurate definition, but I do not think it takes in all the facts of the case. May I suggest that play is work. If you do not believe me and you have a boy four years old, stay at home from business one day, and from morning till night do everything that boy does. I very distinctly remember about a year ago, when one of my boys was four years old, he requested me to play

horses with him. I agreed to do so on condition that he be the horse and I the driver. My garden at Norwood runs down in terraces, and I let him go wherever he liked; it is good to let young horses do that. He went to the bottom by one path, turned round and came up again. I had already had enough, but I let him go on. He went down and up that garden six times, and then I said I must go into the house for a few minutes—and I was there an hour. What is play? Play is work which is not a task set. Play is work, not for profit, but out of pure delight in the exercise of strength. I wish all the young manhood would remember that. Whenever you put gain or profit at the end of play you demoralize the play. The child has no thought of profit in play. It is work, not as a task and not for profit. God's ideal for the child is that it shall play, and the characteristics of a little child at play are merriment, earnestness, pity, defense of the weak. Watch natural and healthy children at play and you will find that all these things are manifest in the midst of the play.

If I may carry this a little further I would say that God's ideal for the child is that it should play itself into its work. We talk about the kindergarten system as though it were something we had recently discovered, as though we owed it wholly to Froebel. Here it is in Zechariah. He was a long way ahead. We are getting there perhaps sooner than he thought, but there it is—the children at play. If you watch children by careful, loving, tender watching, they will play themselves into the work for which God made them. In this age of collectivist thinking it is good sometimes to reassert the law of the individual, and every individual ought to be able to say concerning his or her life work, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world." That is true, not merely of the poets, dreamers and statesmen, but also of the men and women whom we sometimes insult by saying they do mean things. There are no mean things if they come out of the capacity of the man who is doing them. If a little child learns its work through its play, all through the strenuous years you will find the man playing at his work. I do not mean playing with his work or doing it indifferently, but that it will be a delight to him. When work is what it ought to be in human life it is not a task set, not something done for profit merely, but something done for the sake of the thing done. I have been in a carpenter's shop and seen a man at the bench making some plain piece of furniture, and looking at it and touching it with love as he saw it developing under his hand. That is the real carpenter, brother to Jesus of Nazareth. If you find a man who loves his work he will have as secondary motive under it all the two things for which Paul says we are to work, the support of himself and his family, and to have something to give to him that is in need. Beyond that, work is done for the sake of the work, but children never come to that unless you give them their chance to play. You must begin with playtime for the children. That is God's ideal.

Then notice, further, that there is in the text a revelation of the fact that it is God's purpose that boys and girls shall play together. I can quite imagine that some very good people out of this age, if they could be preserved until that day dawns, and came to this city and saw boys and girls playing together, would think everything had gone wrong, that some catastrophe had happened. I walk round among our schools today and I see over one door "Boys," a little further on I find another door marked "Girls." Presently I come to the "Young Men's Christian Association," and a little farther on I see the "Young Women's Christian Association." We have been doing all we can to keep them apart. We are all wrong. God said boys and girls are to play together. Wherever you find that they do so, naturally, purely, perfectly, you will find that the strength of manhood strengthens womanhood, and the refinement of womanhood refines manhood. That is the perfect family in which brothers and sisters grow up and play together. That is God's ideal. The streets of

God's city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

If that be so, we may go yet a step further, and upon this foundation truth of God's purpose for the child and God's ideal for the child build the conditions of public life. This text is an index to the conditions of public life in the coming Kingdom. If in God's city boys and girls are to play in the streets of the city, then the streets of the city will be fit for the boys and girls to play in. Think what that means in the very simplest way. As Christ makes the child the type of character in His Kingdom, so the child comes to be the test of public life in the city of God. Everything in the life of the coming city will depend upon the little child. Everything will be carried forward in the interests of the little child. Among other things, the streets will be fit for children to play in. Said Isaiah, another of these prophets, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." What a city that will be where there will be nothing in the streets to harm little children, physically, mentally, or spiritually! When you have a city with streets fit for children you have a city with streets fit for adults. If the child is safe everyone is safe. Let us walk in imagination through some of the streets of the city of the King. I shall find nothing that can harm the child physically. In that city the drainage will be perfect, and the traffic and everything else will be watched by vigilant eyes for the sake of the children. You can dream your dreams around that. You tell me this is not the Gospel. Then what in the name of God is it? These children whom God loves and speaks of in the terms of playtime in His coming city are to be safe, and the measure in which children are safe in our streets today is the measure in which we have seen this ideal, and are working toward it.

As we walk through the streets of the city of the King, I notice in the next place that in no single shop window can I find any impure literature. On no placard station can I see a bill announcing an amusement, the very bill suggestive of evil and calculated to inflame the passion of a child or youth. No unholy picture can be found. The love of the child will be greater than love of gain. That is the truth about the city of God.

As I go through these streets of the city I find no man ready to pollute young life, no man standing in the shadow of the sanctuary or of the public house watching for his chance to lead a boy who is hardly a youth into the ways of betting and gambling. By no means. In the city of the King the dictum of Jesus will be in operation and the man who is found causing a little child to offend will have a millstone hung about his neck, and be drowned in the depth of the sea, while angels rejoice. There will be nothing anemic and sickly in the city of the King. Righteous wrath will be manifested if anything is done to offend, or cause to stumble, one little child. The streets of the city are to be fit for the children.

Let us go one step further. It seems to me that my text not only reveals to me the purpose and thought of God for children, not only reveals to me what the conditions of public life are to be in the city, but it casts its light upon the home life in the coming Kingdom. It is not only true that the streets are to be fit for the children, but equally true that the children are to be fit for the streets. There are children who come from very respectable houses who pollute the streets by their presence. There are children, proud, despotic, selfish, and, alas, too often impure, to turn whom out to play in the streets would be to defile the other children. I am not blaming the children, for wherever you find such children the blame must be put back on the home from which they come. A child always reflects the home from which it has come. That legend which you hang up in your homes, "Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to

every conversation," will be a living reality in that Kingdom. In homes where these things are believed and acted upon from break of day until the sun has gone westering you will have children that you may turn out into the streets who will not harm the streets or pollute them. In the city of the King the home life will be what it ought to be, and out of the homes will come children whose obedience has been won, whose trust has been inspired, to whom high ideals have been presented, not so much by precept as by the practice of those who have had charge of them, children who know God because they have seen Him in the fatherhood and motherhood which has been round about them. Coming out into the streets they will live and walk in the power of all that home has meant to them—children fit for the streets.

If there is one thing tragic in this city it is the picture of the children who have no playtime. What you call their playtime is for some of them opportunity for deeper debasement. Why? Because our streets are not fit for the children, because we have never yet put a little child in the midst of us in our civic affairs and set everything else round the necessity of the little child. I am perfectly well aware that we are struggling toward it, but it is so slow because we have never seen it clearly. Sometimes one's heart is gladdened spiritually, religiously, by things that seem to be very far away, and yet are near to the heart of God. I remember seeing a while ago what came to me as a vision of God's coming glory. I was at the very end of Cheapside, close to the Bank and the Exchange, and suddenly I saw a policeman, a great, strong, muscular representative of the force of the law, raise his hand and hold up all the beating, surging traffic to take a wee bit bairnie by the hand and lead it safely across the street. By so much as we have learned to do that we are coming nearer to the Kingdom. But, oh, my masters, how much there is still to harm the life of the child in our streets. You who listen to me tonight dare not turn your children into the streets to play, but there are children playing in the streets who have no other place to play in, and in the hearts of all children there is capacity for good and the love of the beautiful just as much as in the hearts of your children, if you will find it.

I will tell you a story at second hand. A month or two ago the first Minister of Works of the present Government was walking in St. James's Park. Two or three children were playing there, one of them a girl with tousled hair, dirty and unkempt. The minister of works looked down at this child and said, "Why do you stay here? Why don't you go over there into the Green Park, where you can play on the grass?" The bright eyes looked up into his, and she said, "There are no flowers there." Oh, if we could hear these things! I am not arguing for flowers over there, or if I do argue for them it is that they may gladden the children.

Let us see deeply into this thing. You and I have a responsibility about our streets for the sake of the children. You care nothing for political parties? So much the better. You care nothing about Moderates or Progressives or Municipal Reform? So much the better; but do you care for the bairns? I have figures and statistics which we have been gathering, for we are trying to find out what we ought to do. Do you know such things as this? Right here under the shadow of this church—I begin there for this is our responsibility—there are at least 132 houses in which, on an average, three or four families are crowded together. These bairns must come out into the streets to play, and the streets are not fit for them, and the homes from which they come are not homes that make it likely that their coming will be a blessing to the streets. Are you content to say you have nothing to do with all these things? Say at once you have nothing to do with the Kingdom of God. Say at once you have no interest in the bringing in of that great and glad golden age toward

which seers have been looking, and of which psalmists have been singing. You like to look on to that great day and to sing of it, but I think that the men and women who have not shared the travail that makes His Kingdom come are very likely to be shut out of the Kingdom when it does come. I want to lay upon you the burden of this great and terrible responsibility.

I am told there is nothing we can do, or that what we can do is so little. You are not responsible for all that has to be done. You are responsible for the thing that lies next to your hand. You are responsible, first of all, to see to it that whatever you have of influence, whatever you may have of influence, whatever lies at your disposal by way of influence, you ought to take hold of and use in the interest of, I will not say the Kingdom of God as a far distant thing, but of the little child in the streets. What about the children who are not orphans but are worse than orphans? What about the children who are in sorrow and sore need round about us in our own parish? In our parish there are thirty-four public houses, every last one of them a center of death, an instrument for spoiling childhood. There are portions of these streets of Westminster close to us which are nameless as to their condition. You put the blame upon the police. I put the blame finally upon the Church of Jesus Christ.

These men of old, these prophets, how they toiled and strove, how they entered into every department of human life with their messages and their fire, and inspiration, and daring and suffering and blood. What matters it that they never saw the city, if they saw it from afar? They set their faces toward it and died in faith, not having received the promises, and yet the promises would be much longer postponed if they had not so suffered and toiled, and had not so striven. So I say we are working, not merely for the present hour, but for all the future. We are working with the little child before our eyes, determined as the moments come and go to strive and toil and suffer to make the streets fit for the children, to see to it that they have homes out of which it is possible for them to come with some suspicion at least of what morality, cleanness, and uprightness really mean. There is no bairn in all this crowded district that is not as near to the heart of God as the little child you laid to rest in its cot at home. There is no boy who is not protected from the rain and hardly dare go home, and who will become a sharper on the street, robbing you on every hand—there is not one such who is not referred to by Jesus when He said, "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

I say to you tonight that our responsibility as a church and as Christian people for this district must begin there. I am not saying all that is in my heart. I am not saying all I know, but I am making an appeal to you for your interest in prayer, and presently in very definite work. Under the shadow of this church close at hand stands a man day after day, a bookmaker. He has been fined again and again, and he pays a fine as I pay a license to keep a dog, and comes back and carries on his nefarious practices. I am told that we must let these things alone. My answer is that the devil said to Jesus, "Let us alone." Christ's answer is our answer to all these things. We will not let it alone. It is our business not to let it alone. A way must be found by which these men shall be removed, and it be made impossible for them to stand around luring our children to destruction. It is very little we can do. In a few years at least the majority of us will have gone out to the great Beyond, but let us do something. Let us, at any rate, come to close grips with the devil. Let us leave the impress of our fingers somewhere on him, or else let us be ashamed to look into the face of Jesus Christ when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Our city is not the city Zechariah saw. The streets of our city are not ready for the boys and girls to play in. It is our business as we take our way through this life of probation and toil and discipline to see the ultimate, and to consecrate ourselves to that great and holy conflict which at last is to issue in victory. I pray that we may make what application of the study of this verse is necessary for our own new inspiration to new consecration to the thing that lies very near at hand.

"Where shall I begin?" says some man. In your own home. "How shall I begin?" Set the millennium up in your own home. "How can I do it?" Crown Christ there. I do not mean theoretically, sentimentally. I do not mean by singing about Him or praying to Him, or reading the things He said; but by the realization of His ideal there for your own children, and by realization of His ideal in your home as Master and Lord and King. Every home so consecrated, and so realizing His ideal, is a contribution toward the building of God's city. We may begin there, and yet to begin and end there is not to fulfill our responsibility. We must go beyond and what we cannot do singly we must do together. As the host of God we must say to the civic authorities and to all the powers that rule the city's life, "These rulings and governings of yours must be in the interest of the child." If that can be established then I have no further care about the youth and maiden, man and woman, about the aged and infirm. We will begin with the child. God help us to hear His call to us about this district through the plaintive need of the child as it expresses itself to all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel.

Matthew 1:21. The Name Jesus.

Matthew 1:21.

The Name Jesus.

Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21

Even today the naming of a newborn child is an event full of interest. The principles of choice are varied in these complex and somewhat superficial days. Children are given names because the names have been borne by their fathers before them. Sometimes names are still given to children as expressing a hope on the part of the parents, but as a rule they are simply given on the basis of preference.

The Hebrews meant far more by their names than we do. That will be discovered as the Old Testament history is read. They were often wrong in their naming of the children. The very first name, Cain, was a wrong name. Eve called her first-born Cain—Acquired. She was doomed to disappointment. She had hoped that the promised seed had already come. And the second name was also a mistake. She called her next boy Abel—Vanity. There was far more to satisfy the mother's heart in the coming years in Abel, even though he suffered death, than in Cain.

Sometimes the names were tragic names. Hosea, that prophet of the wounded spirit and the broken heart, as children were born into his home named them, and in their naming is seen the terrible conditions of the chosen people. He called the first Jezreel, judgment threatened! He called the second Lo-ruhamah, mercy not obtained! He called the third Lo-ammi, not My people!

When Mary's Child was born, Joseph named Him Jesus. And this was by special instruction conveyed to him by the angel. That angel was the messenger of heaven's thought, and of God's will. The Babe was registered Jesus in heaven. And that name, given by Joseph in obedience to the instruction of the angel who had received his command in heaven's own high court, was a name which expressed heaven's confidence in the Child now born. Earth's salvation will come as earth shares heaven's faith in Jesus; and the giving of the name at the first was expressive of this confidence of God in the newborn Child.

This story of the giving of the name is one of supreme interest. Do not be angry with me for bringing to you a text you have known from childhood, but let us come back to this name, which every child here who has begun to read at all, can spell, and try to understand some of the things signified by the giving of this name. A few moments first, then, with the name given; and, second, a consideration of the reason for giving this name to this Child.

I would have you, first of all, remember the humanness of this name. It was a very common Hebrew name. Doubtless many a boy living in Judea in the days when the Babe was born was called Jesus. And doubtless it had been for long years, for centuries, a popular name in Jewish

families; for of course you remember that Jesus is but the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." There were many boys called Joshua, and in the Greek dialect obtaining at the moment, many boys doubtless bore this name of Jesus. There is nothing startling in the name. When the neighbors heard that Mary had called the newborn Boy Jesus, they did not stop to ask what she meant. Many another Jesus was running about in Nazareth and Judea, and all through the countryside it was one of the most common names, almost as common as John is today.

Thus God took hold of a name perfectly familiar, which set the newborn Child among the children of men, rather than separated Him from them. He took hold of a name that men were using everywhere, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," the name that the boy next door has, the name that men have been calling their boys by for centuries. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus."

But how came it that this name was so familiar? What were the associations of the name in the Old Testament history? It was a name associated with two men pre-eminently—the one who first received it, a leader; and, then, another who made it conspicuous, a priest.

The first man who bore the name was the great soldier who succeeded to the leadership of the people after the passing of Moses, the man to whom there was committed the stern, hard, fierce fight that was necessary to establish the people in the land. This man was born in Egypt, in slavery, lived there about forty years, and then followed Moses as he led the people out of Egypt; then spent the next forty years in the wilderness, passing through all its experiences. Finally, he led the people with the sword and terrific conflict into possession of the land. That is the man who first received this name. So far as the Bible is concerned, and in all probability so far as Jewish history is concerned, the name had never been known before. It was made for him by Moses. His name was originally Hosea or Hoshea: but Moses changed it and called him Joshua.

The next man who bore the name conspicuously was a priest in the days of restoration under Haggai and Zechariah.

Now this Child is born, and heaven, taking a name familiar in the homes of Judea, a name conspicuous in Hebrew history because of its connection with the soldier leader and the restoring priest, commands, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

Let us examine the matter more closely. We have seen that the name was common among Hebrew boys. We have seen that the name was thus popular because of the historic association. Now, what does the name mean?

In the story to which I have already made reference, in Numbers 13, it is told how men were sent to spy out the land: princes of the tribes. Among them was the prince of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea, which name means salvation, or deliverance. In the course of that story in Numbers we are told, as I think parenthetically, that Moses changed his name from Hoshea to Joshua, and the reason for it will be found presently when the spies returned. You know the story well, how the majority report was against going up to Canaan; but the minority report—and it is a very interesting thing to notice in human history how minority reports are almost always right—the minority report was, We can possess the land. Joshua was the spokesman, and what did he say? He declared that Jehovah was able to bring His people into possession in spite of all the difficulties. I think it was because of that word, and because of that fact and of that confidence that Moses with insight

and foresight, seeing what this man meant to the nation, changed his name. It was a good name before: Hoshea: salvation. Yes, but this man was not depending on his own right arm. He had no dream in his heart that he could bring salvation to his people. He declared that it must be the work of Jehovah; and, consequently, Moses weaving the two names together, Jehovah and Hoshea, called him Joshua, for Joshua is the combination of the two words, Jehovah and Yawshah, which is Hoshea, and which as we have said means salvation. The name Joshua signifies Jehovah saves, or Jehovah will save, or Jehovah's salvation. Jehovah and salvation are thus woven into one name. It was high honor conferred on the new leader to bear such a name as that, and a wonderful revelation of the insight of the man who gave it to him. The original name, Hoshea, salvation, is a fine one, but this man knew that he could not lead the people in, even though his report be a true one; but he also knew that God could, and Moses said, Your name is changed, and into it is brought the name of the God Who can save. So the name was made. And Joshua led them in, but he never gave them rest.

The high priest of a later day, who had the name, came very near fulfilment of some of its significance as he bore the iniquity of the people, the filthy garments signifying this fact. Presently he was crowned. It was all prophetic and symbolic, but he failed, as the subsequent history of the people proves. The centuries have gone, and the high and noble thinking of the name has never been realized in actual life. There is a hush in the outer court of the inn, and a little Child has come into the world, and the world is quite careless, but heaven is not. Stars are shining, angels are singing, wise men are feeling the touch of the upper spaces, and are journeying toward the manger. Who is it? "Thou shalt call His name Joshua; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins."

God took hold of a common name of the boys playing about, and called His Son by that name. God took hold of the great historic name of the past, the name of the great leader and the name of the priest of the past, and gave it to His Son new born. Yes, but what is the deepest thing? Call Him Jehovah, Yawshah; Joshua, Jesus. Call Him by His own Father's name, Jehovah, and so indicate the truth about His nature. Call Him by the supreme passion of His Father's heart, salvation, and so indicate the meaning of His work in the world.

We pass it on from age to age in printed page, and from mouth to mouth in spoken word: Jesus! But in that name is wrapped up essential truth concerning Him. Jehovah, Yawshah. Call Him that. He is my Son. He is My Servant Who shares My nature. He comes to do My work. Now I understand Him when in the coming years I hear Him say, "I and My Father are One." Call Him Jesus, and I understand Him when I hear Him say, upon another occasion, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." Call Him salvation, and link your two names together into the infinite music; whether it be Hebrew, Greek, or Anglo-Saxon, matters nothing. You cannot rob it of its music. Carry it into all languages and dialects, and in sweet tones it breaks upon the listening ear of humanity.

Jesus, the name high over all,

In hell, or earth, or sky,

Angels and men before it fall

And devils fear and fly.

That is the tone of His triumphant march to victory. But there is another tone.

Jesus, name of sweetness,

Jesus, sound of love;

Cheering exiles onward

To their home above.

Jesus, oh, the magic

Of the soft love sound,

How it thrills and trembles

To creation's bound.

This name has appealed to every generation, and to all classes of men because it is a great name. It is the name of the boy who plays in the street. It touches you. It is Jehovah, Yawshah. Call Him that, said the Father to the angel, and the Boy's name was registered in heaven, God's name linked with the great word that declares His mission in the world.

Second, the reason for giving this name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." You notice that slight variation in translation, certainly a great gain. The real thought is that of a contrast. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people." I repeat, the form of the sentence really suggests a contrast. A contrast with what? With all the aspiration of the past, which had never become achievement. With all the strong and strenuous attempt that had ended in defeat.

Take the man who first bore the great name. Joshua is one of the greatest men upon the pages of the Old Testament in many ways. And yet in all full realization, he failed; and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us, "For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day." So the great leader of the past failed. He led them in, he led them with great sternness and severity, and magnificent triumph against Jericho, and Ai, and on, but he certainly never gave them rest. And all the history of the coming years was the history of perpetual restlessness. Joshua never led them into rest. Well, call His name Joshua, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins.

And Joshua, the high priest in the days of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, not much is said of him, but there he appears, the representative of religion, urging the people under Zerubbabel to their building, helping the office of the prophet with his priestly intercession. There he is seen in symbolic language, clothed with the filthy garments, representing defiled Israel. But he could not take away sin, and the filthy garments remained upon Israel, and Israel failed to fulfil the great function for which she had been created a nation, that of speaking the message of God; and Joshua the priest failed, as did Joshua the leader.

Very well, then, call His name Joshua, for He shall save His people from their sins. And so, brethren, that emphasis of contrast leads us to see that this name indicated, or the declaration associated with the name indicated, not merely a mission, but a method. The angel did not say to

Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He shall lead the people in. He did not say to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He shall bear away the filthy garments, and enable the people to bear their testimony. He might have said these things, but what He said was deeper. "He shall save His people from their sins." My brethren, this is a revelation of the assured success. Joshua failed to lead the people into rest, why? Because of the people's sin, with which he could not deal. Joshua the priest failed to realize in Israel God's purpose, that which should be his message to the nations, why? Because of his people's sin, which he could not carry. So that instead of dealing merely with the surface of things, or speaking of issues, the angel's message goes down to the depths and says, "Thou shalt call His name Joshua," for He will lead His people into rest, and to the fulfilment of their vocation by saving them from the sins which prevent rest, and which give the adversary power.

Call this newborn Child Jesus, "for He shall save His people" from these things and from the consequent ruin. If His people are saved from sins, they will find rest; if His people are saved from sins, they will fulfil their vocation, and be and do all that God means they shall be and do.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." I pray you remember that the phrase, "His people," is significant at this point. It marks limits, and indicates limitlessness. What are the limits it marks? His people. No, brethren, I will begin with the other word. How does it indicate limitlessness? It does not say, He shall save the people of His own nation. It does not say, as has often been pointed out, He shall save God's people, but His own people. "His people." He is coming to make a position, to create a people to be a Kingdom, and to set up the Kingdom; and the people who are His He will save from their sins. There is your limit, but there is your limitlessness. How may a man become one of His people? Simply by believing on Him and crowning Him. It is a statement that overlaps the boundary line of Judaism. It is a statement that includes the wise men who come from afar to Him, as well as shepherds singing on Bethlehem's plains. This is the story of the first naming of the Child.

But as you take the story you will find this Child grows up, and He stands amongst multitudes of men, and He comes out of the border line of Judea, and touches Tyre and Sidon, and Phoenicia. He goes to Samaritans finally, and at the last commissions His disciples to go everywhere. Standing amongst men, He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is a universal invitation that He utters. Will you come? Are you coming? I am addressing in imagination the whole nation, and from here and there they come, they crowd. Who are those that come? His people. What will He do? Save them from their sins. Unless you make yourself His by birth, He cannot save you from your sins. Unless you yield to Him, you cannot be His. It is the call of Christ which constitutes human opportunity. That opportunity taken, and men yielding to it, what then? Then they become His, and He saves such from their sins. So that He brings men into rest, who come to Him, and that Joshua could never do. So that He enables a man to fulfil the Divine vocation who comes to Him, and that the high priest, Joshua, could not do. But our Jesus does it by saving us from our sins.

Brothers, when this name was given to Joseph by the angel it was, so far as man was concerned, a prophecy. So far as God was concerned it was an affirmation of faith, of absolute assurance and certainty. Thou, Joseph, shalt call His name Jehovah—Salvation, for He shall save His people from their sins. So spake heaven; and as men heard it, it was a prophecy, it was an indication, it

was a hope. There is a sense in which it is true that He did not receive that name finally until He went back into heaven, and Paul tells us all the gracious story when he writes, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore, also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name." What name? "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

The angel uttered it, heaven's confidence, a prophecy of hope to men; and the Babe bore it, and carried it through the simplicity of childhood, one Boy among the many who bore it in those Judean villages; and the Boy passed out into youth, and bore the same name, Joshua, Jesus, in purity, and in resistance to all evil. And He bore it on through the years of public ministry, and He bore it on the Cross, and never so universally as there. Who is this upon the Cross? The Babe Whose name is Jesus. But Who is He? Joshua, Jehovah, Salvation.

Can He do it? Can He take sins away, and bring rest? Can He take sins away, and enable me to fulfil my vocation? I do not know. He is dead. They have buried Him. I do not know. I am one of the disciples, I am afraid. I do not know. I hoped, but I am not sure. What is this the women say? He is risen? He has appeared first to them, and then to the eleven, and then to Peter all alone, and then to others, and to five hundred at once. He gathered them about Him on Olivet, the risen One, and He went up, bearing with Him the same sweet human name that boys bore at their play in Judea, bearing up the name the leader of the past bore, who failed to bring into rest, bore it up triumphant into heaven itself; and He received it there anew, no longer a prophecy for men, but an evangel!

And there at the center of God's universe at this moment of human time is the Man Who bore the name, glorified, our Joshua, Hallelujah! He is able to lead us into rest. He is our High Priest, clothed no longer with the filthy garments, for He bore them away on the Cross; but with the miter on His head, and many diadems upon His brow, Jesus, the enthroned One. May God help us to hear the evangel of the name, and to know assuredly that what the name prophesied He has perfectly accomplished.

Matthew 3:15. The Way Of Righteousness.

Matthew 3:15.

The Way Of Righteousness.

... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

Matthew 3:15

These are the first recorded words of Jesus after He had come to man's estate. We have in the Gospel of Luke a record of what He said as a boy twelve years of age, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father (my Father's house)." That was a truly remarkable utterance characterized by all naturalness and simplicity, the naturalness and simplicity of a boy undefiled, artless, and sincere. They were words in which He revealed, even at that time, a sense of relationship that was mystic and peculiar, for there can be no doubt that His reference was to God as He said, "My Father's house" or "the things of My Father." Even then, also, there was a sense of responsibility resting upon Him, "... I must be in (My Father's house)." In that "must," moreover, there was revelation not of responsibility alone, but of response thereto. In that word the boy uttered the deepest thing of His heart, the central inspiration of the life that was opening full of beauty and full of promise, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father (My Father's house)."

Between that hour and this of His baptism, eighteen years had passed, during which once again, according to St. Luke, He had "... advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." There had been definite growth and development; mentally, in wisdom, physically in stature, spiritually, in grace with God and men. The double favor "... with God and men" was the outcome of the double fellowship of those eighteen years. Through them all He had lived with God and with men; in a close, perpetual fellowship with His Father and naturally with the people of Nazareth, not aloof from them but mixing in all their life.

As He approached thirty years of age, a strange and wonderful thing happened in Judaea. A voice was heard which was unmistakably the voice of a prophet crying in the wilderness,

... Make ye ready the way of the Lord;

Make His paths straight.

It was a voice so prevailing that men crowded out to the wilderness to hear him, were swept by his fierce invective and his stern denunciation, and multitudes of them bent and bowed themselves in repentance. Among those who heard the voice was the Carpenter of Nazareth, and hearing it He answered it; "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John...." At this point in the narrative we have a statement which is a very arresting one. When this man from Nazareth presented Himself to the stern, hard, ascetic, magnificent prophet of the desert for baptism, John hesitated, and said to Him, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" There is nothing really arresting in that, nothing very startling in it if we read it with our knowledge

of Jesus; but if we remember that at the moment when John said it, he did not know Who Jesus was, then it became arresting, startling, suggestive. John himself distinctly declared later that he only knew that this Jesus was indeed the One Whose coming he had been predicting when he saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Him. When Jesus presented Himself, John had not yet seen that sign and so did not know Him as the Messiah. It may be that in their earlier boyhood days they had met and played together, but there had been long years of separation. John had retired in early life to the desert and there in loneliness, in meditation, brooding over the sins of his people, he had prepared for the stern ministry to which he was being called. Jesus had remained in Nazareth. Looking into His eyes he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" The explanation is not far to seek. John stands supreme in all the long and illustrious line of Hebrew prophets; brief, stern, and severe, he had so entered into fellowship with the righteousness and holiness of God that when he looked into the eyes of the Galilean peasant that day, he saw light that he had seen in no other eyes, purity which he had seen nowhere else, and without at all knowing Who He was, he recognized that here was One separated from the multitude in His purity, and he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

In that connection Jesus uttered the first words of His ministry that have been recorded, and in the uttering of them He struck the keynote of the whole of that ministry, unveiling in a flash the whole truth concerning it. With gentleness to John He said persuasively, "... Suffer it now,..." and then added, "... for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

These words were introductory to His mission. They came out of a quiet mind, full heart, and fixed will. They were the utterance of One Whose mind had grown in wisdom, Whose heart had grown in grace, Whose will had been constantly yielded to the will of His Father. He clearly saw His mission and understood its deepest meaning and in quiet simplicity in this act He dedicated Himself to it.

In the words He uttered, we have first a revelation of the ultimate toward which His face was set; that ultimate is in this connection expressed in the word "righteousness"; "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Second, in the declaration we have a revelation of the work that was devolving upon Him and upon all those who were already in association with Him, John being among the number, as were the men of the past and those who ultimately come into association with Him, His disciples, and His church; "... to fulfil all righteousness." In the first suggestive word, "Thus," so pregnant with meaning yet so simple that we may hurry over it, He revealed the method by which His work was to be accomplished and the ultimate order of righteousness established.

Let us then follow these three lines of thought, considering first, the suggestion of these words of Jesus concerning the ultimate order, "righteousness"; considering second, the work which He revealed as His work and the work of all associated with Him, "... to fulfil all righteousness"; dwelling last upon the method revealed, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The keynote of our meditation is struck in the word "righteousness." Our difficulty is immediately created, as it is so constantly, by our familiarity with the word. It is one of the commonplace words of the Christian church, one of the great words which is no longer confined to the Christian church but has passed out and is perpetually being used by men of the world. What does it mean? We have sometimes said that by a shortening of the word we may gain access to the heart of the

intention, rightness; and by still further shortening it we may come nearer to the simple statement of its profoundest meaning, right. Yet we are not finally helped by that. What is righteousness? Righteousness is found absolutely in God and in God alone. Turning back to the Old Testament Scriptures where the word so often occurs, we find one great illuminative passage in which the word itself does not occur but in which the whole fact is so poetically and forcefully set forth that nothing can be added to it. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we have the song which Moses wrote at the close of his life and taught to the people that they might sing it. It is found in the thirty-second chapter of the book;

For I will proclaim the name of the Lord:

Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

The Rock, His work is perfect;

For all His ways are judgment:

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,

Just and right is He.

An inclusive and final definition of righteousness lies within that stanza of the great song of Moses. This righteousness is absolute in God, and the measure in which man understands righteousness is the measure in which he knows God. All the Divine attributes are needed for the exposition of the righteousness of God. Righteousness is a greater word than holiness. Righteousness is the positive of which holiness is the negative. The babe in its mother's arms is righteous but not yet holy; righteous in that it is perfectly related to God until the touch of another shall spoil it; needing no priestly magic to make it a Christian. Holiness is the negative virtue which results from the exercise of the positive condition of rightness. In God both truth and grace are included in righteousness. In Him righteousness is not a hard, ethical condition, integrity alone. In Him righteousness has at its heart love and grace, tenderness and compassion. He "... will by no means clear the guilty,..." but He will die in the stead of the guilty, cancel sin and so render the guilty guiltless. Righteousness is absolute in God.

What then is righteousness in man? I want to answer the question individually, socially, and in regard to things. Righteousness in man individually is adjustment to God, thinking with God, feeling with God, willing with God. That means not merely what man is in himself, but all his attitudes and relationships to his fellowmen and to things. In man righteousness is adjustment to God. Righteousness is not the rendering of homage to God on a day, in a place, in an attitude. Righteousness is an adjustment of the whole life to God, every day, in every place, in all conditions, and in all attitudes. Whereas it is true that we cannot put God on the same list with our material possessions, it is also appallingly true, tragically true, that many people put their material possessions where God ought to be. Although it seems almost a frivolous thing to say, the frivolity is tragic, it is nevertheless true, there are men and women who are entirely adjusted to their houses, automobiles and bank accounts. They think in the realm of these things, they feel under the impulse of these things, they will under the mastery of these things. The tragedy of the business! That is all background and negative to our meditation. The thing that stands in the foreground and is the positive end of our meditation is that righteousness in a man is life adjusted

in all things to God.

In social life, righteousness is the proper articulation of the lives so adjusted. Socially, righteousness is that relation between man and man which is the outcome of the adjustment of individual lives to God. The motive of relationship and the method of relationship result from the adjustment of life to God and its right relationship with Him. We imagine too often that we are in right relationship with God and then proceed in our relationships with our fellow men as though there were no connection between the two. Yet there is always connection between the two. A man whose relationship with his fellow man is wrong at any point is a man whose relationship with God is wrong in spite of his song, his creed, and his profession. To be adjusted to God in all truth is to be true, and the man who is true cannot lie to his fellow man. To be adjusted to God in grace is to be gracious, and the man who is gracious cannot be mastered by malice in his dealing with his fellow man.

Once again what is righteousness as to things? What do I mean by things? Just things! Houses, cars, bank accounts, trees, fields, birds, beasts, minerals, mountains, valleys, subtle and hidden forces not yet discovered, things already discovered such as electricity, anything, everything. What has righteousness to do with them? What does righteousness mean in regard to them? It means the discovery of things as to their being and as to their true purpose in the Divine economy. There is nothing inherently evil that God has created. What then, is the matter with the world? Men not adjusted to God, men not articulated as within that great adjustment have not discovered the forces that they need; or having discovered them, do not know their true purpose and are misusing them. The ultimate Kingdom of God in this world will not be a kingdom from which are banished all the things that we see and touch. It will be a kingdom in which man has discovered them and their true meaning, and one in which man will no longer lay hold upon some subtle potent thing that has its purpose in the universe and use it for a kingdom in which things we call poisons will be relegated to their proper place, made use of, since all are gifts of God. Righteousness with regard to things means also the development of the thing discovered. An imperfect flower in your garden is proof of the lack of righteousness somewhere. Arrested development is proof of lack of righteousness. The opposite is true. Righteousness means that the flower found for the first time in the forest, under the touch of man in right relationship with God and in cooperation with his brother man will become beautiful with a beauty of which we never dreamed but which was potential in the flower when first man found it. The discovery and development of all the great and gracious, sweet and wonderful secrets of old mother-earth.

Finally, righteousness as to things means that they are used and not abused, that they are made the servants of humanity and not the masters of men; like the very Sabbath of God, they are made for man and not man for them.

In the presence of the great word we dream wondrous dreams, and no dream we dream approaches the glory of the reality of righteousness. Do you wonder that the New Testament writer upon one occasion made use of the words "... the fruits of righteousness...." Righteousness blossoms into beauty and produces fruits. Righteousness is a word full of beauty, and we, alas too often, have made it merely hard, mechanical, ethical. It is bursting with life. It describes man coming to the fulfilment of his manhood because his face is lifted to the throne of God. It describes humanity finding the true social order because human life is articulated as the result of the

adjustment of the individual to God. It describes the earth, blushing with beauty, laughing with flowers, becoming more glorious in its light and more full of ease and delight in its being. It is God's great word, a word in which He sings out to men if they but have ears to hear it, the exceeding beauty of His own being, the exceeding joy of His own heart, the characteristic grace of His purpose for the people whom He has made.

If righteousness is absolute in God, and relatively in man is man's adjustment and articulation, what is righteousness resultantly? "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," righteousness first, then resultantly peace, and finally, joy. What then according to the suggestion of that declaration are the results of righteousness? First peace. "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" said Jesus, in a world which at the moment was hushed and subdued by an appalling peace. Jesus was born when war had ceased and ceased by the agony of the surfeit of itself. The pax Romanum was upon the world for the world was worn out with struggle. The temple of Janus had been closed for a generation and there was peace, appalling peace. Jesus said: "... it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Out of the righteousness which He saw and toward which He set His face, there springs peace, not the pax Romanum but the pax Dei. The peace of God is not weariness, tiredness, inability to fight. It is rather full activity of life in rhythmic power without friction, without weariness. "... the Lord... fainteth not neither is weary." The peace of God grows out of righteousness. Humanity will never find that peace save by the way of righteousness. Out of that peace will come joy and joy is satisfaction, delight, rapture! That is God's ultimate for humanity.

We seem to have wandered very far, but we have come nearer than ever perhaps to the Man Who stood on the banks of the Jordan as He said, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." These were the visions of His eyes, these the ideals of His mind, this the golden goal toward which He set His face. Now note His description of His work; "... to fulfil all righteousness." There is in that phrase the recognition of righteousness as possible. Righteousness in the thinking of Jesus was not a counsel of perfection, a forlorn hope. It was possible, first, because man can be adjusted to God. There is that in God and in man which makes such adjustment possible. The deepest truth of man's nature is that he is created for that adjustment. As Augustine put it long ago, "God has so fashioned the human heart that it never can find rest until it rest in Him." To take the great statement and put it in another form is to declare that it is possible for man to be adjusted to God. He is made for that, not for houses, cars, and credit at the bank, but for God. God has that in Himself which is kith and kin of humanity; He made humanity in His own likeness and image. Having made humanity, it is not merely true that humanity can only rest in Him, it is equally true that He can never rest save as humanity finds rest in Him. If you challenge that, I remind you of the words of Jesus when they criticized Him for breaking Sabbath, "... My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God and Christ can never rest until humanity is at rest. Jesus realized, moreover, that man can be articulated, that it is not impossible. I will borrow a figure of speech from an old prophet: it is not impossible for the lion to dwell with the lamb; it is not impossible that men of differing and diverse temperaments and races should come into realization of that unity which does not destroy their distinction. Under the illumination of the teaching of Christ and in the light of His principles and purpose, man discovers—mark the paradox but follow me—the value of difference necessary to total agreement; differences in form and fashion, in thought and outlook. Thank God there are differences! Yet differences is an ugly word; there are diversities, that is a little better. But let us

borrow a literary word, diereases, that is differences which merge and mix with each other and make harmony. That is God's ultimate for humanity. That means differences not only as to types, temperaments, and races, but as to thought, and that within the Christian church first of all. As the years run on, a man comes to respect with profounder respect than he did, the opinion from which he radically differs. He comes to see that a man who stands for a doctrine of the church which is sacerdotal may himself be as true as the man who stands against him. Perchance in some sweet morning, when life's fitful fever is over, we shall laugh together as sons of God over the things in the presence of which today we quarrel and rend the body of Christ. It is for this larger outlook that Christ came, this harmony which is not monotony. The word of Jesus recognized, moreover, that righteousness is already operative. To fulfil is not to create, but to cooperate, and set free, and enable it to complete itself. I believe with John that "... the whole world lieth in the evil one"; but I also believe that that which lieth in the evil one is potential with righteousness. As the evil one holds the world in his embrace, he holds that in his embrace which he cannot forever hold. I believe with all my heart

That cannot end worst which begun best

Though a wide compass first be fetched.

Of course there was also recognition of righteousness as hindered, held back. That is the supreme thought and therefore it needs no argument.

So we come to our last thought. The word "thus" suggested the method. What did He mean by "thus"? He meant that from which John shrank. From what, then, did John shrink that day when he looked at Jesus? I believe John had welcomed eagerly all who really came in repentance for baptism, but when Jesus came he said, "... I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" He shrank from the idea that the sinless should confess sin. Jesus confessed sin when He went to that baptism. He shrank from the idea that the righteous should repent. When Jesus went to that baptism, He repented. He shrank from the idea that the free with the freedom of purity should seek remission of sins. When Jesus stooped to baptism, He sought remission of sin within His own soul. John looking into the eyes of Jesus said, It is wrong, this cannot be! Thou art sinless, "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" How can the sinless confess sin? How can the righteous repent for sin? How can the free ask for remission? Jesus said, "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." By the very things from which thou art shrinking, righteousness will be fulfilled. Righteousness will be fulfilled by the Sinless bearing sin, by the Righteous repenting for sin on behalf of others, by the Free seeking to be bound in order to break the bonds and set at liberty those that are bound. Never let us read this story and forget those meanings of the baptism of John; it was baptism unto the remission of sins by way of repentance. John, or his disciples, plunged beneath the waters of the Jordan all that came owning their sin, declaring their repentance, and seeking remission. When Jesus was baptized, He confessed sin, He repented for sin, He sought remission.

Whose sin? Not His own, but yours and mine. When John saw Him again, it was after the quietness of the night, after he had seen the descending Spirit, and there had come to him the overwhelming conviction that his hands had plunged beneath the waters of symbolic baptism the Christ of God, the Messiah. On the day after, John looked at Him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

Now carefully observe our Lord's use of the plural pronoun: "... it becometh us." The word was spoken to John, "It becometh us," it becometh Me, as well as thee; it becometh thee as well as Me; it becometh us. It is as though He had said: "John, I will show thee the way. Thy mission has been a Divine mission. Thou hast been the herald of My coming, thou hast proclaimed Me as coming with a fire and a fan! Lo, I come; but '... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' "Righteousness will never be fulfilled by the voice that denounces sin; righteousness will never be fulfilled by the voice that thunders against it! All of which is necessary but such ministry will never fulfil it. There is only one way, it is the way of the Cross, it is the way of fellowship with humanity in its sin, repentance for its sin, and the bearing away of its sin.

He gathered into this "us" all the men of the past who had trodden the sorrowful way. There was a day when Moses said something that revealed the deepest in him more wonderfully than anything he said before or after. It was the day when in the presence of God, he said of the sinning people: "... this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; Yet, now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book!" That is the way by which the people were lifted and saved. There was a later day when another man wrote: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost... I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." That is the way the Kingdom is coming. Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; by standing with the sinner, and confessing the sinner's sin; by sharing the burden of it, repenting for it, going down to death if need be for the saving of the sinner. "... thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

For us the wondrous facts and forces are centralized in Him. He is the Righteousness of God, the Revealer of the beauty of righteousness, adjusted to the will of God. He in the articulation of Himself with others will set up the Kingdom of God. He is the One Who fulfils all righteousness.

At last John in mystic vision heard Him speak and this is what He said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega,... the beginning and the end" of the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. He is the strength of our fellowship in the method. I cannot take up that Cross and share the burden of sin and repent and suffer with the sinner save as it is true of me that the love of Christ constraineth me and that the life of Christ masters me. Where these things are so, we shall enter into fellowship with the suffering by which, and by which alone, the Kingdom is to come.

Matthew 3:17. God's Thought Of The King.

Matthew 3:17.

God's Thought Of The King.

This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 3:17

These words constitute the inscription stamped around the Image imprinted on this gospel according to Matthew. The Image is that of the King. We have the book of His genealogy, the story of His birth, the record of the ministry of His herald. Then we see Him as lawgiver, Administrator of the affairs of a disorganized and chaotic Kingdom, a Warrior proceeding against the foes of the Kingdom and entering into conflict with them. Finally, He appears as the Conqueror of all His enemies, and we listen to words of sublime dignity as standing in the midst of a handful of men He says, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth."

This King impresses us with a sense of mystery. No man can take up this gospel of Matthew and read it naturally as human document, free from all prejudice, without being compelled to say that it presents a Person Who baffles all attempts to understand Him on the human plane. His words are of the simplest and of the sublimest. His deeds touch human life in all its departments, and yet to such effect that human life is seen with a glow of glory on it which we do not detect when others approach it. Who, then, is the King Whose image is stamped on the page? The inscription round about the mystic majestic head of the King is that of my text, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." The voice that uttered the words was a voice out of the heavens, the voice of God Himself.

These words therefore constitute both introduction and conclusion to the study of this gospel according to Matthew. In them we hear the voice of God introducing us to the King, challenging our attention; we are invited by this introductory declaration to follow Him in the light of the claim, and to discover whether it is probable that the claim is justified by the life He lived, by the words He uttered, by the work He accomplished. Those who follow the story through will find how fitting is this inscription around the image of the King.

Even if it be a work of imagination then he who wrote wrought well, beating his music out in perfect harmony with the chord of the dominant; for apart from this inscription and revelation there is no explanation of the One Who is revealed in the story.

In this declaration therefore we have the secrets of the Kingly authority of Christ laid bare, and in that sense we approach it. On the declaration flash the lights of the anticipations of the people who stood round about Him on this occasion, of the immediate circumstances in which the words are recorded to have been uttered, and of those subsequent demonstrations to which I have already made reference.

All Old Testament hopes had centered in the coming of One of Whom the prophets, psalmists and seers alike spoke as Messiah, the Servant of God, the Messenger of God. These aspirations of the past are explicit in the Second Psalm, and implicit in all the prophetic writings. In that psalm emerge into clear and definite statement the underlying hope and aspiration of all the singers and seers of the Hebrew economy. There are different opinions about the psalm. It is said that the reference is to David as the anointed King of Israel. It is suggested that the reference is to Hezekiah. While there may be elements of truth in these contentions, it is impossible to read the psalm and imagine that all its values were fulfilled in the case of David or of Hezekiah. If the psalm is of David, it is of David as God's messenger, His Messiah in a limited sense. If the psalm concerns Hezekiah, it concerns Hezekiah as God's messenger, God's servant, God's Messiah in a limited sense. But there are values beyond these. In the case of either of these men, there were local, immediate, incidental applications of value, but shining through are larger meanings than the man understood who wrote the psalm, and fuller harmonies than the singers detected who sang the songs. This psalm has its fulfilment in Christ and in Him alone, so that when we hear this word spoken in the listening ear of the Hebrews, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," we recognize at once that they would understand it to mean that all the hopes implicit in their ancient prophecies, and focused in this declaration,

I have set my king

Upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;

This day have I begotten thee.

were fulfilled in the One of Whom this word was spoken.

The light of the immediate circumstances is, in some senses, more wonderful. I pray you look at the scene. John has been baptizing with the baptism of repentance, calling men back from their wanderings toward the reign of God. He has been pre-eminently the prophet of righteousness, stern, hard, ascetic, tremendous in his denunciation of sin and his insistence on righteousness. Suddenly he, a man of fine moral character and of intense spiritual insight, is confronted by another Man, Who asks his baptism. The Man Who asks his baptism is a Man of such apparent moral perfection to the man of spiritual insight as to make this very prophet of righteousness immediately feel convinced that he needs to be baptized of Him. While I listen to this word of John, and understand it and yet am amazed at it, I see a yet more strange and wonderful thing. This Man Jesus, of the high and awful purity, which so impressed the prophet of righteousness that he felt his need of cleansing in His presence, identifies Himself with the baptism of repentance, numbers Himself with sinning men; the One Whose purity had appalled the prophet of purity demands that He snail be plunged beneath the waters of the river with men impure and sinning. It is a strange and arresting picture. Immediately following thereupon that Man emerging from those waters of baptism is anointed by the Spirit of God, and with a visible symbol, for His own eyes and perchance for the eyes of the prophet, such as had never before been employed and never since has been employed for the Spirit of God—the symbol of a dove. It was a symbol that suggested harmless-ness and sacrifice.

It was thus, in the midst of such circumstances, that heaven's silence was broken after long centuries, and the voice of God was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

On this inscription flashes also the light of subsequent demonstration. The ministry of three years, compelling loyalty in certain form and fashion, a ministry in which teaching was uttered, the authority of which men were compelled to acknowledge, even though they did not obey it; a ministry in which His ability to deal with all the limitations and sorrows of humanity was demonstrated so that men at least never questioned His power to work the wonders of His will; a ministry which wrought in the lives of all who dared to follow Him such experience of His supremacy that they yielded themselves to Him, and counted it the highest, holiest honor of life that they were reckoned worthy to suffer shame for His name.

In the terms of this inscription blend the accents of the eternal and the temporal. While they are separated from each other, they nevertheless merge. In separation we have, first, the eternal word concerning this King, "This is My beloved Son"; and second, the temporal word concerning Him, having immediate and local value, "in Whom I am well pleased."

But the temporal and eternal merge in each of these separated parts. This Man was visible to the eyes of the prophet, visible to the eyes of the multitude, a Man of our humanity, a Man of our own flesh, a Man so like the rest of men that none noticed Him save the one man whose purity of soul quickened his spiritual intelligence and enabled him to discover Him. Did not John say to the multitudes, "In the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not"? They had not seen Him, He was so much one of them. Yet the Divine voice drawing attention to this Man of our common humanity said, "This is My Son"; and in that word, as we shall see, declared the eternal and abiding relation, uttered suggestively the mystery of the Person of Christ in His relation to the undying ages.

Or if you take the other part of the declaration, you will find the same merging of the eternal and the temporal. "In Whom I am well pleased," and the reference was to the One on Whom our attention has been fixed in such a way that we are impressed with the majesty of His Person. The Son of God, "in Whom I am well pleased"; and there was an immediate and temporal meaning in the word, having application and value for that hour, and for the things of our present temporary and present life.

Thus are we introduced by the inscription around the Image, by the first word of God recorded concerning our Master, to the King Who will pass before us as we take our way through this gospel according to Matthew.

Let us, then, consider the inscription in its two parts. First, the eternal, "This is My Son"; second, the temporal, "In Whom I am well pleased."

As we approach this strangely difficult theme, which cannot be exhausted, about which no final word can be spoken, we must bear in mind that the one fact of relationship here declared is that of the Sonship of Jesus.

If we place this word in Matthew against the word in the Second Psalm, we find a distinction and a difference. The word of the psalm says:

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;

This day have I begotten thee.

I listen for the sound of the voice of God on the banks of the River Jordan, and this is what I hear:

This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

There is not a word in this declaration by the Father about begetting or beginning. We must have that distinction in mind if we are to approach the subject reverently and intelligently. The two facts are not the same; the first is that of sonship, the second is that of a begetting, which indicates beginning. That begetting of the psalm has no reference to beginning of being, but to the initiation of a work. If the psalm be Messianic and its first fulfilment was in the case of David, then the begetting had no reference to the day of David's natural birth, but to the day when he was anointed king. If the psalm is Messianic and its first reference was to Hezekiah, then that which the expositors suggest may be true, that the reference was to that day when, rising from sickness and death, he started on a new life which God had granted to him. Of these things I have no certainty. If I take that psalm and find it in my New Testament I immediately discover what the word means in relation to Jesus. It is four times cited, two of them certainly by Paul, two of them in the letter to the Hebrews, probably by Paul. When Paul was delivering his first great message in Antioch in Pisidia he quoted that psalm and placed it in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, and declared that it was in that resurrection hour that He was begotten. You will find in his letter to the Romans when referring to Jesus as being, according to the flesh of the seed of David, but according to the spirit, Son of God, he declared that He was declared, determined—or as I have ventured to say if we dare to anglicize the Greek word, horizoned—Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. In the letter to the Hebrews it is declared that He was begotten Son of God, brought into the realm of manifested Sonship by the resurrection, and it is certain that the disciples of Jesus never perfectly understood His relationship to God until the morning of the resurrection. The morning of the resurrection was the day of birth for the disciples, because it was to them the day on which He was begotten Son of God to their understanding and to their comprehension. It was Peter himself who declared in his first letter, "We were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

We may dismiss for the purpose of this meditation all reference to that word in the psalm, "This day have I begotten thee," and take only the declaration of the psalm, "Thou art my Son," and that of God in the hour of the baptism of Jesus concerning His Person, "This is My beloved Son."

In that word we have, first of all, a revelation as to the nature of the King. He was of the very nature of God. All figurative terms must be used with a recognition of limitation. If we speak of a son we implicate a beginning, but that is because we are using our term in the realm of the finite. Finite sonship results from finite fatherhood; but we must cancel our limitations when we reach the heights of the Divine. A word which will again defy our finite analysis is the word "eternal," yet it must be remembered that this word cancels the limitations of time. Eternal fatherhood, eternal sonship, not the beginning of the sonship of this Son of His love. As the proceeding of the Spirit of God from the Father through the Son is eternal so also Sonship is eternal. That which is of supreme importance is the revelation of the fact that the King is of the Divine nature. He shares

the very nature of His Father, is of the Divine essence. That is the deepest and profoundest truth about the King. He is not merely bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh, humanity of our humanity. He is all that, but infinitely more.

In speaking at Antioch in Pisidia Paul argued from the Sonship of Jesus which was demonstrated by His resurrection the impossibility of death holding Him ultimately. He passed into death, but He emerged therefrom as none other emerged therefrom or ever will. Death laid no corrupting touch on Him. He did not see corruption. Peter in Pentecostal power declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." The first fact in this identity of nature is that of eternal being. He will bow and bend to death and enter into its profound darkness and know its mystery, but He cannot be held of it. It is not correct to say merely that He triumphed over death by the way of the resurrection. Resurrection was necessary because of His nature. He was not deified by resurrection. He was raised because He was of the nature of God, and could not, holy One as He was, ever ultimately see corruption.

In the passage in Romans the Apostle teaches that His Sonship connotes His absolute holiness; according to the flesh, He was of the seed of David; according to the spirit of holiness, He is Son of God, and the resurrection did but demonstrate that holiness of character which was part of His essential Deity.

In the opening words of the letter to the Hebrews it is shown that His identity in nature with God by reason of His Sonship proves His absolute sovereignty. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time,

Thou art My Son;

This day have I begotten thee?

But of the Son He saith,

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

In the fifth chapter of Hebrews the writer declares that because Jesus was Son of God He was moved with compassion and became a great High Priest, bearing our infirmities, providing eternal salvation for the sons of men.

The Son of God is of the very nature of God, therefore eternal, therefore holy, therefore sovereign in authority, therefore saving, even at the cost of sacrifice and of death. All the things of Deity were realized in the Kingship of the One manifested in time in such form and fashion that human nature might gaze on Him and be led to understanding of the hidden and profound secrets of God.

The eternal value also reveals the fact that the King has right to the inheritance of God. Again I go back to this Hebrew psalm, and I notice that in the seventh verse I have these words:

Thou art my son;

This day have I begotten thee.

And in the twelfth verse,

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way.

Those who may be familiar with these psalms in the original language will at once recognize that we have two different words here. The word translated "son" in the seventh verse is not the word translated "son" in the twelfth verse. There is the same value in both words, the suggestiveness, with which we have attempted to deal, of identity of nature. In our reading of the Bible we have been made familiar with both these words in proper names, as for instance in the names Benjamin, and Bar-timæus. If I may take these prefixes as being the simplest way of illustrating what I am attempting to say, this is it,

Thou art My son—Ben.

Kiss the son—Bar.

There is the same underlying value of identity of nature in each, but there are two applications, two thoughts.

In the first you have the great Hebrew word, peculiarly Eastern, so difficult for us Westerners to understand, the word that speaks of sonship as being that which builds the house and continues it. We know so little of house building in that sense. Ask the man from the East how old he is, and do not be startled if he tells you two thousand years. He is counting all the family, feeling the solidarity of the race, recognizing his responsibility for that which lies behind him; he glories in being Benjamin, son of the right hand, builder of the house, continuer of the history.

The second word simply means heir. The first word indicates responsibility, contribution; the second indicates blessing, the thing a man receives.

In that psalm we have the suggestion that Messiah should be the Heir of God,

Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,

And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

The anointed King is the House Builder, the One who will accomplish the will of the Father, and therefore He will obtain the inheritance which is His right. The Son Who shares His Father's nature being of that nature and therefore being eternal, holy, sovereign, saving, is Heir of all the wealth of God in this world, all the nations, and all the earth.

This eternal Son of the eternal God not only shares His nature, and has a right to His inheritance, He co-operates in His purpose, He is the House Builder. Moses was servant in the house of God, but the Son is Sovereign over the house, for He is the Builder of the House. So the King is seen as co-operative with God, building His House, realizing His purpose, moving toward the goal on which the heart of God is set.

Read the psalm to the end and discover His method—the rule of justice, the rod of iron, the exercise of mercy:

Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way,

For his wrath will soon be kindled.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

We turn, in the second place, and very briefly to the next word, that of the temporal relation: "In Whom I am well pleased." I do not believe that is temporal alone. I think it is the crystallization of all the infinite music of the eighth chapter of Proverbs. The ancient Hebrew wisdom, the Greek Logos, merge and are fulfilled in Jesus, in the Son of God, in that One in Whom God had forever delighted.

Yet the first application was local and temporal. We have no record of the life of Jesus for at least eighteen years. How has He been living, what has He been doing in those strange, mysterious years? That Voice broke the silence. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Being now about thirty years of age He had come to baptism, and these words were uttered. It was a declaration of earthly conformity to a heavenly pattern, of temporal harmony with eternal order. It was the word of God setting His seal on the perfection of the human life of Jesus. It was the confirmation of the personal perfection of the human Christ, of His holiness of character, of the fact that He had reigned in life, suffering nothing to have dominion over Him other than the will of His Father, of the fact that He had exercised a saving, beneficent relationship as He had come into contact with men. These are the things of God, this is the Son of God, and for a generation He had lived in human conditions; now it was over, and God sealed the perfection of His Son as He said, "I am well pleased."

But there is another value and a profounder one in that statement. John had said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" and the answer of the Son of God to the Hebrew prophet had been, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." In that baptism He was numbered with the transgressors. The Pure stood side by side with the impure, consented to a whelming that indicated the need for cleansing, entered into personal comradeship with sinning men; and that which bent Him toward that lowliness was His passion for righteousness. "Suffer it now: for thus" by this baptism which is the symbol of death and which is the symbol of another baptism which awaits Me in the days to come, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," not to observe a rite, but to deal with sin at its fountain head, to master it that so righteousness may be established. A passion for righteousness filled His heart as He consented to John's baptism. It was His consent to a method of identification with sinners that must end in awful death. It was as He emerged from these waters which were the symbol of His identification with sinning men that God said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

Is there not yet another note here, another value? Is there not in this declaration the note of His power for dominion. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Man can have only one King, and that is God. No man conscious of his own manhood has ever found, or ever can find in man merely, a king to whom he can and will submit the whole mastery of his being without question. If Jesus of Nazareth be none other than a pure and upright man, I cannot crown Him my king, for I also am a man. There can be no King for a man other than God. There can be no final authority for the dignity of human life other than the authority of God Himself. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," satisfied, at rest, because in Him man will find Me as King, and through coming to this Man, the revelation of Myself, man will be enabled to crown God King of the life and thus realize the territory of his own being.

Thus "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Thus at the opening of this great gospel of the King I find the Divinely graven inscription around the image.

Do we agree with God about Jesus? Yonder is a man at prayer beneath the shade of his own fig tree. Disturbed, he follows the disturber, until he stands face to face with this selfsame Man just after this baptism. Nathanael and Jesus are confronting each other. "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," said Jesus. This Hebrew looked into the eyes of Jesus and said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." In that word he agreed with God.

Christ is the test and touchstone of our relation to God. King in very deed is He. Put not upon this King the measurements of earthly kings. That was the mistake of the early disciples until the Spirit illuminated them, and they beheld Him as Son of God. He was the Man of the seamless robe, a homeless Man; but that is God's King. There He is, God's Son, of His very nature, having the right to His inheritance, in Himself having all power and eternal dominion. Then be it ours to hasten to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry.... Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

Matthew 4:4. The King's Thought Of Man.

Matthew 4:4.

The King's Thought Of Man.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Matthew 4:4

The story of the temptation of our Lord appeals to men irresistibly by reason of its essential naturalness. In all its central values it is true to our common human experience. As we read it, far removed as we feel ourselves to be from the Eastern conditions, and puzzled intellectually as we sometimes may be, by some of the methods which are described, we nevertheless are conscious of very close and intimate fellowship with the Man Who is being tempted. Those familiar with the New Testament can hardly read the story without other passages from the apostolic writings coming back to their minds: "One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"; "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

There are certain arresting facts in the story to which I shall make brief and passing reference by way of introduction. You will observe that the devil is introduced without any explanation, and that God is admitted without any argument. We stand in the presence of a Man Who is most evidently of our nature; all the elemental forces of our manhood are discoverable as we observe Him: intellect, emotion, volition, the physical, the spiritual, the vocational; everything which is essentially human is seen in the Man Whom we watch in that strange hour of temptation.

The particular text which I have chosen from the story consists of the answer of Jesus to the first temptation. Its first application was that of reply to the suggestion that life is dependent on the material. The first attack of the foe was in the realm of the physical—bread. In that connection our text was the affirmation of the fact that while the material is necessary it is not sufficient for the sustenance of life. It is well that we should observe that our Lord did not speak disrespectfully of bread, did not even declare it to be in any sense or in any circumstances unnecessary to the maintenance of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone." Do not omit that word "alone" in your thinking. Christ did not say, "Man shall not live by bread." Man does live by bread; but "man shall not live by bread alone." While the material is necessary it is not sufficient. Such was the force of the answer to the attack of the first temptation.

But the statement has a much wider application. Every subsequent answer of Jesus was a deduction from the first. When in answer to the next temptation He said, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," He was not telling Satan that he was not to tempt God, but that man was not to tempt God. So in His third answer, when for the third time He quoted the words of ancient Scripture, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." He was not telling Satan what he was to do, but was declaring man must worship his God and serve Him alone. The

"Thou" in the second answer, "Thou shalt not tempt," and the "Thou" of the third answer, "Thou shalt worship," is the "Man" of the first answer, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Therefore in this first answer we have a central declaration giving us the key to the true significance of the whole story.

I am not so much occupied now with the story of the temptation as with that central and first word that passed the lips of our Lord in the hour of darkness, which revealed His conception of humanity and the secrets of life, a conception which constituted the reason for His attitude under temptation and the secret of His victory over temptation.

Two of the words in the text apprehend us; they are perhaps the simplest, "man" and "live." Of these two elemental words, the supreme word is "live"; the limiting, distinguishing word is "man."

The supreme word is "live." It brings us into the realm of the infinite and abiding mystery of life. We are, however, immediately limited by the earlier word "man."

In order that we may pass to the distinguishing, discriminating word "man" we will pause for a few moments with the second word and with the suggestions which it makes. "Man shall not live." It is life with which our Master was dealing. His own life was being attacked. It was His own life of which He was holding the stronghold, as He repulsed the attacks. I go back, then, to the supreme thought for a moment or two, the thought of life. Life is an interesting word. It is a word that you cannot define because you cannot define that for which it stands. There are some words which we have attached to ideas which exactly represent those ideas. We can grope our way through the processes by which they came into existence, or feel our way down to the roots, until we see how exactly the word fits the idea. When we begin that process with this word "life" we are immediately introduced into the realm of mystery. Philologists feeling their way back tell us that this word "life" came from the Gothic word *liban*, simply meaning, to be left, from the same root as the word "leave." Immediately we are face to face with mystery and a sense of indefiniteness. What do you mean by being left? Then the philologists employ another word to explain what is meant by being left: to survive. I find now I have a Latin word and I must translate it, and I do so, to live on; but I am back to my original word "live," and so I am working in a circle and there is no definition, save the idea that to live is to be left: life is the negation of death. Death carries away, life is that which is not carried away. That is all. That is mysterious, nebulous, insufficient. We turn back to the philologist and ask him to tell us what the word means. I quote from one alone: "that state in which the organs are capable of performing their functions." Can there be anything more gloriously indefinite? That state in which organs continue their functions. What is the secret, mystic, mighty force which makes for continuity, and what happens when it ceases? We are in the presence of the mystery of all mysteries. The mystery of life is indeed a mystery. It is in the flower, in the glowworm at eventide, in the bee passing from flower to flower and fulfilling a great mission in the world of flowers; in the bird, in the beast; and it is in man, a common quantity or quality, a mystery.

What is life? There is no answer; and the nearest we can get to definition is by declaration of what this mystic, mysterious force does. It does exactly the same thing in flower, glowworm, bee, bird, beast, and man. Let every scientist here remember that I am not a scientist, and I am not a poet. I am a plain, blunt man who speaks the things that I do know, not of life, for that I have never seen, but of the operation of life, which I can observe. Life is that which appropriates, assimilates, and ultimately gives back to the whole from which it takes. These are the three functions of life:

appropriation, assimilation, giving. That is common to every realm.

I will tell you in one brief statement from the Old Testament all the story about it: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The secret of life God holds in His own knowledge and His own power, and He has never unveiled it to the sons of men.

Passing from that word to the word which I have ventured to describe as the distinguishing, discriminating word of my text, "man," we immediately leave the flowers and the glowworm; the bee, the bird, and the beast; and we look at life in man. Jesus uttered the essential truth concerning human life in the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man must, if he would live, appropriate more than the material, and assimilate other than bread, in order that out of the mystery of his being he may give larger things than material things. That is our theme.

We turn to this story of the temptation because there we have such a wonderful setting and such a wonderful surrounding enabling us to understand the profoundest truths concerning human life. In this story we have a revelation of the elemental facts of human life, a picture of a common experience of human life, that of struggle and of conflict; and a revelation of the secret whereby a man may live in the full sense of the word, and come to the ultimate realization of the meaning of his manhood.

In the first place, in this story we have a revelation of the fundamental facts of human life. I ask you to observe this Man in the wilderness facing the tempter, and let your eyes rest on Him rather than on the enemy. As you do so you will see that in human life there is a threefold demand, to which threefold demand the enemy makes appeal.

There is, first, the demand for the material, hunger for bread. There is, second, the demand for the spiritual, the craving for an actual spiritual grasp on God. There is, finally, the demand made on self, the passion for a kingdom. Man of the material needs the material; the hunger is the evidence. Man of the spiritual craves the spiritual, to which craving the enemy made his appeal when he said, "If Thou art the Son of God cast Thyself down." Man of the regnant faculty—for man is king in the economy of God, as the psalmist saw and sang so long ago—demands a kingdom over which he can reign. Thus I see the Man in the wilderness and discover the threefold demand of his life by observing the method of the tempter; and I have discovered the elemental facts of human life.

There is, first, the demand on the material. Man of the material needs the material. Life must appropriate, assimilate, the material. Man is not a spirit without a body any more than man is a body without a spirit. It is not for us to reason why; we deal with man as he is, as we know him, as God has made him; and we assert that life demands that we should appropriate the material and assimilate it and recognize our relation to the very earth in which for a while we live. It is absolutely necessary that every human being must have of the earth in order to live. Hunger is a sign of health, it is a sign of strong manhood. It is the man who lacks hunger that you become anxious about, not the man who is hungry. God has made man on one side of his individuality of the earth, and of the earth he must have. This Man in the wilderness, forty days fasting, by the health of His perfect manhood, by the splendor of His perfect physical being, was hungry; and that is one side

of human nature that we must recognize and reckon with. In this Bible story everything is resolved in this simplest formula, bread. Bread is but an emblem of things material and physical. Man is of the earth the ultimate glory and the ultimate crown, and nothing lies beneath him in all the mysterious scale of uprising life to which he is not related. Consequently, there is demand in every man's life for that which shall feed the material side of his nature as it is represented in everything that lies beneath him. The healthy man loves a dog and demands a dog. The healthy man loves flowers and demands them. The flowers lie within his own material nature. He must have colors, sounds, beauty. When you find a man who turns his back on music and flowers in the name of saintship, understand he is no saint; he does not understand his own humanity, in his own thinking of it he will degrade that which God has made, and I will not trust him out of my sight. Bread is the simple formula of the whole material order, which is not inherently evil, which is a Divine creation, which finds its ultimate glory in man; and man in health hungers for everything that lies beneath him.

Then as to the next revelation, the demand on God. Man is of the spiritual and he needs the spiritual. In the elemental man, that is, in the man who is nearest to that which is natural to humanity, that demand for the spiritual will inevitably make itself heard and known. It may be that the man who feels the hunger for the spiritual will not understand the hunger. It may be that he will not be able to express in correct words the true deep meaning of this hunger. It may take curious methods of expression; but not merely for bread does man hunger, but for space, vision, for something beyond the near, the immediate, the dust; for some demonstration of spirituality that is independent of the near, the immediate, the dust. Get back to the wilderness and listen to the subtle voice of the tempter, "If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down," cut thyself off from all the ordinary laws of physical being and find out whether there is any reality in this spiritual relationship; make a venture on the spiritual in order to find out. Have you never felt that temptation come to you. Remember, the very temptation is directed toward a perfectly right attitude of the soul. In every man there is the possibility of the realization of the spiritual. A man may affirm that he does not believe in the spiritual, yet within his soul there is a crying out after God; it may be mere speculation, it may be some adventure, it may be that which man will designate, in what he is pleased to call his sober moments, fanaticism; but, thank God, humanity cannot get away from this fanaticism, the passion for some consciousness and grasp of some larger thing that cannot be cabined and confined within the tabernacle of this flesh. That is why men climb mountains and travel. That is why men venture forth on great enterprises. It is a sign of health.

I come at last to that which is the ultimate thing in all human life. According to this revelation, not the demand on the material of which every man is conscious, not this demand on the spiritual and on God which every man feels, though he may not understand, but the demand on self is final. Man is regnant in his very being. He needs a kingdom; he asks some territory over which he can reign, having captured it, having mastered it, that he may administer it. Every man is asking for that; every healthy man, every elemental man, every man who approximates in any degree toward the original Divine intention, asks a kingdom. That is the secret impulse of all production, of all commerce, of all healing ministries, of all art, and—forgive me—ultimately, of all true preaching. It is the passion for a kingdom. A man does not ask a kingdom that he inherits from his father. Man asks a garden of Eden, not an Italian garden, but one in which he can walk and touch mother earth

brimming with potentialities, and which he can smite and make beautiful with flowers and golden with harvest. That is elemental manhood. You say you have never felt that? That is the sign of your sin. Sin paralyzes the passion for a kingdom, and a man is content to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." That is the language of a false humanity. Man in the economy of God asks a kingdom that he can win, master, administer, and over which in the allied forces of his material and spiritual being he can reign in life.

In the wilderness I not only have this revelation of elemental humanity, I have also the revelation of that which is common to man, the experience of struggle. Of course this is the central value of this particular story, and again I ask you to observe there is no explanation of it here, no vindication of it. It is a story that accepts facts and reveals the forces.

I pray you also to remember that this is the picture of human life. I wonder whether this fact of struggle obtains through all the universe of God. I cannot say, I do not know. I know only man and something of the angels through the revelation of Scripture, and something of all that life on this earth that lies beneath man in the great creation scale; and, so far as I am able to observe, I find the same principle everywhere. I do not know the history of the angels. It is not perfectly revealed in Holy Scripture. There are gleams in the revelation, and I read, among other things, of angels who left their first estate, and kept not their proper habitation. I cannot read a sentence like that without discovering that behind that event in which angels left their first estate and wandered from their true orbit there was struggle. There was in the mystery of the angelic world some kind of temptation, and the victory over it was the keeping of a first estate, of abiding in an orbit, the ensuring of eternity, and the yielding to it was the loss of estate, absence from the true orbit.

I turn from that imperfect vision, for the revelation is not perfect, and I look at all the life below man. I would rather speak of the life below man in the language of one whose understanding of God and Christ was far beyond mine, who lived in closer relationship with his Lord and through whom the Spirit of God could write things for our profit, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain."

I leave these regions and return to man, and here in Matthew I have a picture not of a sinful man. If He were a sinful man, then everything breaks down, there is no meaning in this story; it has no revealing value; it is merely a record. But this is a sinless Man, and into clear light for my eyes emerge the facts of struggle, of the force that creates it, and of the way of victory over it. The first thing that I notice in the story is that according to this story the struggle is caused by a personality who is named the devil. Remember, this is Biblical. We do not hear much today about the devil; modern views fail to see him—I think that is the kindest way to put it.

I hear today about the angel and the beast in man. I am told that there is in every man an angel and a beast. What I object to in that description is that it is rude alike to the angel and to the beast. I am told that in every man the angel is in process of struggling through, and that the beast is being sloughed off. That is a doctrine of original sin far more terrible than the doctrine of the theologians, because it makes sin more original than man, and suggests that man is emerging out of that which is vulgar and low. That is not the Bible doctrine. The Bible doctrine says Satan, the devil, is the beast and that the temptations which come to man come by suggestion from without.

This story also reveals the process. Let me attempt to put that whole process as I see it into one brief sentence. This story reveals the fact that the enemy of mankind approaches man through

what man is. He appeals to the things which are essential in human life, he appeals to elemental things, proper things, God-made things. He appeals to material hunger, he appeals to that which asks for spiritual realization, he appeals to that passion for a kingdom, that passion that demands a territory.

Wherein then lies the temptation in every case? In the suggestion that man shall fulfil the elemental demands of his nature on the basis of anarchy or lawlessness, that he shall cease to obey any law in the realm of the material, that he shall cease to realize that there is a law that governs in the spiritual realm, that he shall cease to recognize that there is a law that governs in the vocational realm.

I look at the story again, and I see not merely the personality and the process, I discover also the pain, the agony, the travail. "He Himself hath suffered being tempted." There is always suffering in temptation, and when suffering ceases temptation ceases. If solicitation toward evil causes you no pain, then it is no temptation, and you are in the grip of the evil thing; spiritual mortification has set in, and God help you, for none other can! Watch temptation at work and mark this: the pain of temptation is felt in proportion to the perfection of the person who is tempted.

I begin with the child. When temptation is first presented to a child, when a child is first conscious of temptation to do wrong, that child suffers. Oh, but you say, that is only a qualm of conscience. Only a qualm of conscience! Hell is a qualm of conscience intensified, prolonged, incurable! What more would you have? The little child suffers. It may be that you will offer it false advantages, and deceive it, until it will forget its suffering and yield to the sin. The child, who is nearer the heart of God than any other, save those who are brought back to childhood by grace, suffers in the hour of temptation.

Or take any seeker after the high and holy, that young man who listens to the preacher tonight who has not yielded himself to this Christ but who has seen the vision and who is aspiring after God, who is desiring to climb the heights—he yielded to temptation yesterday, but, ah, me, the agony of it when it first gripped him. He yielded, and in the sin for the moment was a damnable opiate that killed the pain; but the opiate will pass and remorse will be the return of pain. That is hopeful; but, oh, if the day shall come when there is no remorse, when there is no agony in the presence of temptation! That will be demonstration of the most unutterable ruin possible. Temptation coming to the seeker means pain.

Temptation means pain to the saint—I use the word in its true sense, not of those who are already perfected but of those pressing toward the goal. When temptation assails the saint there is agony in it. There may be yielding, there may be sin; but there is agony in it. Let there be no yielding, there is nevertheless an increasing consciousness of pain whenever temptation assails the soul. It is the experience of struggle.

Finally, I have in this story, and this is the supreme thing, the secret of victory over temptation and of the realization of humanity. If life be a mystery what is the supreme necessity? If life judged by its operations is that mystic force that appropriates, assimilates, gives, and yet cannot be truly and perfectly known, what is the supreme necessity for life? A law. Government in appropriation, that life may know what to appropriate. Government in assimilation, that life may fling out the poison and keep only that which shall nourish. Government in giving. This is a sequence, for if there be

true appropriation and assimilation the giving will be true. What life needs is government. Flowers need governing, that they may appropriate and assimilate the right things, and so give the right things. That law must be formulated by someone who knows the mystery. I cannot formulate any law for the cultivation of flowers; no horticulturist is able to formulate the law. He discovers the law and by recognizing it is able to make the chrysanthemum infinitely beautiful which but two generations ago was but the homeliest of garden flowers. What is true of the flower, is equally true of the bee, the bird, the beast, and of man.

I am now face to face again with my text, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man must live within the law of God, who knows the mystery of his being. Man must live by obedience to commands coming directly, immediately, to him for the government of his life. Those commands have been given to us in the Scriptures of Truth; those commands have been given to us in the Son Who is the Logos, the Word incarnate; those commands are being given to us every day if we will listen; only the commands of today must be tested by the commands of the oracles, and all spiritual illumination must be tested by the Son of His love, the ultimate, final speech of Deity.

What, then, is man's responsibility? I should be inclined to say to my own soul, as the result of this meditation, Man, thy first responsibility is that of recognition of the mystery of thy life. The last word of Greek philosophy was, Man, know thyself, a great word because it brought man face to face with himself. When a man recognizes the mystery of his own life, then the second responsibility is that he consent to the government of Him to Whom his life is no mystery.

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me,
Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
So begins the psalm. How does it end?
Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Recognize that. Make it the first, supreme, essential business of thy life to acquaint thyself with Him, and so be at peace.

Matthew 4:17. The First Message Of Jesus.

Matthew 4:17.

The First Message Of Jesus.

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17

That is the way in which Jesus always begins. His first message to men is always, Repent! He does not end there. He has much more to say to men than this; and even after He had said much more to His disciples, He finally confronted them, and said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth." But there is nothing Jesus can ever say until this first thing is said, and until this first thing is done. He began to preach, and said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

It is not only true that this is always the first message of Jesus to men. It is equally true that it is perpetually the first note of the Divine message to men. Through all the messages of history, utterances of prophets, visions of seers, and songs of psalmists, the almost monotonous burden of the Divine call is, Repent, repent. The herald, the forerunner of Jesus, came preaching, and saying, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Jesus Himself began to preach, and to say, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Presently He gathered round Him twelve men, and sent them out on their mission, and they went and preached that men should repent. Presently the new era dawned, the new order came, and Pentecost flooded the world with new light and new life, and in the first message delivered in the power of the indwelling Spirit, Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." When Paul stood in the heart of Gentile culture in Athens, he said, "The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." It is the perpetual keynote of the Divine message to men.

If I seek illustrations outside the Book of Revelation, and come down through the ages, I find that every subsequent visitation of power has had the necessity for repentance as its keynote. The Reformation under Martin Luther was a reformation based on the great and glorious doctrine of justification by faith. But the Reformation, based on the doctrine of justification by faith, was a revolt against the pernicious teaching that by indulgence men might continue in sin. The great revival under Wesley and Whitefield had this as the very keynote. The whole missionary movement of the last hundred years to the far-distant places of the earth has had this as its message to all men, Repent. That also was the keynote of the visitation that came to this country a generation ago under the preaching of Dwight Lyman Moody. Whereas the tone of his preaching was that of a great winsomeness, a definite call to repent sounded in every message. Wherever God has come to men in restoration, renewal, and regeneration, the first word has always been

Repent. That is the keynote of all true ministry. It is the message that we are called on to deliver to all those who are outside the covenant of promise, outside the Church, and apart from Jesus Christ. There the chief emphasis must be laid, because on the repentant and regenerated individual we may build society, cleanse municipal affairs, and create the national outlook. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," is the message to the individual. It is the message to society both in the proper use of that great word and its popular and improper use. It is the message to the nation in its home and foreign policy. It is always the first message of Christ, the one in which He arrests men on the threshold, coming to the individual, the society, the nation, always with the same monotonous burden, Repent, Repent, Repent.

It is well, then, to consider this initial note in the form in which it is stated here at the commencement of our Lord's own public ministry; and, therefore, I shall ask you to think with me, first, of the great need declared, "Repent ye"; second, of the direction indicated, "the Kingdom of Heaven"; and, finally, of the possibility affirmed, "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The need is declared in the words, "Repent ye." Our very familiarity with this message, because it is the message of Christ, is in danger of making us mistake its point and misunderstand its meaning. We have been affected in our thinking on this word by the teaching of differing schools of theology, in each of which I believe there is some note of truth. Let us attempt to dismiss from our mind all the messages uttered concerning repentance by inspired writers before Jesus; let us turn from every attempt to explain the message of Christ in the terms of accepted theologies, and let us endeavor to listen to what Jesus said, praying that God will help us to understand this initial message. Not that they of the past were false, or that the messages were unimportant, but because this word of Christ is absolutely all-inclusive; moreover, because His message is not the property of one age, but is for all time, and this message is complete.

Let us, therefore, first of all attempt to look at the Speaker, and consider the occasion on which He uttered these words.

Those familiar with the Gospel of Matthew will remember that it falls naturally into three great parts, and this is one of the great dividing points. In the first part you have the story of the preparation of Jesus for His work; and here it says, "From that time," when the preparation was complete, "He began to preach." Now it was here, at the parting of the ways, between His private and His public life, that our Lord uttered this first note. Jesus of Nazareth, the One who most perfectly fulfilled the human ideal, after a life of thirty years of observation, began to preach, and He said: "Repent." He had observed individual life in a small township, where individual life is always best seen and best known. We cannot study individual life carefully if we live in London. Men are hidden there by each other, and we never get to know the real force of individual life in a great city. But there in little Nazareth up on the hillside, far enough removed from the great centers and the great movements to be isolated from them, and yet near enough to know them, this pure Man lived and listened and watched, and came to know men by careful observation; and in preaching to the men and women He knew individually He said to them, "Repent." That is the connection. It was the first note of His preaching, born of His consciousness of the need of the people, first as the outcome of this personal and individual observation of them. Yet living there in Nazareth, remember, He had lived close to the place where the great forces of worldly ideals and methods passed and repassed. Professor Ramsay in his little book on the boyhood of Jesus, a

fascinating and interesting book, reveals how the great world powers passed along the road at the foot of the hill—the Hebrew priest, the Roman soldier, the Greek merchant and traveler. Jesus had watched, and perceived, and measured. And now He came to preach to Hebrew, the religionist; to Roman, the man of power and government; to Greek, the man of culture and merchandise; and He had one word for each of them, the word "Repent."

But this is to say very little. It was not merely the message of the Man of Nazareth, due to His observation of individual life in Nazareth, and of the great currents of the world thought and action. This was the Son of God, and this was the message of the infinite and mysterious One, who was familiar with all human history and all human life; this was the message of One who presently would say, "Before Abraham was, I am." This was the message of One who did not need to ask what was in man, "for He Himself knew what was in man." This was the message not merely of the Man of Nazareth, who had lived and observed, but it was the message of the ordained Messenger, who was none other than the Son of God, clothed in human garb, that He might utter in the words of human speech the fundamental truths of Deity. Standing at the parting of the ways, and beginning to utter the great message for which men had been waiting, the infinite music, for which the world had been sighing, the great prophetic message toward which every prophetic message had moved, He said, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Having thus noticed the occasion and the Speaker, let us consider the need. I want to speak about the simplest meaning of the word "repent," for as we know what this word really means, we shall understand the message of our Lord.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated "repent." They have quite different meanings. One of these words means to sorrow for or regret a deed. The other word means very simply and very literally to change the mind.

Around these two words a great conflict was waged between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic theologians. The Reformers maintained that the second word, which means a change of mind, was used of the change which is necessary to salvation; while the former word, which indicates sorrow after an event, was in some cases indicative of a change of mind, and in other cases it was not so. Such was the contention, in brief, of the Reformers. On the other hand, the Roman theologians maintained that the words were used interchangeably, that the elements of each were present in both, and they taught that the prevailing value was that of sorrow. The whole battle was waged around two Latin words, *poenitentia*, which means the sense of sorrow, and *recipiscentia*, which means the recovery of the senses. The Reformers maintained that the essential repentance demanded by Christ and His Apostles, as well as by prophets, was a change of the senses, or a change of mind. The Roman theologians, on the other hand, maintained that the prime element indicated by the word "repent" was sorrow, and from that Roman theology we have gained our word "repent" and the associated idea that sorrow is the prime element in repentance.

I have the profoundest conviction that the Reformers were right, and that the Roman theologians were wrong. A careful examination of the New Testament use of these two words will show that the essential quality that Christ called for was not sorrow, but a change of mind. Now do not understand me to say that the change of mind will not be followed by sorrow. My experience is that the sorrow grows with the Christian life, and is not part of its initiation. I do not say there is no

sorrow; I am sure there is. What I do say is that a man may be sorry, and at last be damned. We may be sorry for sin with the meanness of motive, which means that we are afraid of punishment, and no fear of punishment ever had in it the evangelical value of repentance. The repentance that Christ preached, and His Apostles preached, the repentance which is demanded of every man is always indicated by the use of the word that means a change of mind.

When Christ used that word, and when, as I have no doubt in the hearing of the men who listened to Him, it had exactly that meaning of change of mind, He had passed beyond the outer circumference of things into the inner center of a man's life. He began by declaring to men that their thought was wrong, that their conception of life was wrong. Now we say to a man, alas, too often, Change your conduct. Jesus never begins by telling a man to change his conduct. That is to begin in the externalities of human life. He comes to a man, and says, Change your mind, and by that word He means that men hold wrong views at the very center of their being. The word "repent" passes into the fundamental realm, the thought of a man's life. We are not accustomed to think about this deepest fact, and even in preaching we are too often more occupied with conduct than with creed. I use the word "creed" very carefully; I am not referring to the creed prepared for us to recite, I am referring to the creed of our life, to the deepest conception of it, to the underlying and overmastering thing that we absolutely believe.

We all believe something, and it is the something which a man believes that makes his conduct and finally makes his character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and when Jesus came and began His preaching, instead of starting a society to correct the conduct of men, He faced men, and He said: Change your mind, repent, get right at the center of things.

But the word that demands a change in the thought or mind, or conception, does not tarry there. For the moment a man has really changed his mind or his belief his conduct will be changed. Let me take a concrete, very simple, and familiar illustration. A man declares, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." I do not know whether he believes that; I may have heard him say it, but I do not know whether it is true. How shall I find out? I shall be able to find out on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. A man's creed is not to be measured by the occasion when he recites it, but by the life that follows its recitation. When Jesus takes hold of a man, and says, Change your mind, He changes the conduct of the man, and then the character. That is the order of procedure. If a man's conception of life is wrong his conduct will be wrong, and, finally, his character. Jesus does not begin by changing conduct, for He cannot do it from the outside of things; but passing behind the character, and beneath the conduct, He says, Change your mind, get right in the deepest and profoundest fact of your life.

This call of Christ is revolutionary. It calls for upheaval, change, and the alteration of all things. It is radical, passing through the external to the internal. But it is also regenerative, declaring the only way in which it is possible for man to live a new life. This is always the call of Jesus: Repent. For human life, social life, national life, Jesus Christ is the most revolutionary teacher the world has ever had. Looking into the face of the priest, He said Repent; you have a conception of life which is false, change it. He looked into the faces of the pleasure-seekers, and said: Repent, change your mind. Jesus Christ confronts you. You are interested in Him, and speculative about Him; perchance you are even daring to patronize Him. There is no blasphemy greater than the patronage of Jesus Christ. He says: Repent; your conduct and character are wrong. They are

wrong because your thought is wrong; your conception is wrong, change it. That is revolutionary. It is radical.

Let us pass to the second point. Jesus in this great word did not merely say, Repent. To leave the word at that point would be to reveal all I have attempted to say as to its revolutionary and radical nature, and to leave unsaid the thing of chief importance. He indicated a direction. "Repent... the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Repentance there may be, and yet the life be hopelessly wrong, for repentance means a change of mind; and a man may change his mind, and his new conception be as false as was the old conception. There was a time when that brilliant and gifted woman, Annie Besant, changed her mind and announced that she was no longer a secularist and a materialist. She repented, she changed her mind, and she became a theosophist, believing in Mahatmas among Himalayan heights. She repented, but the direction of her repentance was wrong, the nature of the change was wrong, a false conception gave place to another false conception. Jesus does not come to men and say, You are wrong, get a new idea of life. Said He: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Herein is direction. Herein is the indication of what the change is to be.

The phrase is suggestive. There occur in the Scriptures of truth certain terms, which we need to consider; the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom, the Church. Now these terms of Scripture are quite distinct in their application. I absolutely differ from the teacher who tells me they are synonymous terms. They mean different things in different relationships and different applications. But they are related by a common principle, and it is by that common principle that the direction of repentance is indicated.

The Kingdom of God means the universal sovereignty of the Almighty. Everything is in it, and never gets outside it. Hell, as well as Heaven, is in that Kingdom. In Scripture the phrase, the Kingdom of Heaven, is always used in relation to the establishment on the earth of a heavenly order; and it is used wholly in connection with the redemptive work of God through His Son Jesus. The Hebrew theocracy culminated in Christ, the King; and in the coming of Christ the Kingdom came, and that is what He meant when He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But men said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," and they flung the King out, and they have never admitted Him since, save to individual hearts and lives. But there were a few souls who said: "We will have Him for King"; and He said, "You shall be Mine"; and there began the Church in which the principles of the Kingdom are revealed, even though the King is absent from His world as to manifestation. That is the period in which we live. But the King cast out is coming back, or else this is all untrue! That Kingdom is being prepared for and is to be set up here, under the direct reign of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, without following these lines, what is the common principle in all these? The rule of God, the authority of the Most High over the affairs of men. The permanent principle in all these phrases is the direct right of God to govern individual life in its entirety, social life in all its relationships, and national life in its purposes and its policies. Do Christian people realize and believe this? The permanent principle, that for which Jesus came, and for which He stood, is that of the absolute right of God to govern every man's life in every part and detail of it. That is the Kingdom of Heaven. The absolute right of God to govern social life in all its interrelationships, husband and wife, father and children, master and servant, capital and labor. The absolute right of God to

govern in national life, in its purposes and in its policies. We must believe this. Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus has said in one of his books, "True statesmanship consists in finding out which way God is going, and getting things out of the way for Him." That is the whole truth. That is the principle. Now, Jesus did not say merely, Change your mind, but Change your mind toward that, and in the phrase that indicates the direction there flashes the light that reveals the failure. We can put the whole call into very simple phrases and words. Change your mind about God, and Change your mind toward God. God is exiled, enthrone Him! That is all, and that is everything. It is a call from godlessness to Godliness. I leave the national outlook, I leave the social application, and I listen while Jesus says to us, and God help us to hear Him: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." We have lived under other lords. We have obeyed the impulses of sin, of self, of passion, of pride; we are wrong. We have wakened in the morning, and we have said: "What will please us today?" We are wrong. Change your mind, learn to understand that you never can live, till with the break of day we say: "Teach me to do Thy will, O my God." "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It had its local application, but I take out the eternal principle, the right of God to govern human lives, to direct, immediate, positive, drastic, interference with every man. This is the keynote of the preaching of Jesus.

Some have dared to suggest what they would do if they were God. Oh, the blasphemy of it, whether it comes from brilliant novelist or neurotic essay writer! Jesus Christ has no dealing with a man who takes up this attitude. He says to him, "Repent." The first thing is that we enthrone God, and kiss the scepter, and bow the knee, and learn that we have no right at all except the right of being where God would have us be and doing what God would have us do. Jesus comes to enthrone God in human life, in human society, in national affairs, and in the world; and the line of repentance is indicated when He says: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." When men repent in that direction what will happen? Their conceptions will be Godly, their conduct will be Godly, and their character will be Godly.

And, finally, let us consider the possibility affirmed, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The prophets had all testified to the abiding fact of the Divine Sovereignty, and yet had looked forward to a centralized manifestation of that sovereignty in a person. Read them all; what is this they sing of, what is this they thunder about, what is this that makes the wail of their agony, and creates the passion of their hopefulness? The Sovereignty of God. But, Isaiah, what is your hope? Has the King come? No, harlotry and evil, abounding wickedness, are about us. What, then, is your hope? The coming Deliverer, and wistful eyes from mountain tops strained eagerly for the break of day and the coming of the Person in Whom and through Whom this Kingdom should be set up.

At last, the final prophet came, rough John the Baptist, and he said: "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." The great cry of the Baptist rang over the plains about Jordan, and then another voice was heard, meek and low, gentle and sweet, and yet uttering the same drastic word, but now whispered with wooing winsomeness, "Repent." Who is this? He does not speak of another, He utters no prophecy of someone yet to come. He says "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The Kingdom came when He came. "At hand" as to manifestation, the Kingdom was realized by this Teacher, this Man. "At hand" as to administration, the Kingdom was executed by Him in the affairs of men in proportion as they yielded to Him. "At hand" as to discrimination, He opens and closes the doors of the

Kingdom, and by Him alone men enter it, and by refusing so to enter, He will exclude them from personal realization of blessing. Said He one day, "the Kingdom of God is"—not within you, a mistranslation absolutely, and yet a whole system of teaching has been based on it—"the Kingdom of God is among you." He meant literally, I am here, and where the King is, there is the Kingdom. Obey Me, and you have entered the Kingdom; trust Me, and I will unlock the doors of the Kingdom to you. It is by the way of the King that men come into the Kingdom. And, oh, let me discuss it no longer as a theory, but let me announce it as the evangel. Dear man, dear woman, dear heart, "Repent"—the word is stern and fiery—"for the Kingdom of Heaven"—and the word indicates the need of your repentance. But, ah, me, it merges and melts into an infinite music—"the Kingdom is at hand." Just where you are. The King is there. Turn to Him, and that shall be repentance. Believe on Him, and that shall be thy passing into the Kingdom. Trust Him, and that shall be the dawn of the veritable day of God in thy soul.

We have attempted to consider this great initial word of the Lord. Wide-reaching circles have stretched out around us. God grant that their infinite significance may have impressed us. And yet now here is the difficulty of it, here is the point at which the preacher becomes utterly helpless, save as the Spirit of God will use the human word to deliver the Divine message. Oh that I could so constrain you that you should forget the messenger and your neighbor and let these far-reaching circles of the Divine Government contract until you find yourself alone, standing face to face with Jesus Christ in solemn isolation before God His King.

Oh, man, for a moment shut out the nation, for a moment shut out society, shut out this congregation, and now hear this voice as it says to you, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Oh, the good news! The Kingdom is at hand. Repent; change your mind and so your conduct, and so your character, and so your destiny, for the King who calls you bears in hands and feet and side the wounds that tell of how He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Trust Him utterly, and enter into His Kingdom even now!

Matthew 5:20. The Righteousness Which Exceeds.

Matthew 5:20.

The Righteousness Which Exceeds.

Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

These are the closing words of the first section of the Manifesto of the King. As to their first value, they reveal the personal responsibility of all those who are to teach the ethic of Jesus. The arresting notes are two: first, Kingly authority; and, second, ethical severity. Let us take them in their wider meaning and application as revealing the ethical demand which the King makes on His subjects.

A matter of supreme importance—if a man is to speak out of the consciousness of his own age, and I think he must so speak if he teach the word of God to his age—a matter demanding far more attention than has been given to it lately, is the fact that the moral standard of Jesus is an infinitely more severe one than that of any other teacher. No one will imagine that I undervalue the gospel of His Grace. I shall have to return to it ere I have done; I cannot preach in the atmosphere of this Manifesto without ending under the shadow of the Cross. Nevertheless, I fear that sometimes we have preached the gospel of His grace at the expense of the demand of His ethic. To dwell on the severity of His ethical demand and His interpretation of morality is our present purpose. Yet let us immediately recognize that to which we shall return by way of conclusion, that these words of Jesus must be heard in the consciousness of the whole of the mission of the King, in which mission He acted as Saviour as well as Sovereign, as Lover of the souls of men as well as Lawgiver.

The statement as a statement is perfectly clear, even if it is startling. Speaking to His own disciples, men who had already crowned Him, so far as they had received light; men who had already yielded themselves to His Kingship, so far as they were able to comprehend His meaning, He said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

When thus set in their true context, these words of Christ become the more startling: they were words spoken, not to the multitudes, although the multitudes listened, but to men who had already crowned Him in the measure of the light which they had received, to men who were to go out and teach His ethic.

Let us attempt to understand this word of Jesus by considering, first, righteousness as the central idea of the declaration; second, the insufficiency of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; and, third, the righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

The clear implication of the passage is the importance of righteousness. That is the perpetual Biblical atmosphere. Among the fundamental things of the Bible, so far as human conduct is concerned, is the supreme message, that righteousness is of paramount importance. That, of course, is the Christian conception, or, to come at once to the very heart of the thought, the master passion of Jesus was righteousness. The inspiration of that passion, if we may dare to press so deeply into the mind of Christ, was that of love. The master passion of all His doing was righteousness, not mercy but righteousness, not pity but purity. Mercy, yes, and pity surely; He was infinite in His compassion and in His tenderness, but never at the expense of right, never by making peace with wrong, never by lowering the standard of Divine holiness, or explaining away the awfulness of Divine purity. The master passion of all His teaching, of all the wonders He wrought, of the life He lived, of the very Cross of His dying, was the establishment of righteousness, and the bringing of all things into harmony with the holiness and purity of God. Those who do not agree with these assumptions of the text will be entirely outside the line of argument as we proceed. Only as we realize that, in the last analysis, the supreme matter of all life and conduct is that it should be righteous, shall we really be prepared to listen to these words of Christ, or be able to grasp their meaning and see how searching and wonderful they are.

What, then, is righteousness? If it be possible for me so to do, I want to escape from theological definitions. I want us to get at the simplest idea, at the abstract idea, at that which is true and commonly known as true in the consciousness of thinking men. In its ancient form, as you will remember, our word read right-wise-ness. That is to say, it came from a word "right-wise," which had as its main value the word "right." That is the fundamental word. Instead of righteousness, say righteous; and instead of righteous, say right; and you are touching the very central thought. Yet immediately you discover that this is not definition. So we press the question further. What is right? If we take this actual word of ours we find that its simplest meaning is No crookedness. Do not stay yet to read into that the moral value, but take it in its simplicity. The root word is a word which means to stretch, so that if you will take in your hand a piece of string, looped and twisted, and stretch it, that is righteousness, that which is perfectly straight. The straightest course is the right course. Go back to your school days and remind yourselves of this phrase, a right line, a straight line. What is a straight line? The one that goes most directly from point to point. Right is that in which there is no loop, no crookedness, no doubling, no deviation from the truly straight. Such is the idea in the word.

We immediately see why in that wonderful process of the formation of our language, the building up of words by which to express ideas, that word was made to stand for the supreme idea in the moral realm: no duplicity, no double dealing, nothing in the nature of a lie either in word or in thought, but straightness, truth, the shortest course.

Twice I have said that righteousness means the shortest course, and I am perfectly sure that in the minds of some there has been protest against the declaration. I sympathize with the protest. One of the devil's suggestions was that the King should take the short cut to the Kingdom—I will give thee all the kingdoms of the world for one moment's homage, a short cut to the kingdom, the shortest way! Would it have been the shortest way? Would He ever have gained the kingdoms so? Was not the lie of evil insidious in that it suggested as the shortest way the way that never reached the goal at all? That is the method of evil. It confronts the soul with a lie. I go back to my definition; right is the shortest way. To take an illustration from the life of our Lord makes one pause, and I do

it reverently—Christ's shortest way to the kingdoms of this world was the way of the Cross, and the long travail of the millenniums. One brief, short moment of homage to the devil, and He the Son of God could never have gained the kingdoms! It seemed so easy to take the short cut. I pray that God may write the inner value of that on the heart and soul of every one of us. Some of you were thinking of actually yielding to the suggestion made to you, that you should take the short cut of iniquity toward the goal that you ought to reach by tramping and travail. In God's name refuse. The lie lies in the temptation that it is a short cut. Right is the nearest way to every honorable goal. I repeat, the stretched out, straight line, the right line, goes most quickly from point to point.

If that be our word, great as it is in its suggestiveness and its root values, I take up my Bible and ask, What is righteousness as herein revealed? I am still dealing, not with the word in all its great evangelical values as they appear in the New Testament, but with the word itself, as to its abstract idea. I find the old Hebrew word translated "right" has exactly the same significance, "straight." I find the Greek word has another meaning which will help us. The Greek word comes from one which means to show a thing, that is, to be self-evident. The Greek, former of words, the builder up of language, formed a word for moral rectitude from a root which means self-evident. There is wonderful illumination in that fact also.

The Bible idea of righteousness may thus be expressed: God is the absolute and eternal standard of right. Consequently, human conduct is righteous as it conforms to His will and approximates His character. These Bible writers and Bible teachers, of the old dispensation and the new, never stayed to argue whether God is righteous. That is their fundamental assumption. On that all Biblical teaching proceeds. The Bible position is that God is holy, and therefore His doings are righteous. He is the one eternal, final standard of what is right; consequently, righteousness in human life is conformity to His will and approximation to His character.

Those who do not accept this standard are totally unable to follow the argument of Jesus in my text, for the man who does not admit that God is the ultimate, eternal standard of right, whatever his own view of right may be, stands on a lower level than the Pharisees, for the Pharisees started there, as I shall try to show you. That was their fundamental conception. Those who believe that God is the absolute, eternal standard of right, and that man is right in the measure in which he lives in conformity with the will of God and approximates His character, may go forward in this meditation.

All this is fundamental; but there are differences in the apprehension of what the will of God is, and in these distinctions we shall discover what our Lord meant when He said to the men who were entering into His Kingdom that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

I think we shall be very unfair to the meaning of our Master if we begin in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, that chapter from which I read one extract in connection with our lesson, that chapter vibrant with the thunder of His awful woes against these very men. I think we must not begin there. I think we very often miss the keen edge of what Jesus said by beginning at the wrong place.

Where, then, shall we begin? Let us ask who these Pharisees were. The answer to the inquiry may thus be stated. The Pharisees were the Puritans of Maccabean period in Jewish history. Their very name means separated ones, and I do no violence to the name "Pharisee" when I say it

means Separatist. That is precisely what they were. We have no history of the actual period in our Bible, but we have the history of its beginning in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we have revelations of the conditions in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. God's ancient people, or a remnant of them, were established at Jerusalem, without any king or prophet. There originated the order of the Scribes, for Ezra was the first. As time proceeded these people were threatened with complete absorption by the Greek power that swept over that whole region, and in that period, of which we have no Biblical history, but of which we have a good deal of authentic history, Judas Maccabeus became the deliverer of the people. There was a period of victories, and these Hebrew people suffered as a result, for they were in danger of forming alliances with the surrounding peoples and of being corrupted by that Greek influence which stood in direct opposition to their own conception of God and religion. It was then, when, humanly speaking, the Hebrew people were threatened with that most terrible form of extinction, absorption, that the Pharisees arose. The passion which actuated those who founded the order was one of loyalty to Jehovah. They constituted themselves into a definite order. I think when we read the New Testament we sometimes forget that the Pharisees were members of a very definite order. There were not more than six or seven thousand of them. The order was a close religious corporation. They banded themselves together as men who would be entirely separated from the Gentiles, from those whom they described as the common people, that is, those who did not take those special religious vows, and especially from the Sadducees, who were the rationalists in religion. The movement was born of the highest, holiest, passion. The order of the Pharisees was an order of men who stood for purity in religion in an hour when Hebraism was threatened by contamination by Greek influence, which would have cut the nerve of the religion of Jehovah. There can be no question, and those who are most familiar with the history of those times will agree with me, that they were the saviours of the nation, the men who enabled that remnant to stand against the encroachment of the forces of worldliness that were sweeping down on the people. These were the Pharisees, and these were the men with whom Jesus Christ was brought into immediate contact, when He began His public teaching.

From the commencement of His public ministry to the close we see Him flinging Himself with all the force of His personality against them and against their teaching. How are we to account for this? Let us look at them again. Let us see what had happened to them in the course of the years, not tracing the movement but seeing the result as it is revealed to us in the New Testament. What had their righteousness become? Let us inquire what was the base of it and examine the structure of it in order that we may understand the failure and insufficiency of it.

What was the base of the righteousness which the Pharisees taught? Conformity to the will of God. When you speak of the Pharisees, remember that they were the most religious people of that period, they were the most orthodox, the men who stood by the old theology. No one will imagine I am condemning orthodoxy, or sneering at old theology.

When we come into the Acts of the Apostles we find that the opposition was not Pharisaic, but Sadducean. So long as Jesus was teaching morality, the Sadducees had no quarrel with Him; they were indifferent; it was the resurrection doctrine that put the Sadducees into opposition with Christ. The Pharisees were religious, orthodox, and the base of their morality was their belief that man must conform to the will of God. Wherein, then, lay their failure? In order to answer that question, let us observe the structure which they had built on that base. Three things characterized their

righteousness: it was, first, external; second, it was exclusive; finally, therefore, it was evasive of essential righteousness.

It was, first, external. It consisted in a most complex and elaborate system of regulations of life by habits. As every man entered the order he took two vows of initiation. The first was to tithe everything eaten, bought, or sold. The second was not to be the guest of the Gentiles, and to observe all ceremonial purifications. These were the fundamental vows of initiation to the order of the Pharisees. Now observe what had happened in the process of the years. In their desire to interpret the law of God and to make it binding they had added tradition to tradition. A little careful study of the Pharisees reveals things that are almost too absurd to be mentioned. Here is one simple illustration of their traditions. If a man should walk through the cornfields on the Sabbath day he must wear the lightest sandals, as if he wore heavy ones and trod on the corn and thus forced it from its husk, he was threshing on the Sabbath! You smile at that, but I know Puritanism today which is quite as foolish! They attempted to explain the meaning of the thought of God by their own foolish tradition until they had heaped tradition upon tradition, and the Lord said to them, "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their fingers."

Moreover, their righteousness was exclusive. They held in supreme contempt all who were outside their own order. In the New Testament we become quite familiar with their attitude toward the publican. That phrase, the "common people," in itself full of beauty because it describes, not the people of one class or caste, but all sorts of people, when used by the Pharisee included all those who were not Pharisees, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, bond and free, the common herd outside the Pharisaic order, on all of whom the Pharisee looked with profound contempt. Notice another revelation of the exclusiveness of the Pharisee, and I shall reveal what is in my mind by again quoting from the words of Jesus, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte: and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." There is no stronger proof of exclusivism than the passionate desire to proselytize someone else and bring that other person to your view. You reveal your exclusivism in no surer way than when you attempt to take hold of the man you hold in contempt because he is not with you, and compel him to your way of thinking.

Finally, their righteousness was evasive. Accentuation of the letter had destroyed the spirit. The Sabbath was held so sacred that in the observance of it its hallowed sanctions were denied, so that when His disciples passed through the cornfields and plucked the ears of corn the Pharisees complained that they were breaking the Sabbath, and Jesus said, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Have you ever really examined that answer of Jesus? These men were insisting on the sanctity of the Sabbath in such a way as to harm humanity, and Christ swept their traditions away, declaring that even the sanctity of the Sabbath must give way to the sanction of caring for humanity. They would not work on the Sabbath, but they would hold their feasts on the Sabbath, provided Gentiles prepared them. Consequently, I repeat, the very accentuation of the value of the letter had destroyed the spirit.

Wherein, then, lay the failure of these men? What was wrong? If the base of their righteousness was the conviction that righteousness is conformity to the will of God, wherein were they wrong? In

that they did not know God. Consequently, they were unequal to the interpretation of the will of God. They did not understand the nature of His holiness. They did not understand the nature of His love. Out of that ignorance of God they proceeded to attempt to bring men into conformity to the will of the God Whom they did not know, and Whose will therefore they did not know, with the result that they libeled the God Whom they professed to extol, and degraded the national conception of God by misrepresentations, enforcing a righteousness which was external, exclusive, and evasive.

The result was the degradation of all life; the degradation of their own spirit to the hard, harsh, critical, cynical, self-satisfied temper which they manifested, the degradation of all their disciples, on whom they laid burdens that they themselves would not lift.

As Jesus moved among these men, the most religious and the most orthodox of men, He flung Himself with holy passion and fervor, and strangely biting words of sarcastic denunciation against their righteousness, against their conception of righteousness, against their attempt to establish righteousness. I will defy you to find me a single unkind or harsh word Jesus ever spoke to sinning man or woman; harsh words were all reserved for false religious teachers, men who misinterpreted God to other men, and who cut the nerve of essential righteousness by attempting to substitute for it the righteousness of triviality and tradition, men who did not know God. Against these He hurled the final anathemas, the awful, appalling woes, of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

What, then, are the bases of the righteousness that Christ calls for? Knowledge of God. That is first. According to Christ, all righteousness is conformity to the will of God, Who is love, and Who therefore is a God of holiness. As we read the Manifesto and follow its teaching concerning life and its value, marriage and its sanctity, truth and its expression, justice and its manifestation, until we come to the last expression of love, love of enemies, we are driven to say, Who is sufficient for these things? And the answer is: None other than the child of God, for he alone knows God and is able to obey Him.

The manifestations of the righteousness which exceeds are suggested by the words, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The word "therefore" tells us that we cannot read that command alone, we must go back. What is there before? "Your Father which is in heaven... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." God-likeness is righteousness according to Jesus Christ. Love active, love so active that the sun shines on the evil as well as on the good, love so active that God does not withhold His rain from the fields of the unjust man. That is righteousness in the economy of heaven. I am perfectly well aware that we have left some of you far behind. We have left the mere moralist out of sight! This is more than mere morality. The manifestation of righteousness according to this ethic is God-likeness, active love, positive purity, fellowship with God. Presently, the King continued: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them," and He gave three illustrations, the giving of alms, the offering of prayer, and fasting, all things that are unnecessary! The merely moral man who has no conception of spiritual things, and no knowledge of Jesus Christ, puts all this out as unnecessary. Christ takes these things and says they are to be observed but not to be announced; they are to be secret things. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" in your giving. When you want to pray, do not announce to the crowd that

you are going to pray. Some of these things ought to sift us. I think there are some people who never pray unless there is a special convocation and everyone knows they are going to pray. If you want to fast, fast in loneliness, and do not go out wearing the solemn face which plainly says, I have been fasting; but wear a joyful countenance while your hunger is helping you to do things for God.

The victories of the righteousness which exceeds are those of personal tone and relative influence. The supremest proof of righteousness for the other man is your tone, your temper, your spirit; "Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; heareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." I know people who are very careful never to smoke, and never to go to the theater, never to play cards; and I listen to them when they suppose they are talking religiously, and they are saying hard and bitter things against Christian brethren with whom they do not agree. That is the Pharisaism that Christ hates!

Pharisaism became the chief force against Christ because it lifted the incidental things to the level of essential things, and degraded the essential until ultimately it destroyed them. Said Christ, "Ye tithe mint and anise and cummin," to the neglect of judgment and mercy and faith. Christ does not undervalue the observances which express life. He did not say your righteousness is to supersede the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, but it is to exceed it. He went on, and said: "These ye ought to have done," judgment, mercy and faith, "and not to have left the other undone." He is not careless about the expressions of life, but demands that the details of habit shall be expressions of life, and not substitutes for life. Righteousness in the economy of Christ is an inspiration and not a prison. The Pharisees made it a prison and shut men inside it. What did Christ say of the men they shut in? "Ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." Righteousness must be the inspiration that touches the secret springs of action, purifying everything at the source.

Behold the King Who uttered the words, Himself realizing righteousness in all the fact of His life, Himself manifesting righteousness in all the glory and beauty of His tender compassion and His tremendous loyalty to truth and holiness.

Finally, behold the King enabling men to be righteous according to His pattern as they put their trust in Him.

I never can have the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees save only as He will take me, dwell in me, and make me love with His love, and see with His eyes, and be compassionate with His compassion, and angry with His anger, compassionate toward the sinner, but angry with his sin. May we know that righteousness through the Lord Himself.

Matthew 5:23, 24. The Way To The Altar.

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The Way To The Altar.

If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

These words are found in the Manifesto of the King, and constitute part of the section safeguarding the sacredness of human life. After the enunciation of fundamental principles of character and influence, and the value of law in itself, that Manifesto contains the new laws of the Kingdom conditioning earthly and heavenly relationships. The laws of earthly relationships deal first with the foundations of society, forbidding murder and adultery; then with the pillars of society, insisting on truth and justice.

The sacredness of human life is recognized, and murder is forbidden. The method of the King in the enunciation of His ethic was to put His own commandment into contrast with that of the old economy, not abrogating it, but fulfilling it. In the old economy the word of the law, definitely, sternly, simply, forbade the act of taking life: "Thou shalt do no murder." The new prevents the act by dealing with the mental attitudes which precede it. The King warned the subjects of the Kingdom against anger, for in that there is peril. Anger in the sense of intense displeasure may not meditate revenge at the moment, but it would rejoice if the one against whom it proceeds were to suffer. Yet sterner words fell from the King's lips in condemning contempt: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," the supreme term of contempt, "shall be in danger of the council," that is, citation before the whole Sanhedrin. But if a man shall say to his brother, "Thou fool," the language of malice, of insult with intention to wound, then the only fit punishment for such as he is that he be taken outside the city walls and cast into Gehenna, the place of refuse and of burning in order to destroy it. The severity of the ethic is apparent. Yet the tenderness of the ethic is equally apparent. Under the old law the sinner is arrested red-handed. Under the new law he is arrested because of those attitudes of the soul which, unless they be held in check, canceled, made not to be, may eventuate in the act of murder. All this is tremendously searching, but the matter is not done with. Our Lord did not end at that point. This preliminary survey has been necessary in order that we may find the atmosphere of our text.

Let me ask you now carefully to observe in this text the word "therefore." "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar..." It would be manifestly unfair to take this text without recognizing its relationship to all that has gone before. It is impossible to read any text which is ushered in by the word "therefore" without inquiring, Wherefore? What, then, is the simple meaning of the text in its first application? Because these mental moods of anger and contempt and malice are forbidden, therefore, if any man has given his brother occasion for such moods he is to act at once so as to

remove them. If thou art angry with thy brother, thou art in danger of judgment; if thou shalt say to him, Raca, in contempt, thou art in danger of judgment before a higher tribunal; if thou shalt say to him, Thou fool, thou art refuse socially, fit only for destruction. Then turning to the brother man, Jesus said: Therefore, if when thou art coming to the altar thou rememberest thy brother has something against thee which may inspire a feeling of anger, contempt, or malice in his breast, go and be reconciled to him, not for thy sake only, but for his sake, lest he become guilty of sin. That is the first application of the text. We shall return to it in the course of our meditation.

Realizing this to be the first application, we may consider its wider reaches as they include the subject of restitution and reparation in their relation to our acceptance with God.

We shall observe three things in these words of Jesus: first, a supposition, "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar and there rememberest..." Second, the clear, definite, imperative command of the Lord: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother." Thirdly, and finally, the gracious, ultimate welcome: "Then come and offer thy gift."

In dealing, first of all, with the supposition I desire to remark that this was not a doubtful hypothesis; it was the recognition by our Lord of a fact not only generally experienced, but always experienced. Approach to the altar of God always quickens the activity of conscience: "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee..."

Let us think of this a little carefully. First, it is interesting to note our Lord's references to the altar. He never referred to the altar except here and on one other occasion, so far as the records reveal. The other occasion is found, interestingly enough, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, wherein is chronicled that last terrific address of His in Jerusalem. Here we have the Manifesto introduced by beatitudes, "Blessed..."; there, in the last address, we have denunciation, with ringing, thrilling thunder, "Woe... Woe... Woe..." In that first Manifesto, and in that last denunciation, our Lord referred to the altar. It is quite evident that He was making reference to an existing order and that the men who heard Him knew exactly what He meant. The whole religious symbolism of Hebraism was present to their minds. The picture suggested is the common one of a Hebrew man coming to the altar of God, bringing a gift. It will readily be admitted further that if our Lord made reference to the existing order He did so in harmony with the highest, deepest, spiritual intention of that order. It was not a mere passing reference to that which was external, spiritual, formal; it was a reference to that which was internal, spiritual, dynamic, to that true coming of man to the act and attitude of worship which was symbolized by the altar. The reason for reading as part of our lesson the passage from the Old Testament in which we find the first instructions ever given to the Hebrew people concerning the altar will immediately be seen. It is important to remember that those first instructions concerning the altar were given immediately after the enunciation of the decalogue containing the inclusive words of the law. After they had been pronounced, the people besought Moses that they should hear the voice of God no more, but that he alone should speak to them, so filled were they with fear. In answer to that request Moses declared that there was no cause for fear, that the purpose of God was good and gracious. Immediately following that, these simple instructions concerning the making of the altar were given. If an altar was made it must be of earth; or if of stone, of unhewn stone. It was to have no steps. All this was primitive and simple, but suggestive of tremendous spiritual necessities and principles. By the altar men were to be for ever

reminded that their approach to God was not on the basis of their own ability or righteousness or cleverness. The altar must be of earth, the commonest material, or of unhewn stone, so that man should not glory in that by which he approached God which was of his own creation. There were to be no steps for the ascent to the altar of God—and mark the word—"that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon," a word unveiling the spiritual fact that if a man climb to an altar for his approach to God he reveals his nakedness and unpreparedness for approach. The altar suggested approach to God by man, and more, approach to man by God, for "in every place where I record My name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee."

The altar, moreover, was the place of sacrifice. Man approaching the altar was coming to God always recognizing, even though he might not be able to explain, the mystery of the whole fact, the necessity for approach by the way of sacrifice. We know how far these people wandered from spiritual comprehension, and remember how in the day of Christ they were almost blind to spiritual values; but when our Lord referred to the altar He was not a ritualist, He was not a formalist, He was referring to all that the altar stood for; man drawing near to God by the way of sacrifice. When He uttered the great word of the Manifesto, He already knew that the time would come when under the constraint of the Spirit, an inspired writer would write, "We have an altar"; that in Himself the way of fellowship was being provided, all the foreshadowed values were being fulfilled; that in Him man would find his way to God, as in Him God had found His way to man. In His Person and through His mission,

Grace comes down our souls to greet,

While glory crowns the Mercy-Seat!

With all this in mind, we listen to the supposition of the Lord. Coming to the altar is approach to God. Coming to the altar is coming to the hour and place of worship. Coming to the altar is finding our way into fellowship with God by means of mediation and sacrifice. Coming to the altar is the recognition of the sovereignty of God, of the supremacy of His will. Without any further argument, it is perfectly evident that coming to the altar produces recollection of any violation of that will. No man ever seriously draws near to the altar without remembering.

This is invariable, and it is inevitable. Let it be borne in mind that the wrong done, to whomsoever it was done, whensoever it was done, is fixed in the mind of the man who did it. There are forgotten things that are not forgotten. They are forgotten, I am not conscious of them now; but they are not forgotten, they are hidden away in my mind, covered over by other things. Some of you remember how Scott in Guy Mannering, in a very quaint way, refers to the disorderliness of some minds. He says that Dominie Sampson's mind was like "the magazine of a pawnbroker, stowed with goods of every description, but so cumbrously piled together, and in such total disorganization, that the owner can never lay his hands on any article at the moment he has occasion for it." There are minds like that. However orderly our minds may be, there are things buried away in it of which we are not conscious at the moment; but they are there. There is a little expression we often use in conversation and public speech: "Call to mind"; we all know the possibility of calling to mind. No wrong we have committed have we really forgotten; it is there, covered over, much to our own ease, guilty ease, perilous ease, dangerous ease; but it is there. When we approach the altar we remember. There is no need to go far for illustration. Thank God, we do not know each other's secrets, and thank God we need not unveil them to any human being; but in this very hour we

have been remembering. One of Watts' greatest pictures is called "The Dweller in the Innermost." It is a representation of conscience, with a star on her forehead, with a trumpet and arrows lying on her knees. The outstanding wonder of the picture is the green, fiery eyes. Yes, but we forget her. We are unconscious of her eyes, and we do not hear her voice, and the trumpet and the arrows seem forevermore to lie on her lap. But when we approach the altar, she looks, and her glance searches us; she speaks, and with trumpet tongue; she acts, and those "arrows are sharp... in the heart of the King's enemies." The dweller in the innermost is awakened when we draw near to the altar. This word of Jesus was not a rhetorical allusion, it was the recognition of a psychological activity of which everyone who really knows what it is to draw near to the altar of God is conscious. When men first come to the altar of God they remember sins of the past; and in every subsequent approach, if wrongs have been done, they are remembered. It is so whether we will or not. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me." It is desirable that it should be so, and if we really know our own hearts, the mystery of them, and the meaning of sin in its vileness and poison and power, then we shall cry out as did the psalmist:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my thoughts;

And see if there be any way of wickedness in me.

The supposition being considered, let us hear what the Lord says to a man in that moment when approaching the altar of God he remembers. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother." That is the command. We may express all that the command means by saying that the activity of conscience which results from the approach to the altar must be the inspiration of immediate action. Observe with great care what is meant by these words. By them our Lord has revealed the fact that the altar never condones or cloaks sin. The altar is the way to purity, not an excuse for impurity. The intention of the altar is to loose from sin, not to hide it. If for a single moment we imagine that in our coming to Christ we come that sin may be hidden, we do not understand the meaning of Christ's mission.

The altar calls on man to co-operate with God to the utmost of his ability in this moral restoration. The very first value of the altar is that it reminds a man of his sin. The very first value of Christian worship is that it starts the activity of conscience, and compels men to think of the actuality of sin. The first value of Christ's presence in the world is not forgiveness, but conviction. In His presence men know sin. When men come toward God through Him they discover sin. One of the last things of religious and social significance that W. E. Gladstone said was that our age was suffering from a lowered sense of sin. I do not know what he would have said had he lived today! We often mourn that men seem to have no consciousness of sin. We are under the spell of certain pseudo-scientific attempts to deal with religion. When a modern scientist tells us that the intelligent man does not think about sin it is a most unintelligent statement. The intelligent man faces every fact of life, and sin is a fact from which there can be no escape. I say that the first value of man's presence before Christ is that he will know himself a sinner. Coming to the altar—for "we have an altar"—we remember the things of wrong, the things of evil.

A consequent value of the altar is that it absolutely refuses to harbor the man who is not prepared to co-operate to the utmost of his ability with God for his own moral restoration. "Leave there thy

gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother."

What, then, we inquire carefully and with solemnity, is man's utmost? What can a man do in this hour when conscience is awakened, when his whole life is suddenly arraigned before the penetrating awfulness of the eyes of his own conscience? He can do the thing he knows. That of which conscience has just spoken to him indicates his immediate and only responsibility. That one thing demands immediate action. Go to thy brother directly, immediately, without hesitation, crucifying pride; and, looking into his eyes, be reconciled to him. The one thing that conscience speaks of must be dealt with.

Look, I pray you, at the spiritual significance of all this. The man is seen leaving his gift, and leaving the altar. Geographically, he is traveling from it; but the near way to all the values of the altar is that journey on which he goes to find his brother. He is leaving the altar only geographically; all the while the altar holds him to its own spirit and intention, brings him near to the God Whom he is seeking, and leads him along the pathway that eventuates in purity. The journey away is the near way to the altar.

The limits of responsibility are set further out than we generally think. That which man seeks as he seeks his brother is not his own peace of mind, but saving his brother from those attitudes of mind, anger, contempt, malice, which may make his brother sin. No deeper social note is found in all the teaching of Jesus than this. Why am I to co-operate with God for my own moral restoration? Not alone for my own heart's ease and quietness, but because I am involving the man I have wronged, not by the wrong I have done him, but by the wrong he may do himself if he become angry, contemptuous, malicious toward me. Every journey from the altar that leads back to the altar is a journey to serve someone else and save him. So has God bound us up in the bundle of life. "None of us liveth unto himself"; each one lives unto his brother. Therefore, because the law in the Kingdom is stern, forbidding anger, contempt, malice, therefore take this journey and find thy brother.

The limitations are entirely reasonable. We are to deal with that which is remembered between ourselves and the man we have wronged. I am to go straight away to him; there is to be a meeting between two; I am to make my confession to him, and such restitution as I am able to make, such reparation as lies within my power. Somehow, I am to find my way into his heart.

There are other teachings of our Lord which would warrant us in saying that if that man will not receive me I am not to blame; the Lord will deal with him. But have you ever thought how remarkably rare a thing it is for any human being to refuse to forgive? Sometimes we hear of such refusal, most often in novels, but sometimes also in actual life. Alas and alas! I have known such cases, but they are rare. I have often been amazed to find how a bad man, to whom another confesses sin and asks pardon, is ready to forgive and blot it out. In any case our responsibility ends at that point, and in that direction lies easement from morbid and unworthy regrets.

If I am speaking to some individual soul, and I pray and believe that I am—perhaps to many such—I pray you do not interfere with the Lord's quite clear command. Do not say, I remember that one thing, but then there have been other things; I will try to remember them all. Perhaps I may as well say that the sermon this evening is in answer to the letter of a troubled soul that has reached me from the other side of the world, telling me of agony, of desire to make restoration.

The writer said, I beseech you preach on the subject and send me the sermon. That I propose to do. Therefore let me say that the letter is a revelation of false attitudes towards this question of restoration and restitution; perfectly sincere, to be pitied, to be loved into the light, but wrong. The one responsibility concerning restoration in order to be reconciled to God is that we definitely go and deal with the one thing conscience names. To-morrow it may name another thing; then we are to deal with that. Do not let us trouble ourselves with things that in the last analysis are very doubtful, or force ourselves to deal with things in the past with which it is quite impossible that we should deal.

Finally, listen to the welcome. "Then come and offer thy gift." Here we may summarize the teaching by declaring that such immediate action in response to conscience whose activity has been aroused by approach to the altar prepares for the appropriation of the advantages which the altar offers. Let that man come back who has taken his journey, who has, so far as he is able, accomplished its purpose, and let him take up his gift and offer it. The altar is for putting away sin. This man has co-operated with God to the utmost of his ability; his approach is now sincere, open and worthy; let him come.

Now the altar is of value. There is an activity of grace which that man still needs, and of which he never felt the need so profoundly as in the hour when he has done his utmost to co-operate with God toward moral restoration. Never so perfectly before did he know his need of absolution, cleansing of the soul, restoration to fellowship with God. Then, said Jesus, Let him come. He will come now, not as a formalist, but in reality. He will come sincerely, and coming sincerely will be received.

The grace of which the altar is the symbol is now to be received. Grace to deal with the wrong which has been righted, for its stain is still on the conscience of the man; its desolation abides. Grace will now deal with that. As between this man and his brother the wrong has been righted; but only God can right it as between man and Himself. This God does, and that is grace in its meaning and value, in its mystery and its mercy.

Let the man remember that he may now come to the altar not alone for the wrong which he has righted so far as he is able, but also for the wrongs which he cannot right. In the moment when conscience has awakened are some to whom it is too late to go. Thank God for the altar! Without it I could have no hope. There are some to whom we cannot go without involving others, and therefore we must not go. We can make restoration only when it may be between ourselves and those whom we have wronged. The confessions that we sometimes hear in inquiry rooms when dealing with souls about sin, made flippantly, involving another, are never sincere. So far as I am concerned, I have no pity for such, and no dealings with them. The confession of sin is lonely, singular, peculiar. There are confessions I can never make, speaking impersonally and as a representative man, for I have no right to involve others. I can go to the altar. I shall carry with me the shame and the wrong and the suffering of some things to the end; but I can trust God's grace for both myself and all the influence of the wrong I did to others, knowing this, that He will not hold them responsible for that for which I alone was responsible. So we must rest in the grace of God. All the strange involutions and intricacies of wrongdoing we must leave at last at the altar.

Those who in the presence of the altar have no questionings of this kind, no remembrances, need very seriously to consider their religious life. Let us be practical, let us be immediate, let us exclude

all the world but this congregation, this sanctuary, this hour, this service. Then let us inquire; This coming to God, is it vanity, or is it reality? If it be reality it rebukes us; we remember! If it be vanity we remember nothing, and pass flippantly through the service—the singing of the hymns, pleasant; the sermon, endured!

To the sensitive soul to whom coming to the altar is reality let me say that continuous approach in sincerity enables us to keep short accounts with our own conscience. The thing rebuked in this service can be set right if we will have it so.

The dire peril of carelessness in such matters as these is that conscience becomes hardened. The dweller in the innermost becomes blind. The altar brings nothing to our remembrance. We never blanch with fear or blush with shame. It is an appalling thing that a man may come to that condition.

There is, however, another peril, the peril of unbelief in the mercy of God. The conscience becomes morbid and sees things that are not there, multiplies transgressions that have never occurred, and turns certain things in life into sins which are not sins at all in the economy of God. Spirituality is diseased, anemic, weak, trembling, often simply because man will not trust in the incredible mercy of God. Do you remember that supreme line in F. W. H. Myers' poem, one of those lines of poetry of which there are few in our language that come out of the essence of eternal things?

God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.

The only thing God cannot forgive is refusal to trust in His love. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings..." Was ever figure so vibrant with the infinite passion of God? "And ye would not." Ye would not trust My love! Ye would not respond to My love! "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

I pray you, do not doubt the mercy of God. If you have heard Him calling you to some hard task, some rough pathway, some difficult business between thyself and thy brother, know this; that if thou wilt tramp that pathway, and "lay in dust life's glory dead," then from the ground there shall blossom red, "life that shall endless be." The hard journey leads at last to the altar, and the way of the altar is the way of peace.

Matthew 5:48. Ethical Perfection.

Matthew 5:48.

Ethical Perfection.

Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Perhaps no words in the teaching of our Lord have given more pause to honest hearts than these. With a due sense therefore of their solemnity, combined with a conviction of the reasonableness of our Master, we approach their consideration. In doing so it is of great importance that we should guard ourselves against two perils which threaten us.

First, we must be most careful not to exclude from these words any of the Lord's meaning. We must not say that our Lord did not quite intend what He said. We must not indulge in that most pernicious form of Biblical criticism, the attempt to accommodate some high word of Jesus to the low living of our own experience.

Second, we must not include any more than He intended. It will be healthy for us if we can escape entirely from all merely technical theological ideas as we approach these verses. We have heard much of Christian perfection, a fine and beautiful phrase. I have occasionally been startled by Christian people who have said to me, Do you believe in Christian perfection? My reply to such an inquiry has been to ask, Do you believe in Christian imperfection? or, Do you believe in imperfect Christianity? Every man who is a Christian believes in Christian perfection. That such an answer to the inquiry may be an evasion of the intention of the questioner I know right well. There may be involved in the question certain conceptions, interpretations, doctrines, theological opinions. Now, it is from these that I desire to escape. Let us hear these words of our Lord just as He uttered them, with the simplicity of children.

With regard to the second of these perils, that of including nothing which our Lord did not intend, let us at once recognize that the change which we find in our Revised Version is most important and most accurate. The mood of the verb is future indicative, and not imperative. Our Lord did not say, "Be ye therefore perfect." He said "Ye therefore shall be perfect."

Yet immediately, in the interest of the first warning, let us recognize with equal care that the sense of the indication is imperative in its bearing on our responsibility, for all His declarations involve responsibility, just as all His commands implicate resource.

Comprehensively, this word of Christ is a summarized declaration of what He expects of those who are in His Kingdom, and therefore it is a summarized declaration of what is made possible to them by Himself.

He came unto His own Kingdom, and found it disorganized, degraded; He came to organize, to restore, to uplift, to supply all the forces that were necessary for the remaking of men and the

re-establishment of the Kingdom of God in the experience of the race. Confronting His own disciples, and speaking in the hearing of the multitude that had gathered about Him, He said, This is the sum total of My ethic, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Speaking to His disciples in the hearing of that larger multitude, He said, You shall be perfect, for I am here to make you perfect; that is the meaning of My mission.

Let us, then, consider, first, the central idea of the text, perfection; second, the perfection of the Father to which our Lord referred when He said "as your heavenly Father is perfect," and, third, the perfection of the sons which He declared to be necessary.

First, then, the general idea of perfection. The arresting word of the text is undoubtedly the word twice repeated, "perfect." This is the word which gives us pause, surprises us, the word which we have been so anxious to undervalue, the word which has made us declare that our Lord did not really mean what He said, but that we were to be as good as we could. It is impossible to consider or apply this statement of our Lord without carefully considering this word, both as to its actual meaning, and as to its use.

What, then, does the word mean? I am referring, of course, in the first place, to the actual word of the Greek New Testament. Let us get behind the actual word to that from which it came. A third remove from the word here translated perfect is a simple word, meaning to set out for a given point, not to go promiscuously, but to go toward a definite place. The suggestion of the word is that of traveling toward a goal. That is the root idea. From that word another was derived, meaning a limit, the conclusion of the journey, the destination of the traveler, the place toward which the journey was taken; and so the word came to mean a termination, a result, and ultimately, a purpose. From that word was derived the word which is translated "perfect" in this passage. The word therefore means realization, arrival at a destination, the state of being at the limit toward which the start was made.

In classic Greek this word was used of adults, as distinguished from infants, or children undergoing discipline. It was also used in the religion of Greece of those who were initiated into the mysteries; those who had passed beyond the novitiate were perfected, that is, they had arrived, they had reached the goal, the limit toward which they set out when they became novices.

In the New Testament this word occurs only in my text, and in one other place in the gospels, where our Lord said to the rich young ruler, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast and give to the poor"; if thou wouldest arrive at thy goal, come to fulfilment of that toward which thou hast been moving, crown everything that has preceded; then yield thyself to My control by sweeping out all that hinders, "sell that thou hast... and come, follow Me." In the epistles it is found over and over again. It is there used constantly of those who are ethically adult, not complete in the sense of including everything that is intended by the being, and excluding everything that is not of the being; but grown-up, adult, having arrived at a definite goal. Such is the word, "Ye therefore shall be perfect," not babes ethically, not youths and maidens, but full-grown men.

The varying value of the word is illustrated by our word "perfect." We are conscious of the natural ambiguity of that word. We always need to interpret it by the subject of which it is used. It is not a word that always means exactly the same thing; it cannot. Here is a baby in its mother's arms. Is it perfect? Ask the mother. Meet the baby seventeen years hence, a youth. Is he perfect? Ask the

youth. Add another four, five, half a dozen years, he is a man. Is he perfect? Ask the woman he considers perfect. Perfect as babe, perfect as boy, perfect as man; but always room for growth, advancement, development.

Perfect, then, means arrival at one particular stage of completeness, not the impossibility of procedure from that stage to another. Perfection is the reaching of a given limit. When that given limit is reached, there may be a new enterprise, a new vision luring to new heights, and so consequently a new process toward a larger perfection.

We are by this consideration brought face to face with the supreme difficulty, in the presence of which men have halted, have indulged in criticism, and have attempted to escape the force of the word of Christ, that of the consciousness of the necessary difference between the perfection of God and our perfection. All that we need for the moment is a recognition of the fact that in each case we must interpret by the subject of which we use the defining term. There are certain senses in which it would be absurd to imagine we can ever be perfect with the perfection of God. Therefore, all such senses are necessarily and properly excluded from our consideration. Our Lord, in infinite condescension, used this particular word "perfect" of God in order to accommodate to human understanding a great principle of human life and conduct. So much then for the abstract idea.

Before we consider in separation the perfection of the Father and the perfection of the sons, it is of the utmost importance that we remember that the statement of Jesus has as its central value the suggestion of likeness, and that most definitely. As your heavenly Father, that is just as your Father, exactly like your Father is perfect. That is not unwarranted emphasis. Whereas there are things we shall necessarily have to eliminate from our consideration, in the matter to which Christ was drawing attention He used the strongest word possible as He demanded on the part of His subjects perfection like the perfection of God.

The consideration of the two perfections will emphasize the difference. The perfection of the Father, the perfection of the sons, these terms marking distinction which must be multiplied by the difference between the Divine and the human.

Admitting that fact of difference, it is ours to look for the likeness which our Lord intended, for in the discovery of that likeness is the supreme value of our meditation.

What, then, is the perfection of the Father to which our Lord referred? This word "perfect" is never elsewhere used of God in the whole of the New Testament. It was manifestly an accommodation on the part of Christ. A great subject is suggested at this point, which is quite aside from our theme. I am more and more impressed, however, as I study these gospel narratives, with our Lord's choice of words. I suppose we are all undergoing a very interesting and profitable revolution in regard to the language of the New Testament as the result of the work of Deissman and others. This, however, is helping us to see more clearly with what accuracy and delicacy our Lord made use of words. He never spoke of His Father by this word on any other occasion. No New Testament writer ever dared to use this word of God. It was, I repeat, a manifest accommodation in order to teach some central lesson.

If the word means reaching a goal toward which a man has traveled, then immediately it cannot have any application to God, for essentially God has no goal toward which He travels. In the fact of

His essential being God knows nothing of infancy in His own being, nothing of youth, nothing of age. The vision of Daniel, while poetic, is at the same time strangely illuminative, expressed in the figure that always arrests us, "the Ancient of Days." God, if I may use such poor human words, is always adult in the mystery of His own being. He is taking no journey toward a larger perfection. His perfection is absolute and final and eternal. Yet our Lord spoke of Him here by a word which is entirely on the human level, accommodating His word to the necessity of His teaching. Therefore it is evident that the word "perfect," when used of the Father must be interpreted by the limitations of the context. Moreover, Christ's use of the word is so closely associated with something He had said a moment before that we are compelled so to interpret it.

To diligent students of the whole teaching of our Lord—those who today are standing in a place of far greater privilege than these men occupied who were listening to Him—the interpretation of Fatherhood may be, for certain purposes, much wider. We have all that He said about the Father, we have all that He revealed concerning the Father, and we may, nay we must, take all into account when we desire to know God.

For the present purpose I confine myself to the Manifesto. In this Manifesto, of which our text is, as we have said, the crystallized declaration of requirement and resource, these are the things He taught about the Father. First, that He is in the heavens. I cannot help feeling that we lose a great deal sometimes by not being more literal in our translation. Our Lord said, Your Father which is in the heavens; He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in the heavens" always in the plural. I should not like to base any very definite doctrine on that, but it is at least suggestive of the omnipresence of God and the immanence of God, that He is as nigh as the very heavens of the atmosphere in which we live, and as far as the ultimate reach of the final heaven. In this Manifesto He also made these simple declarations concerning God: Your Father seeth, Your Father knoweth, Your Father feedeth. Yet all this is but the atmosphere, not finally revealing the perfection of God to which our Lord referred at this point, but helping us toward an understanding thereof.

Let us look back to some earlier words in this paragraph: "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Now connect these words with our text, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as, just as, your Father in the heavens is perfect." Do not quarrel with that illustration. I did not choose it. It is the Lord's illustration. The particular words of my text rise straight out of it, and must be interpreted by it. It is of the essence and reality of the teaching of this particular passage. "Ye therefore," not "ye shall be perfect," but "Ye therefore." Wherefore? On what does the "therefore" depend, and from whence does it derive its strength and urgency? "Your Father... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." That is a revelation of God. First, it is a revelation of beneficence. Make the word "beneficence" as great as it is; do not degrade it by the low level of our common use of it. When we use great words let us think great thoughts. Beneficence is well-doing, doing well to, doing good to. Your Father is beneficent toward man as man, whether he be evil or good, toward the unjust or the just. Behind the beneficence is benevolence, well-wishing.

That is the Divine perfection to which our Lord referred, love desiring the good of all men, love doing good to all men, love set on men irrespective of what they are in themselves, love for the evil

as well as for the good, for the unjust as well as for the just. There comes to my mind a story from the earliest days of my preaching. I have often told it. I will tell it again. A boy in a Sunday-school class one day said to his teacher, Does God love naughty boys? Certainly not, said the teacher. What blasphemy! Yes, God does love naughty boys. God loves wicked men, in their wickedness, and out of the arch of His blue heaven makes His glorious sun to shine on them, and out of the secret chambers where the rain is generated sends it forth in beneficent floods on the unjust as well as on the just. Do not quarrel with the illustration, it is not mine. You might criticize this if I were imagining it, but it is Christ's definition of the Divine perfection. "Your Father... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." That is our Lord's description of the perfection of God. It is the ultimate distinction of God, that He makes His sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good. In the Colossian letter we have a great word of Paul's applied to human conduct which is equally applicable here, "Love is the bond of perfectness." What does that word "bond" mean? Ask your medical man to explain it to you; he can do it better than I can, *sundesmos*, the ligaments of perfectness, holding all other things in unity and making them act harmoniously. The love of God is the bond of His perfections. Deny His love, and what, then, of His justice? How hard it will be, like the justice of man! What, then, of His holiness? How impossible for a man as man ever to find His way into it, to climb toward the light of it. Love is the bond of perfectness in God, and our blessed Master and King caught this one song out of the infinite music, and sang it to the ages. This is the Divine perfection, that He "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

What, then, is the perfection of the sons to which our Lord is calling us? "Ye shall be perfect" exactly as your Father is perfect. Mark the idea of perfection thus interpreted. Again I pray you remember the necessary distinction between a father and sons multiplied by the difference between God and man. While remembering that, let us emphasize the thought of likeness. Christ said to His subjects, You must be ethically full-grown. To be ethically full-grown is to be men of whom it is true that thoughts and words are mastered by love, men of whom it is true that action is always love-inspired. In our previous meditation we considered the fundamental word of Jesus, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." The ultimate expression of that righteousness is love-mastered thinking, benevolence; and love-mastered activity, beneficence.

Take this whole Manifesto and see how the Lord interprets His own ideal. This word about love is the climax of our Lord's enunciation of laws as to earthly relationships. I glance back, and I find, first, the law of life as to murder and hatred; second, the law of purity as to the marriage relationship; third, the law of truth, that no man shall take any oath, but say yea, yea; the law of justice, that the man in His Kingdom shall overtake the demand of justice by such living as will make it forevermore unnecessary. The attitude toward human life as He describes it, the sacredness of the family, the preservation of the purity of the state; the attitude toward truth, the simple statement; the attitude toward justice. How are we going to fulfil these ideals? Only in love. Only out of life love-mastered can these things proceed.

This, then, is not a low standard. It is the ultimate, the highest of all ethical conceptions. Love is the secret of all righteousness, personal, social, national. That does not need arguing; it does need thinking about and remembering. Could war last for a single four-and-twenty hours if love mastered the peoples? That never will be until the King of love shall come and establish His

Kingdom; but when He comes, that will be the issue. Every social problem that confronts us today would be solved if only we could make men live a life love-mastered. No sentinel is half so severe as love. If love stands sentinel in our lives, watching over our actions, we cannot lie, we cannot hate, we cannot slander. The measure of high and noble life is the measure of love-mastered life. How we admire that man who in company will not allow another man to be ill spoken of.

Who steals my purse steals trash...

But he that filches from me my good name,

Robs me of that which not enriches him,

And makes me poor indeed.

Such a man is of all men most despicable, and the man who will not allow it to be done in his company is the man who is love-mastered.

Do not imagine that love is sentimental, sickly, mawkish, anaemic. If it were, then God deliver the world from it! Love is strong, virile, tremendous in its demands. Love makes demands on self. Love thinketh no evil, "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

That is the God-like perfection which Christ demands, the love-mastered life which expresses itself in gifts bestowed on men without respect to what they are in themselves.

As I ponder these words, as I have pondered them in trying to understand our Lord's meaning, everything has at last gathered itself up for my own soul and my own heart into one question. I am not now so much speaking as a preacher, an expositor; I am telling you the things that have been happening in my own soul while I have been preparing for this service. As the light has shone on me, and I have caught His revelation of God in the perfection of His love, and have then heard Him say, You therefore shall be perfect exactly as your Father is perfect, the effect has been that I have been driven to the asking of one plain question: How?

For in the name of God, if that be the ideal it mocks my impotence. I grant its beauty and glory; I grant that if men live love-mastered lives all the problems are solved and righteousness is established. But how am I going to be perfect with that perfection, how am I to arrive at that ethically adult condition of life when I shall be mastered by love in my thinkings, in my wishings, in my judgments, in my actions? How?

The answer is in the text and in the context. I venture to suggest that our Lord might have used other figures of speech here. In some senses other figures of speech would have been as illuminative as this is, but they would have lacked exactly that thing which I am now feeling after. He might have said, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your King is perfect." Would not that have done? Yes, as the revelation of an ethic, but it would have lacked dynamic, it would have lacked the essential Christian secret. Your King makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Would not that have done? Quite perfectly for the revelation of an ethic, for the King is a King of love, but a King cannot give life to His subjects.

But our Lord did not use that figure, He used the figure of the Father, "that ye may be sons of your Father. Now the arresting word is not the word "perfect" but the word "Father." That is a word of hope, a word that woos me, a word that suggests dynamic as well as ethic! I go back to the beginning of the Manifesto and I find that the word first appears when our Lord was telling these very men the purpose for which they are called to high character, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He never used that figure of speech again till He came to the climax, the love-mastered life, "That ye may be sons of your Father... ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then everything that followed thrilled with it. Take the sixth chapter at your leisure, and do what I did when I was reading just before coming to this service, put a red line under the word "Father." Life is to be lived before "your Father" and not before men to be seen of them. Your alms are to be given so that "your Father" may see them. When you pray, get alone and pray to your Father, and your Father will reward you. When you pray, say, "Our Father." When you forgive men, remember your Father will forgive you if you forgive them. When you fast do it alone with your Father. Do not be anxious about the necessities of this life. Your Father feedeth the birds, and your "Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

So the music runs. The King is Father; the subjects are sons. And therein is suggested the central verity of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He comes to give men not an ethic alone, but dynamic; not light on a pathway merely, but life enabling them to walk therein.

Such love of our fellow men must proceed out of life, and the Manifesto is not all the mission of the King. There was not merely the Mount of Light, whereon He enunciated the ethic that burns us:

There is a green hill far away,
Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.
We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.
He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.
Oh dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,

And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

Matthew 5:48; Luke 19:10. The Ethic And Evangel Of Jesus.

Matthew 5:48; Luke 19:10.

The Ethic And Evangel Of Jesus.

Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

Here we have two superlative utterances of Jesus, which, at first glance to the thoughtful man, seem contradictory, yet, as a matter of fact are most closely related. They condense into the briefest declaration the sum total of Christ's teaching. On the one hand, we have a word of superlative truth; on the other, a word of ineffable grace. One is a word of light, searching, revealing, shaming, filling the heart with fear; the other is a word of love, caressing, healing, lifting, filling the heart with hope. The apostle John declared of Jesus, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Here the two things find expression from His lips. If we take a larger outlook than that of the text in each case, we shall immediately see that there is no contradiction. While the first word is a word that demands perfection, it is set in relationship to declarations of love. The definition of the Divine perfection in the context is this: "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In the atmosphere of the demand for love flashes the great word of light. On the other hand, the story from which the second text is taken is purely an ethical story. Jesus entered the house of Zacchæus, a notorious wrong-doer, and within a short period of His entry the most marvelous moral reformation had taken place. In the presence of that mighty ethical change Jesus said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." So that when I set each text in its context I find the value of the other constituting that context. The first text is a text of light set in an atmosphere of love; the second text is a text of love set in the shining of light.

For these two things Jesus stood in all the days of His public ministry. For these two things the Lord Jesus Christ stands at this hour. His demand is for perfection, and if He says no more than that to me He leaves me on the highway of life having discovered my failure and unable to realize the high ideal; but His gospel is that He finds the man whom His ethic condemns, and enables him to fulfil that ethic—"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." These two things must never be separated from each other. The proclamation of the evangel which even suggests that the mission of Jesus in the world was to persuade God to excuse sin is a blasphemy. The proclamation of the ethic which declares that God has set a high standard to which He demands that a man shall climb ere He receive him is equally a blasphemy. When, on the one hand, we realize that Jesus Christ, in the days of His flesh, through every successive century, and at this hour, calls for absolute perfection, and then see Him holding out to the

condemned soul hands in which are the arguments which declare His power to realize in the life of the failing man the very thing He demands, then we have begun to understand the real message and mission of Christ.

A generation ago there was a phrase which was largely the phrase of the schoolman, the phrase of the scientist. It has become the phrase of that ubiquitous and remarkable individual we describe as "the man in the street," whom no one has ever seen but everybody knows: the survival of the fittest. With strange, intuitive accuracy, humanity has fastened on that phrase, and now applies it everywhere. Whatever it meant when it was first used a generation ago by the physical scientists, today it stands for the conception that only fit things ought to survive. Men have been applying it physically and mentally, and the Church has, or ought to have, been applying it spiritually. It embodies an essential truth. It reveals a profound necessity. It reveals a principle apart from which our life is not worth living. Only fit things must survive; the unfit must go to the wall. I go further and declare that it is a law of God, and that the chief exponent in human history of that particular law and that particular principle is Jesus Christ. There never passed the lips of Jesus a single plea for the excuse of incapacity. Through the centuries He is not leading into some heaven that lies beyond an army of mental, moral, and spiritual cripples. He demands perfection. In the presence of such a word as this we must not indulge in any of that kind of criticism which is far more destructive than the higher or the lower criticism—the profane criticism which says that Jesus did not mean exactly what He said when he uttered the words, "Ye shall be perfect." If we want to know the severity of the demand we must remember the location of the text. There never was a day when the context will search us more than today. "Ye shall love your enemies." "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is Christ's demand for the ultimate fitness, the fitness of the soul, love baptized, love inspired; the fitness of the soul that cannot stoop to untruth or to meanness, cruelty or devilry, because it is mastered by love. The last spiritual, mental, physical, fitness of humanity is created by the mastery of love. Christ stands with that great word forever sounding in the listening ears of astonished, ashamed, confounded humanity, "Ye shall therefore be perfect"; and, lest there should be some lowering of the ideal, He interpreted His meaning, "as your heavenly Father is perfect."

What does all that mean? It means that I stand in the presence of Christ and say: "If that be the standard, then, verily, I am guilty and a failure! Oh, it may be, my masters, that by the ordinary standards of respectable society you will pass; it may be that even by the standards of the Christian Church you will pass; but if you come to that solemn loneliness of spirit which is the self-consciousness of a man in the presence of Jesus Christ, you also will say: If that be the standard, God help me, I am not that. Yet that is Christ's demand. I declare that if that is all Jesus Christ has to say to me, it is a word of condemnation, and there is no help in it for me.

Now I listen to Him again, the same Christ; and with no lowering of the standard, I hear Him say, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." He bends over me, the man whom He has condemned; He bows over me, the soul whose unutterable failure is revealed; and as I lose all heart and hope, and feel that if that be the standard, not only have I not attained it, but I cannot attain it, He whispers to my heart this word of hope. Forgive me if I change His wording that I may express His meaning—I have come to make you the very thing that I demand you shall be—"to seek and to save the lost." Here, then, we have the ethic of Jesus. Here, then, we have the evangel of Jesus.

Let us consider a little more carefully this ethical ideal of Jesus. I think we must try to understand it by trying to understand Him, for if John declared that the glory which shone from Jesus' Person was "glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth," it is also recorded by John that upon occasion Jesus said, "I am the truth." Not, I teach it, not I declare it, not I explain it; but "I am the truth." That is to say, He claimed to be the incarnation of that perfection which He demanded. I am not going to defend His claim. Believing it to be true, I want to see the perfection, first, by listening to His teaching; second, by observing His example; and, third, by noting one stupendous fact of Divine relationship to Him.

First, then, by listening to His teaching. The first of my texts is taken from His ethical manifesto. It breathes the spirit of that manifesto. It catches up the ultimate claim, appeal, demand, thereof. Yet, because it is so inclusive and so vast, let us think of the manifesto itself, not in detail, but in general outline. First, we find in this manifesto of Jesus that He insists on supremacy of character, and of character of a particular type. As I read I am impressed with the fact that no blessing is pronounced on any human being for having anything, or for doing anything; every blessing is pronounced on men for what they are in themselves. Then I discover that Jesus reveals the nature of the character on which He pronounces His blessing. He declares that character is a matter of the soul, a matter of the hidden life, a matter that is entirely inward. There may be external attitudes and actions which convey the idea of rectitude; but if the heart be wrong there is no beatitude. He declares that the character must be purity in the inward parts, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Not the overt act of sin is that which is supremely to be condemned, but the inner lust after it. God does not shudder and tremble where man does, in the presence of the murderer with blood on his hands; God shudders at those movements of the soul which are of contempt, of hatred, and which presently may express themselves in murder. While the man who does not inflict bodily harm on his neighbor will escape the law of humanity, the man who speaks in terms of contempt of his fellow man is judged in the courts of heaven as being iniquitous and unholy. This is the ethic of love. These are the demands that love sets up on the human soul, and which can be realized or answered only when love masters and inspires the life. Life must be true and gracious, it must be according to light and according to love. It must be stern and hard with irrevocable justice. It must be tender and sweet with unfailing compassion. A man must steadfastly refuse to bend the neck in the presence of any oppression and wrong; and yet he must be ready immediately to embrace the wrong-doer with the love of a great forgiveness. That is the ethic of Jesus, all contained in the ultimate conception of likeness to the God Who is love, and expressed in the terrific word of my text, "Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." In the manifesto, moreover, something is added which is entirely peculiar to Christ and Christianity. Jesus says that the true value of character is not that it secures safety to the men who possess it, but that it scatters blessings on other men. Those who have this character are the light of the world, are the salt of the earth. Men are to be men of holy character, true and gracious, not that they may secure their own safety, either for time or for eternity, but in order that from them light may fall on the pathways where men stumble and are lost; in order that they may exert the aseptic influence of salt, salt that hinders the spread of corruption and gives goodness in other people its chance.

When I have done listening to this Teacher I look at Him. When I look at Him I am more than ever impressed with the awful glory of the standard, for the purity of Jesus is something that fills the

soul with ever-growing awe. There came a day when Paul was writing a letter in which he declared, "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." That is the value of the second text. Then he continued: "instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." That is the value of the first text. The words Paul used I reverently use of Jesus Himself. "Soberly"; that means with perfect inward self-government. It is a word that refers to the individuality, and describes life as held in check, in poise, in restraint, none of its passions destroyed, but all held in check by principle. Look at Jesus. We cannot find in the records a single instance in which he lost control of Himself. I can find instance after instance in which He surged with passion as He denounced hypocrisy in language which even at the distance of two millenniums is white-hot and scorching. But He was always Master of His language; no word passed His lips that He had to recall. I have seen Him, His bosom heaving with emotion, and His wondrous eyes of matchless beauty suffused with tears; but I never find Him sickly in sentiment. Thrilling through the threnody of His complaint is the thunder of His righteousness. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He lived soberly, that is, with personality powerful, but controlled. That is perfection.

The word "righteously" here defines human interrelationship. It refers to the world around. To live righteously is to maintain the relationships of justice and mercy with our fellow men. Righteousness is supremely merciful. When our Lord commenced His ministry He said to John the Baptist, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He said that when He was bending, stooping, to a baptism that was symbolic of the death whereby He would extend mercy to men. Even His enemies never attempted to bring against Him any charge of ever having wronged man, woman, or child. They did charge Him with profaning the temple, with violating the Sabbath, with being overfriendly with sinning men and women; but never with wronging man or woman, or being unjust to a child. When at last they would murder Him, they must lie in order to do it, and procure false witnesses to trap Him. They charged Him with the violation of the trivialities of their ceremonial in order to nail Him to the Cross; but they could not charge Him with being unjust to His kind.

The last word, "godly," reveals relationship with the great over-world, the ultimate world of the human spirit, the world with which man essentially has to do, whether he admits it or not, for in the hand of God is man's breath, in the government of God are all man's ways. No life is perfect that has no traffic with heaven, no commerce with eternity, no dealings with God. The godliness of the life of Jesus was revealed, not conventionally, not according to the religious standards of His day. The supreme trouble was that He was not a religious man in the thinking of the religious men of the day. He broke the Sabbath, He violated tradition, He failed to give His hands ceremonial cleansing before eating food. But He was godly. Hear His own beatitude, and discover in it a chaplet of glory and beauty that found its first resting place on the head of the Man Who uttered it: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." See God! Where? Everywhere. See God! When? Now. Jesus saw God everywhere, in the beauty of the lily, in the safety of the bird, in the glory of the harvest field, in the faces of men and women, in the vast movements of history. The vision of God was the inspiration of His humanity. His life was adjusted to God with a familiarity that often fills the soul with wonder. He spoke of God as Father, and declared His unity with Him,

and His submission to Him; made the declaration that He never said anything of Himself, but uttered only the things He heard whispered in His soul by His Father, God; that He never did anything on His own initiative, but only as the Divine will constrained and controlled Him. That is godly life, perfect life. The ethic of Jesus was incarnate in Himself.

Once again, and finally, the perfection of Jesus was demonstrated by that supreme and final act of God wherein He raised Him from the dead. On the day of Pentecost Peter for the first time became a truly seeing man, all the blindness gone, understanding as he never had understood, by the sudden, glorious coming of the Holy Spirit apprehending the meaning of the Man in Whose presence he had been for three years. Referring to Jesus' resurrection, Peter declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." Why not? Because of the perfection of His righteousness, the righteousness of His godly life, the righteousness which He perfected in the mystery of His dying. When God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead He said to humanity by that act, This is the type of human life acceptable to heaven. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead He rejected every other ideal of human life and every other conception of human greatness. By that raising from among the dead of One Who had bowed to buffeting and sacrificial death God declared in human history that the man who desires to rise to power by the oppression of others is rejected of heaven and doomed in the ultimate economy of eternity. By that raising from the dead of this Man God declared that merely intellectual attainment can never be the final ground of humanity's acceptance. By that raising from the dead of Jesus He declared that every ideal and every conception of man that does not harmonize with the perfection of that wondrous life is rejected. The raising of Jesus from the dead is God's signature to the perfect glory of the human ideal that had been incarnate in the Man of Nazareth.

Now I listen again to His second word, so familiar is its ineffable music, and so has it comforted the hearts of multitudes that perhaps there is need to do little more than repeat it: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." The seeking involves the whole of His mission, not merely the earthly mission, but His mission through the Spirit, the methods by which He approaches man's soul and makes His great appeal, seeking, ever seeking. The saving involves not merely the initial act whereby a soul is received, but all the disciplinary processes which follow, until that soul is perfected and presented faultless before the throne of God.

He came to seek, and why to seek? Because of the distance between those whom He came to seek and the God from Whom He came. But God is not far from any one of us. In Him "we live, and move, and have our being." He is "the God in Whose hand our breath is, and Whose are all our ways." Our distance is that of inability to know and apprehend the near. It is the distance of the blind man from the glory of the picture that is in front of him. It is the distance of the deaf man from the beauty of the symphony sounding round about him. It is the distance of the insensate man from all the movements of life in the midst of which he lives. Men live and move and have their being in God, and do not see Him. His voice, broken up into a thousand inflections, is ever speaking in their ears, but they do not hear them. He is close at hand, and they do not feel or touch Him. This Man saw God everywhere, heard Him always, and always touched Him. Man's distance from God is the distance of death from life in the midst of life. How appalling is the fact that men everywhere are near to God but never see Him. There are men who never see God in a flower, never see Him in a bird; who never see God on the mighty ocean or amid the vastness of the eternal hills. There are men who cannot see God in the war today. They are blind souls. God's

judgments are abroad in the earth. His grasp is on all humanity, making humanity work out its own choice to inevitable expression, that He may correct the wrong and bring the light of life to light. Yet men do not see Him. Therefore, He came to seek, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to touch the hard heart until it thrills and throbs with emotion. Those who are thus at a distance from God have become unlike God. He seeks them that He may restore to them the Divine image, and them to God Himself. Souls who are remote from God by reason of death are at enmity against God, hating, not God, but what they think is God. He came to seek them, to shine through the gloom, and destroy all false conceptions of God by being Himself incarnate Deity, revealing to men through the glance of the eye, the strength and tenderness of human speech, the glory of human life, all the perfection of grace and beauty, the wonders of what God is in Himself.

He came not only to seek, but to save. He begins with that central, essential fact of human personality, the spirit, linking it again to God, opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, making it keen of scent in the fear of the Lord. He renews the mind also, transforming it until it becomes spiritual. The body He preserves as a temple of the Holy Ghost, and promises that at last there shall come to all trusting souls the infinite wonder that came to Him, resurrection from among the dead.

The announcement at the beginning thus becomes not a command, but a promise. Because He bends and stoops to me in my low estate, and lifts me notwithstanding all, and takes me into His fellowship while as yet I am a polluted man, sitting down to eat with me, a sinner; because He does this, I dare look into His face with reverent awe, and glad emotion of soul, and I dare say to Him in spite of my growing consciousness of failure and weakness, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me."

God help us to submit ourselves to the measurement of His standard. Let us be done with comparing ourselves with ourselves, or finding some crumb of paltry satisfaction in the fact that we are not worse than other men, or a little better than a few. Let us press into His presence that He may measure us and condemn us, for by that process we shall be led to press nearer and yet nearer to His wounded side of ineffable love, that we may know His restoring and healing power, and at last be presented faultless before the throne of God.

Matthew 6:10. The Kingdom: "Thy Kingdom".

Matthew 6:10.

The Kingdom: "Thy Kingdom".

Thy Kingdom....

Matthew 6:10

Our theme this evening is that of the Kingdom over which the King reigns. The phrase I have read as text is taken, apparently, almost ruthlessly from its setting. These words are selected from the Lord's prayer. My theme this evening is not the prayer, but rather the Kingdom for the coming of which our Lord taught us to pray. In speaking of it let us remember that He Who taught the prayer was Himself the King; that the prayer itself is formulated with wonderful care, and is part of the King's Manifesto.

At the fifth chapter in the Gospel according to Matthew, we have the account of Jesus looking upon the multitude, and as a result going to the mountain, taking with Him His own disciples, and there upon the mountain height, enunciating in their hearing the ethic of His great Kingdom. At the heart of the ethic is this prayer, and at the center of the first part of the prayer is this phrase, "Thy Kingdom come."

Of that Kingdom Jesus is King by way of manifestation and for the purpose of demonstration. The one sovereign Lord is God. In order that men may know the King, He came into human form; and so coming, not nearer to man, but nearer to his consciousness by the way of incarnation. Therefore in Jesus of Nazareth, Man of our manhood, Bone of our bone, Flesh of our flesh, Life of our life, there has appeared in human history all that it is necessary for us to know concerning the Kingship of God, for in the King, the Kingdom is revealed.

With that thought in mind, we turn to the consideration of the Kingdom for which He taught us to pray that it may come, not that it may be created, not that it may be established, but that it may come, that it may be realized, that it may appear, that it may reach its ultimate fulfilment. In human history kings have often been great only by reason of the greatness of the empire over which they have reigned. But the greatest kings, even in human history, are the kings who have created a great kingdom. The greatness of our King is created by the greatness of the Kingdom over which He reigns, and the greatness of the Kingdom over which He reigns is created by the greatness of the King. Yet, it seems to me sometimes that we can only come to any recognition of the greatness of the King as we attempt to see the Kingdom over which He reigns. We spoke of the abstract things of Christ's greatness in our previous study; of His character, of His qualifications, of His authority. Now let us try to see the Kingdom over which He reigns.

I shall ask you to follow me as I attempt to speak; first of the actual fact and extent of the Kingdom; and secondly of the present expression of the Kingdom in human history.

First, then, as to the fact and extent of the Kingdom. We are in danger of limiting our outlook when we speak of the Kingdom. I am not going to enter into any discussion of the interesting problem of the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever difference there may be of application, there is no difference in the central thought. All the realms of which we are conscious are in the Kingdom of God. "King of kings" was the word of our last meditation. As we remember it we think of rulers and principalities; of dominions and powers; of kings over certain restricted areas. Over all these Christ is claimed by Scripture to be King. All realms are in His Kingdom. The material universe is in the Kingdom of God. The mental realm is under the government of Christ. Over the moral realm He is the one supreme ruler. So climbing up the ascending scale from the material through the mental and moral, we reach ultimately and finally to this: that the whole spiritual universe is within the Kingdom of God and is under the dominion of Christ.

Let us begin with the first of these thoughts; the material realm. To declare that this is in the Kingdom of God is to utter something old and commonplace, and therefore difficult of belief; that is of the belief which touches the heart and moves the emotion and fires the imagination. Yet, I believe that we are losing greatly in our Christian thinking and teaching by forgetfulness of this fact. No words of mine can set forth that truth with such lucidity, with such force, as the words which I read to you at the commencement of our service, selections from the writings of John and Paul. I halt you one moment to ask you to think of the difference between these two men, because as we recognize that difference we shall see how remarkable it is that they both came to identical conclusions concerning the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. John was the mystic, the dreamer; a man of intuition and insight. If I were asked to designate John, I should never speak of him as Saint John the Divine, but as John the Interpreter. I never read "Pilgrim's Progress" and the account of the visit to the house of the Interpreter without thinking of John, the man who saw things never seen, and was conscious of things that other men did not dream existed. The dreamer, the mystic, the poet, the visionary, the seer. Paul was a man of sincerity and honesty; a man of logical acumen; a man who would bring to bear upon the most trivial matters the profoundest powers of the mind; the man who wrote the great treatise on salvation which plumbs the depths, and scales the heights, and shows accurately the movements of God toward the accomplishment of His purpose. I am not saying there was nothing of the mystic in Paul, no vision of the gleam, no consciousness of the glory. In this very treatise he adds to all his statement and his logic, the wings of song, and having begun with the degradation of the Roman Empire, describing it until we shudder at this description, he at last says, "Let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God." He was preeminently a man of logic, a man of argument, a man of debate, a man of strange and strenuous reasoning power, a man who saw his way through all the processes. These two men, brought in different ways into comradeship with Christ, came to the same conclusion. The mystic words of John concerning the Christ are, "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." "In Him was life," and there is dramatic magnificence and inclusiveness in that use of the word "life." There follows a fine differentiation between the lower forms of life and the highest, as John continued "the life was the light of men." Such is the language of the mystic. I turn to Paul and I read in his Colossian letter, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and

unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Such is the language of the logician. The conclusion in each case is the same. Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, the Man known of the Galilean fisherman as an intimate human friend; the Man arresting Saul of Tarsus, learned in the law of his people and enthusiastic in his opposition to Christianity; impressed Himself upon the mind of the mystic, and upon the mind of the thinker, and the result was the same. They both saw Him as the Creator and Sustainer of the material universe. That is the Kingdom of Christ. In imagination I stand upon the mountain side, and I see the touch of His beauty in everything. I watch the procession of the seasons as they come and go, and mark their wonderful regularity, notwithstanding the impatient blasphemy of people who are afraid that a week's rain will spoil their harvest, and I know that "In Whom all things consist." There is no flower outside His Kingdom. There is no ploughed field sweeping up the hillside in folds of russet velvet which is not His handiwork. He holds the world in His hand, and is Master and Lord of the material universe. The first fact then for us ever to remember, is that the Christ Whom we crown as King, is King in the material universe; present at creation, He is the Word of creation; He upholds it by the word of His power; and all things made through Him, move toward Him, and will find their final glory when they have attained that form which harmonizes with the infinite perfections, which had their unveiling for the eye of mortal men in the strange and wonderful Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

He is also King in the mental realm. All the powers of thought are under His control, and under His government. There is rebellion in the world, in the universe; but ultimately all is under His control, for no thinking being in the universe can finally escape the strength of the mind of God. He is absolute Sovereign. All beautiful thought owes its origin to this one King; and every expression of beauty is the outcome of His reign and His Kingship. Of music, art, poetry and philosophy, He is the Lord and Master. Test your music by the harmonies of His perfections, and it sings its last unutterable note when it celebrates the Messiah. Art comes finally to Him, and that in art which is untrue and unclean is that in art which is unlike Christ and against the purposes of His Kingship. Poetry sings itself out in highest strains when it celebrates the name of this one great King. Philosophy is final when it is true to His wisdom. Thus through all the mental realm He is King.

The fact of His Kingship in the moral realm is beyond dispute. His law is the standard of morality. Gradually the world in its progressive civilization is coming to understand His ethic and obey it. Men outside the Church at this hour, sincere men, are telling us that we need to set up a new social order, and the proportion in which these men are uttering the truth about society, the relation of man to man in brotherhood, is the proportion in which they have heard the ethic of Jesus. In civic life, national life, here or anywhere else; the proportion of its purity is the proportion of its approximation to the ideals of Christ. In our moral ideals for the individual, the community, the nation, the world; the final standard is the ethic of Jesus. Thousands of men who have refused personally and individually to crown our Lord and Master, are crowning Him indirectly when they accept His ethic and bow before His standard of morality. From His Sermon on the Mount, light has flashed upon every age, rebuking it, shaming it, and gradually men are coming to honor the great ideal. I will put the whole case in other words. No ethic has ever yet been enunciated so severe, so searching, so high, so perfect as the ethic of Jesus. Twenty years ago a man who was filled with doubt and questioning concerning the Christian religion, said to me quite frankly, "My only complaint against the ideal of Jesus is that it is impracticable; no man can fulfil it." I only quote that, I need not argue it. I agree with it, No man can fulfil the ethic of Jesus save as He receives

from Him the necessary dynamic force. I quote it in order to say that it was a recognition that Christ is King in the moral realm. To obey Him absolutely, completely, finally, is to come to the ultimate in morality.

Christ is King finally over the whole spiritual realm. The highest side of life develops under His rule. He has so spoken to men who have questioned and doubted and groped in the darkness after God, that they have found Him and come to know Him. By His interpretation of truth concerning God, men have come to such conception of God as has enabled them to worship and to serve. The whole spiritual world has been opened to the consciousness of man by the ministry of Jesus. He has given us back into a present fellowship, the faces "loved long since and lost awhile." "We sorrow not as those that have no hope." The simple phrases of our holy faith link us in that communion of saints which laughs at the terror of the tomb. They are not dead, but gone before. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." We know that when Christ shall appear, they shall appear with Him in glory. He has not killed the capacity for sorrow; but He has gilded the teardrop with His smile and made the desert garden bloom awhile, by opening before us the gates, and giving us to see the infinite distances, and to enter even here amid the dust and turmoil of this present life into the communion with the saints who have gone before. If we follow Jesus we have no need to mutter in the dark in order to talk with spirits that have gone. We are their fellow citizens. If for a little while we wait amid the conflict, in this waiting we are not divided, but one with those who have gone. And presently, when the end comes, the followers of this Christ, this King, will look into the face of the rider upon the pale horse, and hail him as friend rather than foe, recognizing, as Bishop Taylor once so exquisitely put it, that Christ has taken from him his sting, and made him forevermore a porter at the gate of life. The consciousness of the spiritual world is born of the touch and presence and victory of this Christ King. He reigns over all things material, over all things mental, over all things moral, over all things spiritual.

Let us consider secondly, the present expression of the Kingdom.

I am speaking out of the midst of a world, and out of the midst of a condition of affairs, which made it necessary for the King to teach men to pray "Thy Kingdom come." The Kingdom is not apparent, it is not perfectly patent, it is not seen of ordinary men save in partial degree. It is an actual essential fact. It is seen of such as have seen the face of Christ. We remember the word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, that old and familiar word, let us recite it now with this particular meaning in it: "We see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we behold Him Who has been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." The writer of those words recognizes the fact that within the Kingdom there is rebellion; but he affirmed that at last the victory would be won, and all things would be subjected unto the King. His words suggest the unfinished work of Jesus, "Not yet all things subjected unto Him"; and the assurance that it will be finished, "We see... Jesus."

Yet, while we recognize His actual sovereignty in all these realms, let us also remember that it is not only actual, it is active. Think of the rule of Christ today. We must remind our hearts of it or we shall lose courage in many a day of battle and darkness. He holds the reigns of government over all the forces in the midst of which we live. Think of the crowned heads of the world, kings as we name them; think of the merchant princes of today; think of the rulers of the scientific world; or yet again, think of the great spiritual leaders of this and every age. Think of all these, and then hear again this word, He is "King of kings." Begin on that first and simplest level where it sometimes

seems impossible to believe it; He is King of all the crowned heads. It is not manifest; but it is an actual and active fact. Go back to the Old Testament and catch one gleam of light. Speaking to Cyrus, Jehovah said, "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." There was a man of faith in the olden days who was agnostic in the presence of what he saw about him, and Habakkuk said in his honest agnosticism, "Why is God doing nothing?" The divine reply was, "I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." Then said Habakkuk, "If that be true, I will up to the watchtower and watch and see." Then God told Him what He was doing. "I am taking people outside the covenant, cruel, brutal people, and making them the ministers of My sovereignty, for the chastisement of My people, that they may be ultimately saved." The man who began his prophecy by saying that God was doing nothing, ended by singing:

Though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Do not forget the significance of these old-world pictures. Things are different today you say. Only with a superficial difference. At this moment God girds Cyrus though Cyrus does not know Him. The whole philosophy of the government of Jesus over crowned heads, and parliaments of the world, is contained in this Old Testament declaration, "Surely the wrath of men shall praise Thee: The residue of wrath shalt Thou gird upon Thee."

If you take all that away from me, then I am a lost man indeed, without any hope. My hope is not in Parliaments. My hope is in the fact that God reigns, and that His King holds the reins of government. I do not always understand the process; I get so weary of waiting. Oh, feverish heart of mine, be still! One day with Jehovah is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day. Mount up to the mountains, and see the going of God; live in the spaciousness of eternity, and know this, that all hell, and all the devilishness of men, cannot finally defeat the enthroned King. He holds in His own right hand the government of the world. Though the process may seem long, and the conflict may be severe, Christ is reigning and ruling, this anointed and appointed King.

He is King also of merchant princes. Have you ever heard a business man talk about creating wealth? You cannot create wealth; you can amass it. God must ever create wealth. What is the ultimate, final wealth? Money? Surely not! The thing that He creates is wealth. Only that which comes out of life is wealth. A man may reap his fields of golden grain, and garner all the wheat, but he has not made wealth; he has reaped in order to make himself rich, which is quite another matter. It is the King Who creates wealth. If Christ hold in check the resources of His universe for

one year and there is no harvest, then what is the use of money? He is King over all merchant princes, and can beggar them if He will.

Christ is King of science. Let every young Christian hear that word. Never be persuaded for one single moment either by the man who attacks Christianity, or by the man who defends it, into believing that science and religion are out of harmony with each other. Of course we need to be very careful to draw a distinction between scientific facts and scientific hypotheses; and to draw a distinction between Biblical declaration and human interpretation of its meaning. I stand for no man's interpretation of the Bible, not even my own, but I stand for the Bible. I am interested in every hypothesis of science, but I hold in reserve my judgment, and ask for the ascertained fact; and when I find the ascertained fact, and the simple statement of Scripture, I find that they are one. In all the scientific world Christ is King. All scientific discoveries and investigations in modern years have been made possible by the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel. Every discovery is a revelation. You speak to me of the discovery of some force. It was there before you discovered it. Why did we not discover it before? Because the hour had not arrived, and we were not ready for it. Take electricity for example; when the hour arrived the King discovered the secret to man, who forevermore says he discovered it. It was revealed to him rather than discovered by him, in answer to his endeavor. Ask, seek, knock, that is not merely for the Christian man when he is praying in his own inner chamber; it is the law of life. When a man asks, there is the answer; when he seeks, he finds; when he knocks at the door of entrance to hidden secrets, the King discovers them. In all the scientific realm it is by the coming of the Christ that men have been set free for investigation and equipped for investigation. Christ is King in that realm.

Once again, and I need not stay to enlarge upon this: He is today King over all spiritual leaders. Men who lead in spiritual matters, men who help other men to vision, are all men who have kissed the sceptre of Christ, and bent themselves before His Cross.

What is the present expression of this great fact of Christ's Kingship? We thank God for the measure in which His Kingship is acknowledged directly or indirectly in this and every land. We cannot, however, say that the Kingdom has come in England. Where then is its expression to be found? It ought to be found in His Church, for there He is crowned King, there His laws govern, there His commands are obeyed, there His interests form the supreme interest. No man can say that without shame. There is a measure in which it is all true; and the measure in which it is true is the measure in which the world knows something of the Kingship of Christ; but in how much greater degree it ought to be true than it is. I find it almost impossible to rejoice in the expression of the Kingdom when I think of the corporate Church of Christ, for very shame of our failure. Therein is the secret of the unrest and indifference and rebellion of the outside world. The rebellion is against the Church that fails to manifest the Kingship of Jesus. There is no rebellion against the Kingship of Jesus when truly manifest in the Church. We have not realized His Kingship in our corporate capacity. The armies of the Captain of Salvation are engaged in internecine warfare when they ought to be confronting the foe. Yes, we must recognize that the measure in which the world knows anything of the glory of the Kingdom is the measure in which the Church has revealed it.

Whereas criticism of the Church's failure is of very little use save as it may inspire us to face individual realization; I turn to that matter in conclusion. The reign of Jesus can be expressed in

individual life. If life is in His Kingdom, then it expresses His Kingliness. He desires that His Kingdom shall be manifest through His Church and through His people; and He has indicated the line of present expression and the value thereof. Salt is pungent, aseptic; potent for the prevention of the spread of corruption; and it gives goodness its opportunity, wherever it exists. Not only salt, but light; "Ye are the light of the world," said the King to His own disciples in His manifesto; and He explained His own figure. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house." The lamp is individual, local, personal; the illumination of private places by His own children; the city is the Church in its corporate capacity, flashing its light upon the darkness, illuminating the far distant places. These are the ideals of Jesus. The world can only know the King as it sees the Kingdom; and it can only see the Kingdom through those who are in the Kingdom.

I discard all larger applications, and close upon this note.

How far are we exhibiting to the world the meaning of the Kingship of Christ, and so revealing the King Himself? When we pray for the Kingdom, do we mean it? When we say, "Thy Kingdom come," if we simply utter words, allow them to pass our lips, we take the name of God in vain; and our blasphemy is more terrible than the blasphemy of the man in the slum. We can only pray that prayer out of our inner life when the Kingdom has come there. If we say, "Thy Kingdom come," while still the idol holds sway in our lives, and unholy, filthy things, which are an abomination to the King, are retained in our lives, then are we taking His name in vain. God have mercy upon us and deliver us from such blasphemy. Let every man, and woman, at this hour, by solemn affirmation and solemn oath, surrender to the King, saying: "Here, O King, is my life, rule over it, be Master in it, realize Thy purpose therein; take the territory and subdue it to Thy perfect will; and through it show, my children, the servant maids in my house, the men to whom I pay wages, all the people I meet, what is the meaning of Thy great Kingdom." We can be microcosms of the Kingdom, in which its laws, its purposes, and its beauties are seen. God help us so to be.

Matthew 6:24. Righteousness Or Revenue.

Matthew 6:24.

Righteousness Or Revenue.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:24

These words occur in that part of the Manifesto of Jesus in which, after enunciating His laws for the government of human life, both in its human and Divine relationships, He declared the necessity for a super-earthly consciousness in dealing with all the things of the earth.

You will at once recognize that the paragraph which I read to you this evening, beginning with His charge, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," is a paragraph bringing those who listen to the King face to face with the truth upon which He perpetually insisted, that it is impossible to live the earthly life as it ought to be lived unless there is an abiding consciousness of things above and beyond the earth.

In the course of this particular instruction, He warned His disciples and all the subjects of His Kingdom against two perils, those of covetousness and of care; the two opposites, the desire to possess, and the anxiety lest not enough may be possessed to meet the bare necessities of life. His charge against covetousness closed with these words, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." They are emphatic, clear, and final, and constitute one of those brief declarations of which it is almost impossible to miss the meaning, unless we come to the text with prejudice, and desire to read into it things that are not in it, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This evening I propose, first, an examination of these words of Jesus; and secondly, an immediate application of them.

First, then, let us take the statement itself, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Three words arrest our attention; the emphatic words around which all the rest are grouped, and to which the rest do but serve as connecting links to create the declaration. The three words are God, mammon, serve.

Because it is always necessary to get back to the simplest and most elemental things in our study of the words which fell from the lips of Jesus, I am going to ask you to take these words one by one, and examine them, before we consider the declaration. Let us for the moment put the whole declaration out of mind; we will come back to it, for the text is the message of the evening. In order that we may return to the declaration and consider it, let us then look at the words God, mammon, serve. If I am to understand this declaration of Jesus, I must seek to find out what He meant by God, what He meant by mammon, and what He meant when He used the word serve.

This is a very large inquiry, and one to which for a perfect answer it would be necessary to take the whole scheme of His teaching as you find it in the gospel narratives. I suggest to you that we take another method in order to answer the inquiry, which I think will be perfectly fair. In the whole of this Manifesto what conception of God is manifest?

Mark carefully this thing. He neither argued for the existence of God, nor attempted to define the mystery of the Divine nature. So far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, we are left without anything in the nature of definition. He came and exercised His ministry, taking God for granted, never occupying one single half-hour in defending the doctrine of His existence, or in defining the nature of His Being. Therefore, if I would know what He meant by God I must listen for the incidental things, and must pay attention to the underlying conceptions which manifest themselves through those incidental references. In order to find these, I read again this Manifesto of the King, going through it merely to take out of it the direct, immediate references to God which occurred in the course of its deliverance. With what result? The first reference is in the fifth chapter and the eighth verse, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The next is in the ninth verse, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God." The next are in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth verses of the same chapter, "Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet." In the forty-fifth verse, "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." In the forty-eighth verse, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then I read through chapter six and I find these references, "Your Father Who is in heaven," "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Thy Father Who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "Behold the birds of the heaven... your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him." These are the references He made to God, never arguing for His existence, never defining His being, but, incidentally, referring to Him.

From these I discover a God of essential purity, the pure in heart shall see Him; a God Who is a God of peace, the peacemakers are His children; a God Who is a God of authority, supremacy, power; heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool; a God Who governs in all things in the material world, and is in that sense a God of providence, making His sun to shine, sending His rain; a God of perfection, "as your heavenly Father is perfect"; a God rewarding men, recompensing men in the sense in which the great word appears in Hebrews, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him"; a God of infinite resources, caring for the birds, clothing the flowers, giving food and raiment to all who put their trust in Him. This is not exhaustive, it is only suggestive. If we let the sublime and glorious thought of God, which evidently filled the soul of Jesus, break upon our consciousness as the result of these incidental allusions, we shall see what He meant when He said "God."

Turn to the next word, mammon. The word represents wealth, material possessions not necessarily in particular quantity, but the fact of them, material things. The only place in which the word occurs in the New Testament is here in the Manifesto, and once when Christ, speaking of material wealth, said, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it"—the mammon—"shall fail, they"—the friends—"may receive you into the eternal habitations." What then is mammon? What is mammon according to the conception of Jesus? Something about which men should never be anxious. Something which God knows men must have. Something which God promises He will add in the proper measure and proportion to men according to their need, "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Something which a man may so use as to transmute it into infinite possession in the land of life which lies beyond. The word suggests material possessions, nothing inherently evil, and nothing necessarily improper.

I turn to the third word, served, which need not occupy us above one minute to understand. To serve as does a slave, for the word is one that suggests bond slavery. Its root suggestion is, to be bound by. The interrelated word in the text is master. "No man can serve two masters." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is a word which suggests the supremacy of another; the idea is that of being mastered, and of yielding supreme obedience.

My own conviction is that my task is now really accomplished, that every man and woman can come to this simple statement and see its true impact and discover its true meaning, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This is not a comparison of equal forces in opposition to each other. Jesus is not putting God on that side and mammon on the other as necessarily antagonistic. Had this text said, Ye cannot serve God and the devil, it would have been quite another thing. I am not saying that that is not true, but that is not the text. The underlying thought, the suggestiveness, the philosophy of the text is not the same as it would be under such circumstances. Jesus is not putting God and mammon necessarily into opposition. Everything that mammon connotes is in the Kingdom of God. It has its place in the fulfilment of His purpose. He knows man's need of material things. He will add to man the things he needs. Mammon can be the means to the highest ends. It is possible for man by means of mammon to make friends who will receive him into age-abiding habitations. There is nothing inherently evil in it. The tragedy suggested is not that of man standing between two forces that are forever in opposition, choosing which he will serve. Mammon is simply non-moral. Lay your hand upon a coin, I care not what the coin, a sovereign or a copper, and think with me. That coin is non-moral. There is no inherent evil in it. There is no inherent good in it. The questions of right and wrong lie wholly in the spiritual nature of man, and mammon is affected thereby. You can take that coin and put it to such base uses that it will damn you. You can take that coin and put it to such good uses that it will make you richer forever and ever.

Christ does suggest two possibilities which are in opposition. The one, that man can serve mammon. The other, that he can serve God. What is it to serve God? To be His bondsman, yielding all to His absolute supremacy. The abandonment of everything to which the name of God connotes, purity, peace, and all those other facts of which we spoke. That is a possibility for every man and nation. There is the other possibility, to serve mammon. To be the bondsman of material possessions, and every poor man can be that; to yield wholly to the sway of the things which are

only material; the abandonment of the life to husks. Jesus declared the possibilities to be mutually exclusive. To serve God and be His bonds slave. To serve mammon and be its bonds slave. To serve God is to command mammon, not to serve it. To be wholly yielded to God is to be the master of all material things, not to be bound in slavery thereto. To state the case from the other side. To serve mammon—to live saying only, What shall I eat, what shall I drink, wherewithal shall I be clothed, and how shall I possess these things, is to dethrone God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Take two illustrations. First, an individual one. Here is a man standing at the parting of the ways, facing a moral crisis. He knows perfectly well that two ways are stretching out from the point where he stands. He knows perfectly well that he is at a moral crisis in his life. What are these two ways? There is the way of temporal advantage, and there is the way of eternal advantage. These things are not always, necessarily, forever antagonistic to each other, but the hour comes in which they are in opposition. Which will the man do? That is the hour of crisis. We leave him at that point.

Take another illustration, a national one. The hour has come in the history of a nation when two ways lie out before her; one is the way of righteousness. Let us abbreviate the word and make its impact greater, rightness. Let us further abbreviate the word, the way of right. What is the other way? The way of revenue. These two things are not altogether, always antagonistic. They are not necessarily in conflict. There is a way of revenue which is the way of righteousness. There is a way of righteousness which is the way of revenue. But the hour comes in the history of a nation when these two are in opposition. There is the crisis. That is an hour of destiny for the nation because it is the hour of crisis.

Take your two illustrations again and let me say a second thing. We have seen the crisis, mark the choices. I see a man standing at a moral crisis, at a place where two ways meet, the way of temporal advantage and the other way of eternal advantage. I say to that man, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve? I say to the nation, as the nation stands at the parting of the ways, when the hour has come that she must decide between righteousness and revenue, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Which will you serve?

I go back to the individual in the place of crisis, in the place of choice, and I now look for the consummation. He says, "I will seek first the Kingdom of God." Then all the things which are necessary to him will be added unto him. In that hour, when he has made God supreme, he has come to mastery over mammon.

I go back to the nation and watch her as she makes her choice. I inquire what the consummation will be. I see the nation decide that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," and make her choice to do right at all costs, and I see that nation never lacking the revenue necessary for the maintenance of her moral integrity and abiding strength. "All these things shall be added unto you."

You will notice there are no neutral tints in this sermon. I stand here tonight first, always first, so help me God, as a minister of Jesus Christ, but I stand here as an Englishman. It is time that we have done with neutral tints, and that we come back again to the clear dividing lines of Jesus Christ. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." You say, Is there not such a thing as policy? The Church has nothing to do with it. The Church of God must stand in every hour of crisis by the side of the individual man, in the presence of the nation, insisting upon the hard, clear, sharp,

beneficent dividing lines which the Christ of God creates; to the right or to the left, life or death, light or darkness, heaven or hell, for the man or for the nation. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

What is the application? You will find in the pews a pamphlet scattered broadcast. My only regret is that I was unable to secure enough to be sure that every man and woman would go home with that pamphlet in their hands at the close of this service. I want those of you who are interested and can lay hands upon one to take it home and read it. That is the second part of my sermon. I cannot pause to read it, neither is it necessary that I should. It is from the pen of a man for whom we all thank God, Mr. Arnold Foster, one of our missionaries in China.

Tomorrow a conference will meet in Shanghai. How many of us know of it? Does the Christian Church in England know of it? I have seen some incidental references to it, some few things said concerning it in the religious press. I have seen more in what men call the secular press than in the religious. The Church of God is asleep about this matter. What was the genesis of that Conference? The answer is in the pamphlet on pages five and six. There Mr. Arnold Foster tells us that this Conference is the outcome of an approach made by the United States Government. What is the constitution of the Conference? Twelve nations are to be represented, China, Japan, Siam, Persia, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Holland, Portugal and the United States of America. For what are they gathering in Shanghai? The answer is given in the pamphlet. To consider, "The character of the opium habit as a habit. The results of opium on the Chinese as a nation. The volume of the trade, its sources of supply, and the rights of the traders." That is very technical. I do not profess to understand diplomacy or policy. All these things are very necessary I suppose. It is necessary that our Government should send these commissioners. I am profoundly thankful she has consented to do so and that they have gone.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the whole thing is a farce. We know perfectly well what the opium habit has done for China. We know perfectly well that the blame and shame is on us. If there were such a thing as a national conscience that was worth anything, we should blush to remember that America had to ask us if we would not consider this problem.

Well, the Conference is to meet. Its object is thus stated, "Suggestions of measures which the respective governments may adopt for the gradual suppression of opium cultivation, traffic, and use within the Eastern possessions, thus assisting China in her purpose of eradicating the evil from the Empire." I quote from the communication sent out to diplomatic agents by the United States State Department.

England has twice declared, through her elected representatives in Parliament assembled, that the opium traffic is "morally indefensible." Since doing so, within the last two years, the Government has steadily resisted China's own efforts to rid herself of it. It is said that we must proceed slowly, that there is the need of policy. I know nothing about policy. I face the facts. I stand in the presence of China's undoing, and I can hardly speak of this thing as I feel it. I know perfectly well that some people will say, the preacher was in danger of getting excited. I am terribly in danger of it. I can hardly possess my soul. Where attempts have been made in certain quarters, during the last two years by China's government, to put an end to this traffic, our Government, by its agents and representatives, has declared that it cannot be done because of existing treaty rights, and that there must be a gradual ending of the thing. That is where we are.

This is not a question of politics, party politics. By unanimous vote, not merely of men sitting on one side of the House, but of the whole Assembly, England has said through her elected representatives, this thing is morally indefensible: but we are halting. Why? There is only one word. Revenue! India is perpetually quoted if we urge haste. Make your calculations of what it would mean to end the traffic forthwith, and then remember that the amount of money necessary for the doing of it, costly though it would be, falling upon this nation by way of taxation, would not begin to compare with the two hundred and fifty millions spent on the Boer war, and the forty millions we have added to our annual expenditure as the result of it. I am not dealing with the Boer war. It may have been absolutely necessary. It may have been a piece of devilry. I do not know or care anything about that now. The fact is that for purposes of wrong or right we spent that money. Here is a great nation crippled, blighted by a traffic we have forced upon her, and we are now standing at the bar of an awakening world conscience. The world is watching this conflict. The representatives of these other nations, however we may question it or wonder about it, will be principally interested to see what Great Britain suggests or is prepared to do. What a chance we have, not wholly to redeem the past—that we can never do—but to set ourselves right with China. We profess an interest in China. Here is our opportunity. What a chance to show the awakening world conscience that we prefer righteousness to revenue.

Has Christ anything to say to us, to England? Who am I? I am but a voice crying in the wilderness. How can I speak to England, or to governments? I may not be able to do so, but I must speak as I can. I say here tonight solemnly in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the word of Christ to this Government and to this nation at this moment is no other than this, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we serve God we shall prefer righteousness to revenue. If we serve mammon, we shall put revenue before righteousness. If we do that, then it would be for the benefit of the world and all the coming ages that we should cease to talk about God. It is this attempt to persuade ourselves that we can still be Christian and worship God, while we persist in the wrong and shameful thing for the sake of revenue, that is harming the Kingdom of God, and flinging a blight o'er all the earth.

The issue is clear cut and definite. To serve God is to co-operate with Him, and to have done at all costs with the thing that is blighting another people. To serve mammon is eventually to be destroyed by God.

We need to be saved from our national pride, from this actual devilish conviction that neither God nor man can harm us. Already the judgment of the moth and rotteness—to use the language of one of the old Hebrew prophets—is upon us. Already, everywhere there are evidences of weakness. I say again, I have said it in other connections, our safety is not in the two-power standard. I am tired of the monotony of the phrase. Our safety is not in the new territorial army. If we do wrong persistently, we are doomed as the nations of the past have been.

Now is the hour of the Church. She should be gathering everywhere in assembly for prayer and humiliation, and insistence upon this great truth. Half the resolutions passed in our denominational assemblies and Free Church Council Federations are of little importance in the light of this. What we need is to come to the knowledge of the fact that we stand nationally at the parting of the ways.

When I have said all, I have not said half that should be said. When I have said all, the last thing and the best thing is that I should get down, and that you should get down before God, taking the

sin of our nation into our own hearts. We make our boast that we are of Great Britain. Her shame is ours also. Let us get down before Him in humiliation. Let us cry to Him that He will at this moment guide, direct, and deliver us from this shame, to the glory of His name.

Matthew 7:28-29. The Authority Of Jesus.

Matthew 7:28-29.

The Authority Of Jesus.

And it came to pass, when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7:28-29

These words occur at the close of the manifesto of the King. They chronicle for us the fact of the impression produced upon multitudes who had been listening to His teaching of His followers. That which supremely arrested their attention was the note of authority. This becomes the more striking in view of the contrast suggested by the evangelist as he records the fact: "The multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes." Now, as a matter of fact, the most prominent note in the teaching of the scribes was that of authority. As revealed to us in the life of Jesus, these men were argumentative, dogmatic, critical, ready to ostracize and excommunicate all who did not receive their teaching. The people regarded them as the official interpreters of the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers.

Yet, when the gathered multitudes had listened to Jesus unfolding the law of His Kingdom to His disciples, when they had heard Him pass from the winsome tenderness of the opening beatitudes to the solemn severity of the closing warnings, they were astonished at His authority as distinguished from that of their own teachers.

What, then, was the authority of the scribe? It was interpretative, dogmatic, official. None of these words is necessarily indicative of wrong condition. Interpretation is of infinite value; dogmatism has its place, and an official position is not necessarily false. To this kind of authority the people were perfectly accustomed, but having listened to Jesus, they said He taught as having authority, and yet they declared that it was not as their scribes.

His was not the authority of interpretation, although He was the great Interpreter. Neither was it that of dogmatic statement, although He taught without reference to other authorities and without apology. Neither was the sense of authority created in the mind of those who listened that of one who had a right to be heard because of some official position.

It was rather that of the self-evident truth of His teaching combined with a sense of His personality resulting therefrom. To put this in other words, men listened, and then said, "That is true." As they listened, moreover, they were conscious that this man was speaking not in the name of another. He was not exercising the authority of words already spoken. His was the authority of origination, of Kingship, of supremacy, the thrilling, awe-inspiring authority of the final voice.

We are not surprised to read the statement which immediately follows our text: "And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him." Authoritative speech is always

attractive, because man everywhere is conscious of his need in this respect. The authority may be false, but nevertheless it is attractive. Dogmatism always draws. It has been demonstrated that a man may erect a great organization upon the basis of a lie if only he will utter it with authoritative emphasis. We have no right to be angry with people who follow a false authority, for it must be remembered that the desire for government is one of the essentials of human personality. Angry with the false leader we may be, but pity should fill our hearts for those who are deceived. The great cleavage in the Christian Church between Romanism and Protestantism has been created, not by a difference as to the need for authority, but concerning its true seat. The watchword of the Romanist is the authority of the Church. The watchword of the Protestant has been, and I pray it may remain so, the authority of the Scriptures. Man instinctively seeks for authority. This is especially true in the realm of spiritual things, in those matters which affect creed, and conduct, and character. Therefore it is not surprising that the authoritative note in the teachings of Jesus drew the multitudes after Him. What the issues of their following were is not the question under consideration. We must never forget that the element of will enters largely and finally into the question of issue. My ultimate relation is determined not by what is said to me, but by what I answer. For example, the claim of the Bishop of Rome to authority in matters of Christian doctrine does not constitute authority for me. I deny the claim, and therefore am not bound by it. If I am able to establish the claim that the authority of Christ is based on truth, even then how it affects any of us will depend upon one's answer. We may keep His sayings and so build upon the rock, or we may refuse them and erect the superstructure of character upon sand. In this lies the awful majesty of human life. The supreme and overwhelming dignity of human personality is that of will. The majority of the multitudes who were attracted by His authority did not crown Him.

This whole question is a most vital one. I do not desire to discuss it academically, but rather in its living relation to those choices by which character is built.

Thank God, we are emancipated very largely from the intervention of men in the realm of conscience, but we remain profoundly conscious of the need of authority. For the sake of illustration let me speak personally. I cannot allow any man to decide for me what line of action I am to pursue, or what is to be the creed upon which my life is based; yet I do need someone to direct me, someone who shall tell me what for me is really right or wrong. In hours when the consciousness of life's strength is strong upon us we imagine that we are masters of our own thinking, and are free to do exactly as we please. Sooner or later, however, there comes to every soul the crisis when the need is keenly felt for a voice of authority, for one who will lead us into the highest, and the best, and the noblest. In order to the perfecting of life we need guidance in the finer decisions and subtler choices of the will. Any authority, to be finally satisfactory, must satisfy the reason and move the heart, and so energize the will. It is only such authority that will enable us to make our decisions with a sense of perfect rest. The message I bring you is that this need is profoundly important and is met only by the One of Whom the multitudes of olden days declared that "He taught... as having authority." I affirm, therefore, at once, and shall attempt to prove my affirmation by argument and illustration, that there is but one voice which can perfectly answer the clamant cry of our souls. There is but one Lord and Master to Whom we may absolutely submit ourselves, and know that in such submission we tread the pathway leading to the highest realization of the possibilities of our own personality, and that one is Jesus.

So wide is the field of illustration that it will be better for us to confine ourselves to one portion of survey. Therefore I shall draw my illustrations from that Manifesto, the uttering of which created the sense of authority in the minds of those who heard it. We shall follow two lines: first, that of the consideration of the authority of Jesus, and, secondly, that of our relationship thereto.

At first it might seem as though something in the manner of Jesus impressed the crowds with His authority. While admitting that almost certainly there were dignity and authority in the very way in which He spoke, there can be no doubt that this manner was associated in the closest sense with the matter of His speech. It is almost impossible to dissociate these two things in studying His Manifesto. To minimize the value of the teaching is to rob the personality of its dignity. On the other hand, to be convinced of the truth of the teaching is at the same moment to realize the Kingliness of the One Who speaks. We find ourselves constantly contemplating the Teacher as we listen to His teaching. As His words fasten upon my conscience, sometimes scorching, sometimes soothing, I find myself irresistibly appreciating the Kingliness of the Person. Each utterance of His convinces my reason, carries my heart, constrains my will, and I stand in the presence of the one and only royalty, the King of men. The manner and matter alike appeal. The "how" is born of the "what." The manner is created by the matter, and thus the great sense of Mastership breaks upon the soul. In attempting to see the Person through the teaching, nothing is further from my desire than to indulge in any merely imaginative speculation. I do not propose to attempt an ideal portrait of Jesus, but only to discover Him as He is revealed through His teaching. Taking for granted your familiarity with the general scheme of the Manifesto, I submit that it reveals One Who speaks with the authority of perfect knowledge, of pure emotion, of poised volition. His perfect knowledge is manifested in His clear conception concerning God, concerning man, and concerning their interrelationship. I do not mean to say that in this Manifesto final knowledge concerning God is given to us. Such knowledge is not possible to man. My argument is rather that the conceptions of God which underlie appeal to the deepest in man are absolutely true. As the unfolding of law proceeds, God is revealed to the mind as being essentially supreme, relatively interested, and actively reigning. There is no discussion by this Teacher as to the difference or agreement between the doctrines of the transcendence or immanence of God. He speaks familiarly rather than argumentatively. In the appeal it makes to the deepest in us every reference indicates His perfect knowledge. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," and in that word as in a flash of light I find that this Teacher places God in the position of absolute and final supremacy. "Be not anxious," "your... Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." In that sentence, and in the paragraph of teaching connected with it, I learn His estimate of God's interest in all things which He has made. "Seek ye first His Kingdom... and all these things shall be added unto you." And in these words I discover His declaration of the active government of human affairs by God. Thus, listening to His teaching concerning God, I am constrained to say, "He speaks truth." Every view which He sets before me carries conviction to my reason, sways my heart, and woos my will into submission. According to Him, God is supreme, is interested, and reigns.

And yet again, while convinced that this man knows God, I ask, "Does He know man?" And I listen for His estimate of human life. First of all, I discover that He thinks of man as a being in whom the spiritual is supreme. According to Him, the measurements of life are not those of time but of eternity. The deepest consciousness of human nature is not that of the senses but that of the spirit. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth,... but lay up for yourselves treasures in

heaven." According to these words, man is able to possess things in the infinite life that lies beyond the present. Moreover, Jesus' view of man is that it is his nature to be anxious or to seek. Jesus recognizes the restlessness which is the inspiration of endeavor. No word of His treats this as wrong in itself. He corrects the method of its activity. There are things about which man should not be anxious. There are matters in which he may seek. Jesus deprecates the turning of this power to the issue of acquiring that which is sordid and material, and urges that it be exercised toward the realization of all the highest and abiding things. Moreover, He is evidently intimately acquainted with all the facts of human nature. Every beatitude suggests a common human capacity, and as we hear them falling from His lips we know that they make their appeal to the facts and forces which are part of our nature. Thus, by way of His teaching, I find myself in the presence of One who knows God and man.

Moreover, the Manifesto reveals to me His intimate knowledge of the true lines of relationship: the relationship of man to God, the relation of man to man, the relation of the things of time and sense to those of eternity and the spiritual world. Here is a Teacher Who is not an ascetic withdrawing Himself from the thousand and one matters which I must touch every day, but One Who understands me in all these, even to eating and raiment; One, moreover, Who understands the passion of my life for possession, and Who comes into the midst of everything with such light as enables me to see clearly all relationships. Thus I have found through this teaching a Person Whose knowledge is perfect—knowledge of God, of myself, and of all the interests of my life.

But this Teacher is more than One of intellectual accuracy. He is also a Man of pure emotions. His sense of justice is of the keenest. His words are characterized by a fine scorn of imperfection, and yet they thrill with the tone of delicate and exquisite sympathy. He is not a mere man of tears, maudlin in His pity, and unable to help me. Neither is He merely an iron-handed administrator. He is both. The same lips said, "He that looketh on sin with desire hath committed it," and "Your Father knoweth." No tone of mine can give full expression to either of the things in these words. The first scorches and burns. The second has in it the infinite music of the love of God.

And yet once more, through this Manifesto, I discover a Person of perfectly poised volition. For Him it is evident there is one center for all life, and that is the throne of God. His conception of life in all its varied capacities and responsibilities is that it must maintain its relation to that throne. All His decisions are regulated by that central passion of His being.

"Having authority." And it is the authority of One who knows God, knows me, and knows the lines of relationship. It is the authority of pure emotion. I cannot fear and dread Him, though His sense of justice be of the keenest, though His scorn of imperfection be of the finest, for both are atmosphered in a sympathy which is exquisite in its tenderness. It is the authority of a will perfectly poised in the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. Standing in imagination among the multitudes of old, and listening to Him, I am constrained to say, "I have found my King."

And yet, again, let us think of the teaching, for it was this which led to the Person. As we attempt to review in general outline that teaching, let us ask ourselves the simple question, Are these things so? A survey of the Manifesto reveals certain estimates of Jesus. He first of all declares that character is supreme. That is the meaning of the opening of this discourse. He pronounces no blessing on having or doing, but all on being. This is certainly startling and remarkable. Men have never come into perfect agreement with this view—at least, in their active life. We still say,

"Blessed is the man who has" money, property, position. We still say, "Blessed is the man who does." Jesus says, "Blessed is the man who is." According to His estimate, the great man is the man of character rather than the man of property or of activity. Now, whether in active life we yield to this conception or not, I affirm, without fear of contradiction, that we are all convinced that the estimate is true, that the great man is the one who is pure and strong and tender rather than the one who owns anything or even everything. In the presence of that fundamental estimate of the King the heart is convinced.

To take another emphasis, having declared the supremacy of character, Christ proceeded to declare to the men who by yielding to Him had accepted his view of the supremacy of character and of its nature, "Ye are the salt of the earth.... Ye are the light of the world." In these words He affirmed the importance of influence, and revealed His conception of the kind of influence which the world most needs. Salt is pungent and antiseptic, and not always pleasant in the vicinity of a wound, but it saves, it heals, it blesses. Light flashes and flames, and is not always welcome to the man hiding in darkness, but it will help him to find his way out if he desires to come.

Take another emphasis, that on the necessity of law, concerning which He said, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." Do any of us think that He was wrong in this? I will not stay to argue it. Every man's deepest conscience assents to His wisdom. Or, again, mark another emphasis, that which He laid on the matter of the true motive of righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in doing right in order to be well thought of by their fellow men. The motive was bad, as it is not strong enough to ensure righteousness under all circumstances. The righteousness which exceeds is that which acts in response to the throne of God and for the glory of God. When I was a boy I remember writing in my copybook, "Honesty is the best policy." No one questions the truth of that, but the man who is honest only because it is the best policy is at heart a rogue. Again we are compelled to consent to His view as to the motive of righteousness.

Further, He recognizes that there is a place in human life for anxiety, and the recognition appeals to me. It is useless to tell me not to be anxious, that it is wrong to think, and plan, and arrange. The capacity for these things is in my very nature. This King does not forbid them, but brings them into highest use. He says in effect, "Take the capacity, which is restlessness to achieve, and use it, not finally to procure things which pass and perish, however necessary they may be, but rather to put the fire and passion of it into the business of seeking the Kingdom of God." Thus He places anxiety in its right relation to infinite things.

Or to refer again to things already dealt with, His emphasis on the care of God and the true responsibility of man appeals to the deepest within us.

Taking a still more general view of all, we find that this Teacher has a twofold intention. He is seeking by His enunciation of law to realize the glory of God, and this by securing the good of men. Now let us pause a moment and earnestly ask ourselves certain simple questions. Are these conceptions true? Has He said one false thing? Where do we differ from His positions? Where does our criticism commence?

I think I can answer the questions. We begin to criticize by saying, "It is too high. It cannot be obeyed." And at this point I will not argue. All I ask at the moment is, Is it high? Are we prepared to

grant this?

Many years ago a man in Birmingham said to me, "My quarrel with your Christ is that He is not practical." And I said, "Give me an illustration." He replied, "Confucius said to his followers, 'Be just to your enemies.' Christ said, 'Love your enemies.' Confucius is practical. I can be just to my enemy, but I cannot love him." That was a criticism honest and straightforward. I said to my friend, "But suppose you could be brought to love your enemy, what then?" He answered, "Then you would solve all the problems of human nature." That is all I ask. Is this ideal high? Is it noble? Does it at least command your admiration? Do you recognize its tone of authority? The multitude of Jesus' own day passed from the mountain impressed with the authority of His teaching. "He taught as having authority, and not as their scribes." The scribes dogmatically interpret authority, but Jesus has authority.

Then it would seem as though there were no more for the preacher to say. The issue is so evident. Yet here begins his most solemn and tremendous work. What are we going to do? There is really only one thing to do, and that is to be true to conviction. There is only one honest attitude in the presence of established authority, and that is obedience. And yet, here is the realm of uncertainty. The relation between conviction and issue is dependent upon that most awe-inspiring power of human personality, the power of choice.

Therefore, in conclusion, let me say three things. First, a word concerning the logical relation between conviction and conduct. That may be expressed in one word—submission. If there is authority in this teaching of Jesus, when the logical issue is that I submit. Submission may be explained simply as the crowning of the Person and consequent obedience to His teaching. But there is a possible alternative. This also may be stated in one word—rebellion. Rebellion against the truth of which the intellect is convinced—that, namely, of the authority of His teaching and the consequent supremacy of the Teacher—must mean submission to the base, surrender to the low, which, in turn, means ultimate degradation. Mark the fact carefully. This high truth stands before you, claiming the consent of your inner consciousness. That you have granted. You have said, "Yes, that is the ideal, that is the Teacher." Now, if, after having given such intellectual consent, you turn your back on Him and choose to disobey His teaching, by such action you submit yourself to that which is low, to that which is a lie, to that which will inevitably degrade. That is the appalling alternative. If we could but see this hour as God sees it, then we should see how, within the next few minutes, crowds of men and women, yea, all of us, will pass into close personal contact with the Teacher, and in that contact shall crown Him, and so find our feet set upon the highway which leads to the realization of life at its best; or, rejecting Him, shall hand over our lives with all their capacities to the low, the mean, the ignoble. There is no middle course for anyone who has stood in the presence of the King.

Let us follow this thought of the issue a little further. What follows submission? Inevitable conformity to the likeness of that to which we submit. Obey the truth and the truth will make you free. Crown the high ideal and it will transform you into its own nature. What is that? Heaven. Where? Here, and forever. On the other hand, rebel against conviction, deliberately refuse to crown the Christ, decline to submit to the true. What then? Instead of conformity, disparity, difference. Instead of growing likeness to Him, increasing dissimilarity, drifting further and further from truth, and what is that? Hell. Where? Here, and forever. You make your own choice. God

grant you may choose aright.

A final word. Someone in this audience is saying, "I will submit." Such decision immediately brings the one making it into a new consciousness of sin and failure, a consciousness more profound and overwhelming than it has ever been before. Consent to the truth of what Jesus utters and abandonment to its claims is always followed by a keen sense of past sin and present inability. I have often said, and sometimes have been misunderstood, that having been brought up in a godly home, and saved thereby from many of the vulgar forms of sin into which others who have lacked my privilege have fallen, I never trembled in the presence of Mount Sinai. I always feel the profoundest sympathy with the young man who looked into the face of Jesus, and said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But while the majestic mountain of the ancient law never filled me with trembling, when I came to the clear shining of the ethic of Jesus, and stood in the presence of the rare and radiant loveliness of His perfect humanity, then I cried, "I am unclean, a sinner before God." Such is the experience of any soul honestly submitting to Him. And more, sin is not merely a pollution, it is a paralysis. I am not only defiled, but weakened. It is not merely, and not principally, that I cannot wash out the stain; it is that "when I would do good, evil is present with me" as a poison, as a disability. In the presence of these things, what are we to do? The acceptance of the ideal of truth never enables a man to realize it in experience.

Thank God, when the King had ended His Manifesto He had not finished His work. He went forward until He hung on the cross, and in the stupendous and unfathomable mystery of that darkness bore our sins in His body on the tree. Yet more, He returned from among the dead, victorious over all the forces which are against us, and having won out of death a life which He communicates to all such as put their trust in Him.

Now, as I come to the wicket gate to enter the Kingdom in obedience to the call of the King's authoritative voice, He first gives me pardon for my sin upon the basis of infinite justice, but He gives me infinitely more. He gives me His own life as the dynamic which shall work to the realization of His ideal. Trust Him as the Saviour, crown Him as the King, and you will find, not only the quiet rest of the reign of truth, but the infinite ability of the communication of power.

Matthew 8:9. Submission And Responsibility.

Matthew 8:9.

Submission And Responsibility.

I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.

Matthew 8:9

All the scenes of New Testament history lie in the atmosphere of Roman government. Its earliest stories are connected with the decree that went forth from Caesar Augustus that the world should be taxed. The last definitely historical picture that it presents is that of a notable prisoner, at large in his own house in the imperial city. As we read we grow familiar with Roman armies, with cohorts, legions, and bands; with captains, centurions, and soldiers. We meet with seven centurions. The first one appears in the passage from which my text is taken. He came to Jesus about his servant who was sick; the next one we see at the close of the Gospel narrative, in charge of the crucifixion of Christ; then in the book of Acts we find Cornelius, a devout man, the first Gentile believer to be baptized by the Hebrew apostle; then a centurion placing bonds upon Paul, and, as Paul objects, immediately seeking the advice of his superior officer; then two centurions taking Paul to Felix and protecting him from the threatened hostility of the crowd; then one who took charge of Paul and gave him great indulgence by the direction of Felix; until we come to the last, Julius, who was Paul's custodian on his voyage, and who became interested in Paul, so much so that he saved him from death at the hands of the soldiers in the hour of threatened shipwreck. In all these centurions there is something to admire; in some of them much to admire; and in one of them at least everything to admire. The three first mentioned stand out upon the page of the New Testament, and are remarkable in many ways. This one came to seek the aid of Christ for his slave, and uttered the remarkable words of my text. At the crucifixion another centurion watched the dying of the Man of Nazareth, and so keen and accurate was his observation that he said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Of Cornelius the highest things are written.

How is this excellence to be accounted for? If I were to declare that the military system accounted for it, I am inclined at once to say that would be too broad a statement, yet there is a sense in which it is true. I want to discover that sense, and to make it the method of my appeal to the young manhood of this congregation, to whom this message is to be particularly delivered. The end of the life of the soldier is not in view. I am not dealing with that. Whether that end be war, or whether it be that for which war is waged, I am not discussing that question at all at the present moment. It may be that if I were I should arouse the hostility of some of you, or, rather, I should not find you in perfect agreement with my own standpoint. I think there is a wonderful amount of insight in words which occur in The Comments of Bagshot, "There is no peace at any price party. There are only various parties which disapprove of each other's wars." I was recently reminded that so eminent a

theologian as the late Dr. Dale once said, "I am for peace at any price, even at the price of war if necessary." I am not discussing that. I am attempting to bring you to a consideration, not of the end of the soldier's life, whether that end be war, or the reason for which war is waged; but of the method of the soldier's life. In understanding that method we shall discover why it is that these men of the old Roman armies had an excellence that attracts us.

That method is declared clearly and simply and inclusively in the words that the centurion uttered to Jesus, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is a philosophy of life. I wonder if he had ever said that before. I think not. I am inclined to think that it was a sudden expression of a subconscious philosophy. Remember, while he spoke in the first person singular, and while the philosophy was stated in the terms of experience and not in the terms of theory, this declaration was drawn from him by what he saw in Jesus. With an accuracy that should make us very thankful, the revisers have restored to the text a little word omitted in the Authorized Version, "also." You can drop the word "also" and you still have the philosophy, you still have the experience. "I am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." That is my whole text, and yet it is not my whole text. It is the "also" that attracted me to the text. It is the supreme word. The centurion implied that Christ was a Man under authority and that He had those under Him. He looked at Christ and he saw in Him the fulfilment of the highest ideal of life as He knew it, and so Christ compelled from him the confession of the level upon which he was living his own life, the confession which revealed the philosophy of his life, which I think he had never formulated before.

I shall ask you, first of all, to consider this philosophy of life, "I am a man under authority," that is submission: "having under myself soldiers"; that is responsibility. I am a man under authority: I have soldiers under me. I know how to bend the knee to a throne: I am able, to exercise the power of a throne. I have kissed a scepter: I sway a scepter. I am responsible to a throne: I therefore am able to be responsible for those who are beneath me. I am a man under authority, submission. I have soldiers under me, responsibility. That is the highest philosophy of life that can be stated for a young man.

Let us attempt to see a little more clearly what it really means. So far, then, as the method of the life of the centurion is concerned, I borrow the career of such a one as the ideal for young men. First consider the view of life suggested, and then see how the Christian life realizes that ideal at its highest and best.

What is this view of life suggested? This man first said, "I am a man under authority." To illuminate this I will take three simple prepositions: "to," "of," "for." "I am... under authority." That is submission to, submission of, and submission for.

Submission to. The Roman soldier was submitted to the cause of the Roman Empire, but for the Roman soldier the cause of the Roman Empire was personified in the emperor. The Roman soldier was under authority, and so was submitted to a cause personified in a person. You need not stay with the Roman soldier. It is true all through the ages. For king and country is the motto of the soldier today. The king is the personification to the soldier of the larger purpose and issue. The soldier is submitted to the cause of his country as it is personified for him in the king.

Submission of. The submission means submission of the central will. Upon enlisting in the army of the emperor the Roman soldier surrendered his will, his property, his relations. From the moment

when he enlisted he had no will of his own, no possession of his own, no property of any kind. He could not hold property. Neither could he speak of his relations as any longer being his. He gave up everything. The soldier submitted to a central authority has submitted his will and everything else. His time, his habit of dress, his choice of foods, and all his ability are handed over.

Submission for. The Roman soldier was submitted for fitting himself for his work. That meant drill. He was submitted also for his work. That meant war.

The centurion was submitted to the service of his country personified in a sovereign; he had made submission of his will and of all he had: he had submitted for the purpose of his own perfecting, for the accomplishment of the work to which he was called.

Turn to the other side of this: responsibility, "having under myself soldiers." I want you very patiently to follow me as I say that the responsibility of the centurion was connected intimately with his submission. He was responsible for the soldiers under him, to the state to which he himself was submitted. He must identify himself with them. He must exert an influence upon them. He must insist upon certain things in their lives. All this for the sake of the state. The state looked to him, held him responsible, for all those who were placed under him, that he should recommend it, utter its requirements, and insist upon the realization of its purpose. So there was the most intimate connection between the soldier's submission and his responsibility. "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." The first was an upward look to the throne to which he bent; the second was a downward look to the territory over which he reigned. The upward look was in order that he might realize the territory over which he reigned. The downward look was in order that he might satisfy the throne under which he served. In order that we may understand this great philosophy of life, I am more anxious that we should realize the connection between these two things than that we should see either in isolation. This is not a picture of the two sides of a man's nature, the one side subservient to authority, and the other getting satisfaction out of the fact that he was able to make others bend the knee to him. Here is a man who says, For seven years I have been serving a master, now it is my turn. I am going to make someone else serve me! Or here is a man who says, In a certain department of my life I have obeyed; now I am going to compensate myself for the irksomeness of that by making someone else obey me. That is not the picture presented by these words. Let us be careful to draw the distinction. The unifying conception of life to the centurion was the Roman Empire. He said, I am under the empire and of the empire. I submit to its authority and I represent its authority. I look up to a throne in order that I may represent the will of the throne to those over whom I reign. I look down upon the territory over which I reign in order that I may realize in it the will and purpose of the throne to which I am submitted. This is a perfect harmony and interrelationship. There can be no right and perfect government of the territory over which I reign, save as I am in right relationship to the throne over me. The reason why I should perfectly submit to the throne over me is that I may exert its influence among those who are placed under me. I am under authority, submission; I have soldiers under me, responsibility. The responsibility of reigning is intimately connected with submission.

That is a revelation of perfect life. Before I turn to show that the Christian ideal realizes that, do you see the importance of it? Let me get my sermon out of shape and take the application now. To what throne is your life submitted? What territory are you reigning over? Have you found a throne to which you bend the knee? Have you found a kingdom over which you reign? That is the

meaning of human life. Every man is intended to reign, but before a man can reign he must submit. Every man here has found a throne. Every man has found a territory over which he is reigning. You cannot escape it. These are the deep things of human nature which no man can elude. The trouble is that men submit to the wrong throne, and therefore their reign is that of despotism, destruction, death. The influence you are exerting within the circle of your own manhood, the circle of your friends, in your home, your city, is an influence created by your relation to a throne. If the throne before which you bow is the throne of the world, or the throne of the flesh, or the throne of the devil—and these are not separate thrones, that is the trinity of evil—if you bow before that throne, you are still reigning, but it is a reign of devastation, a reign of death. You cannot escape submission to a throne. You cannot escape the exercise of influence, of power. Whether the power be constructive or destructive, for life or death, for lifting or flinging down, depends upon the throne to which you bow the knee. Every man can say, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." I am not here to press young men to go forth and find a kingdom. I am here to press them to see to it that they find the right authority, and are exercising the right influence in the place where they reign.

That leads me to the second point. The Christian revelation most perfectly realizes this ideal of life. That ideal was perfectly presented as a pattern in Christ. That is what this man meant, though I do not imagine, or suggest, that he perfectly understood it. Thou art a Man under authority, and Thou hast soldiers under Thee. That is the story of Christ's life. Jesus of Nazareth might have said with perfect accuracy and with far fuller, richer, more spacious meaning than did the centurion, "I am a Man under authority, having under Myself soldiers." Jesus Christ was under authority. He was under authority to the state, the great universal empire of God, which He expressed in that term which we are still using and are only beginning to understand the meaning of, "The Kingdom of God"; and that for Him was personified in God Himself, Who was King, Ruler, Sovereign over the whole empire. He was a Man under authority. "I do nothing of Myself... I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." It was a life under perfect and absolute authority. It was a life of perfect and absolute submission. It was a life, therefore, responsible, "having under Myself soldiers," all the forces of the Kingdom of God over which He was appointed to reign. He was under authority and exercised authority. The authority He exercised over the things under Him was the authority to which He submitted, as He yielded Himself wholly to the will of God. The authority of love, light, love, the authority of pure, high, noble ideals; to these things He yielded Himself, for they were in the will of God. These are the very elements of the empire of God. Wherever He exercised His authority it was toward the realization of these things in human life.

Christ did not merely reveal to us the fulness of this ideal as a pattern; He came to call us into submission to it, and to communicate to us the power that would enable us to fulfill that in our life which is essential to it on the highest level and in all fulness and breadth.

To what, then, does Christianity call every young man? To submission and responsibility! Submission to what? To the Kingdom of God personified in Christ as King. I call you in the name of this Christ to submission to the Kingdom of God. I pause because I am so conscious that the familiarity of these terms robs them of their spaciousness and grandeur and beauty. Young men are constantly telling me they are looking for a career. Here is an all-inclusive one, passion for the Kingdom of God. All honor to the soldier who really and truly and deeply loves his country. I ask

you to make the master passion of your life not this country of Britain, but the Kingdom of God. If the idea be too spacious, too gracious, as indeed it is, then focus it, localize it, personify it, only remember when you have personified it that that to which you come, or He to Whom you come, does stand for the larger purpose, the Kingdom of God. We call you for this purpose to the Christ, for submission to Him is submission to the Kingdom of God. Come, not merely that you may kiss a scepter and be under a King, but that you may make the Kingdom of God the goal of your endeavor, the passion of your life, that to which you devote all your energies. Here is the true throne. Here is the true state. Here is the true empire to which men should give themselves. The man who can go forth from this chapel saying, I am a man under authority to God's King, and God's Kingdom, is fulfilling the essential necessity of his life on the highest level and in the fullest, best sphere.

Remember that if submission means submission to the Kingdom of God it means submission of the will, and as the Roman centurion in the olden days, having handed over his will and choice, ceased to have property, or time, or relations of his own, so must the soldier who submits to the Christ. If you say I am carrying my figure too far, listen to the King Himself. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." This does not mean that the man giving himself to the Christ is to have no love for father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister; but that forever, in every hour of crisis, in every commonplace, in all circumstances, if there should arise conflict between the interest of Christ and that of father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister, Christ must have the pre-eminence, and the Kingdom of God must be first. So that "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" is the awful and yet necessary word of the King as men come into contact with Him and desire to submit themselves to Him. Sometimes I think that we lose something of power and force by stating the case in all its widest reaches and its most spacious applications. It means that the soldier is to have no habit unremitted to Christ for approval or disapproval, no hour of his time which he calls his own, no interest in life which is to him vacation from vocation, no single detail of life over which Christ is not supreme, which does not enter into the supreme master passion of bringing in the Kingdom of God. That is the life of the Christian. I know there are a great many people who call themselves Christians who have never come within a million miles of realizing this. Are they Christians? I suggest the question and leave them to their own conscience and the clear teaching of Christ for decision. "Under authority." You have played at life long enough. Begin to live by giving yourself in tremendous submission to this King.

When you have done that, what then? Begin to reign in power. Begin to realize your kingdom. Where shall I begin? says some young man. Give me my work. I give it to you now. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." That is in Proverbs. I am not going to preach from that text apart from the New Testament. I long ago gave up preaching the doctrine of self-control. I never say to a man, Control yourself. "The fruit of the Spirit is... self-control." You begin to control yourself only as you hand yourself to your King. That is the first empire over which man is called to reign. All the forces and conditions of his own life, the desires and aspirations; the movements of intellect, emotion, and will. I can reign only when I am under authority, when I have kissed the scepter. Enlarge it without my staying to illustrate it. Your home, your class in the Sunday school if

you are a teacher. This pulpit is a throne of power for me if I am under authority. If I am not, then it is an awful opportunity for wrecking human life. I am not talking idly. These are the deep and awful and heartbreaking convictions of any man who knows what it is to be called to preach the Word of God. Yet blessed be God, as the apostle declares, the true minister is "led in triumph." If I would reign in this pulpit and bring a territory into subjection to the vast empire of God's Kingdom, then the measure in which I submit is the measure in which I command, and reign in my own life of service. So also in your city, in your country, everywhere. First under authority, and then reigning in power.

I go back to the application which I have already used in the middle of my sermon. Under what authority are you living? What are the sanctions of your life? To what do you remit everything? The lusts and desires of your own life? Is that so? Under what authority are you living? Tell me that, and I will tell you the effect you are producing upon the territory over which you are reigning. The authority to which a man submits is the authority he exercises. Let us break this up. Are you submitting your life to the authority of the flesh, answering its clamant cry, yielding all the forces of your being to whatever your flesh life asks and demands? Then you are exerting the authority of the throne to which you bow. You are spreading a poison and paralysis wherever you go for no man liveth unto himself. Are you bending the knee to the world with its maxims and methods? Then you are exerting the influence of the world in the circle of your friendship, and your friend is becoming worldly because you are reigning over him in the power of the world to which you bow the knee. Are you serving the devil, the devil who was a liar from the beginning and a murderer, the devil who is the prince of compromise and of subtlety? Then you are exerting the influence of the devil wherever you go. Are you serving that great Kingdom of God by crowning Christ? Then you are exerting the influence of that Kingdom and that Christ wherever you go. That which you are under, you transplant into that which you are over. That has a wider application than to young men. Fathers and mothers, that is true of you. It is not the precept which you utter, it is the throne before which you bend that you will see reproduced in your children. It is true everywhere. Let me cease my illustrations and leave the vast, awful sublime truth upon your conscience, and turn to my final word to young men.

Man, you must fulfil your manhood by bowing the knee to a throne and reigning. To what throne are you bowing? That life of yours, the history and mystery of which I know not, nor could I know if you attempted to tell me, the history and mystery of which you know not, for there are vaster reaches in your manhood than you have ever discovered. God only knows it all. Take that life and hand it over to that One Who out of the eternal ages came into the little spaces of passing time that evil men might know the meaning of life in its richest fulfilment. Hand your life to Him and He will—this is the gospel, the evangel that comes like music to the heart of the man who has failed—He will "restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." He will give you back the things you have missed. Though the vessel be marred in the hand of the Potter, He will make it again, another vessel as seemeth good to Him. If you, like Jonah, in unutterable folly have paid your fare to try to escape Jehovah, and have gone to Tarshish, if only you will get back, the Word of the Lord will come to you the second time, and He will establish His Kingdom in your life and then you may begin to reign in life. Is there anything you more desire than a sense of power? Is there anything any man who is a man at all desires more than to be able to say, "I can"? It is the next great word to "I am" on the level of human life. "I am" is the first expression of human

personality. If the next be "I think" the outcome is "I can." Do you want to say it? Oh, the scores of men who say to me, "I cannot." They are here tonight. You are here tonight, my brother, you are saying, "I cannot, God knows I would if I could, but I cannot do it. I see the vision, but I have no virtue to win the victory." No, you have bent to the wrong throne, and the influence resulting from your bending to the wrong throne has been destruction of the territory over which you reign, for, remember, your paralysis is your own doing, your weakness is the result of your own yielding. I pray you turn the deafest of deaf ears to the false and damnable teaching which declares that you cannot help your sin. You can help your sinning. Sin is the rebellion of your will, and it is rebellion against God. You know that you need not have crossed the threshold of the house of sin, or put your life at the disposal of evil things; but you have done it and now you cannot help it, you are poisoned, paralyzed, spoiled. You are saying, I cannot, and you have ruined your kingdom because the throne to which you bent was the wrong throne.

There is a "trysting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet," and the trysting place is the Cross where the Christ, Who came to give the pattern, died that you might know how in the mystery of pain God is able to communicate power that makes life over again. If you have been the slave of the awful evil things to which you have yielded yourself, the chain can be broken now. God help you to find the right authority and bow under it, and so find your kingdom and reign over it.

Matthew 9:2; 9:22; 14:27; John 16:33; Acts 23:11. Christ's Call To Courage

Matthew 9:2; 9:22; 14:27; John 16:33; Acts 23:11.

Christ's Call To Courage

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven.

Matthew 9:2

Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath made thee whole.

Matthew 9:22

Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

Matthew 14:27

Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Acts 23:11

Five familiar pictures of the New Testament are recalled by the reading of these words.

The first is that of a man sick of the palsy, carried by his friends into the presence of Jesus; physically trembling and troubled in heart by the consciousness of sin.

The second is that of a woman struggling to reach Him through the movement and pressure of a jostling crowd, troubled by all the suffering of twelve years, twelve years of physical pain, of divorce, of ostracism, of excommunication.

The third is that of a company of disciples in the midst of difficulties which had arisen in the path of duty. The Master had bid them set the prow of their vessel toward the farther shore, and the wind was contrary, and the waves were boisterous. The picture is that of these men suddenly confronted by a new and nameless terror, a specter of the night, moving over the waters toward them.

The fourth is that of a company of disciples face to face with three facts: first, the fact of their Lord's approaching departure by some way they could not understand, and to some bourn about which they knew nothing; second, the fact of the antagonism of the world to Him and to His ideals, and consequently to them also, if in His absence they remained loyal to Him; and, third, the fact of their own appalling weakness. Or briefly, it is a picture of a company of men troubled by the fear of

the future.

The last picture is that of a servant of God in prison, rescued from the mob yesterday, threatened by a new conspiracy tomorrow, troubled by the force of circumstances which hindered the progress of his service.

The central fact in these pictures is not that of the troubled souls. The central fact is that of Christ, and of what He said to these people. To the man sick of the palsy He said, "Be of good cheer, child." To the woman broken, bruised, weary, emaciated, and forlorn, He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter." To the disciples in the midst of the storm, terrified by the approach of the phantom, and to the disciples yet more afraid of the future without Him, He said, "Be ye of good cheer." To the man in the prison, hindered in high and holy service, He said, "Be of good cheer." In each case He challenged fear, and uttered a call to courage, and gave His reason for doing so.

These incidents illustrate and illuminate the whole realm of discipleship, and I bring them to you this morning in order, as I may be helped by the Spirit of God, to fasten your attention upon that challenge of Jesus. I bring them to you as a New Year's greeting, not as my word to you, for that would be very worthless, but as the Master's word to you. "Be of good cheer."

Let us then consider, first, the call of Christ itself; second, the arguments of Christ as we find them scattered over these stories; and, finally, let us inquire what is the way of obedience to this call of our Lord.

First, then, the call of Jesus, "Be of good cheer." Now I take up my New Testament, and I find that these are the only occasions on which we have any record of His using these expressions, and no one else is ever recorded to have used exactly the same expression in addressing men. The word is almost peculiar to Christ. It emerges in the writings of Paul in certain applications; but this personal, direct, immediate call was peculiarly that of the Lord Himself. It is therefore important that we should, with all simplicity, inquire what He really did say. In the Revised New Testament from which I read, you will notice that there is uniformity of translation, that on each occasion we have these words, "Be of good cheer." In the Authorized the translation is, "Be of good cheer" in each case except one; in the record of His speech to the woman, the 1611 translators rendered Jesus' words thus, "Be of good comfort."

Now, without any question, there is a fault in this translation, "Be of good cheer." There is something very bright about it, very hopeful about it; and before I am through I shall show you that I have robbed you of nothing by saying that it is not exactly what our Lord said. Indeed, so to translate it is to miss the deepest value of the word. "Be of good cheer" suggests the result rather than the cause. The actual word of which our Lord made use described the cause, and left us to discover the result. There is another word in the New Testament for cheerfulness. When Paul wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is... joy," the thought is that of cheerfulness. But that is not the word here. Cheerfulness will be the outcome of what Christ commanded, but He did not command men to be cheerful. He never dealt with the surface of things. He never told men to smile when they were in agony. He dealt with the underlying agony, and thus called men into such attitude of soul as made cheerfulness possible.

The word employed indicates courage rather than cheerfulness, and, moreover, courage subjectively as a feeling rather than objectively as an enterprise; "Be of good courage" rather than,

Do a courageous thing. Our Lord did not say, Forget your trouble by doing something. That may help for the moment, but the agony surges back when the activity ceases. The word that our Lord addressed to the man, to the woman, to the disciples, to the imprisoned apostle, was a word suggestive of that strength of heart which is at once the inspiration of daring and the reason of cheerfulness. The call, then, is to freedom from fear, and to an absolute assurance of safety.

Passing from that attempt to consider the actual meaning of the Lord's word, let us glance at these pictures once more, in order to discover what Christ meant in each case.

There is a conscience troubled by sin; to that man He said, Do not have any fear, be of good courage.

There is a woman's heart trembling through long suffering, which has become destitution; to that woman He said, Have no fear; be full of courage; there is nothing to be afraid of.

Look carefully at those men on board the ship. What was their condition? Intelligence menaced by mystery. I wish I could bring you into real sympathy with those fishermen of blue Galilee. They were men accustomed to the storms that suddenly swept its waters, men who were not often baffled, even when the sea was tossed into fury by Euroclydon. Their chief trouble that night was not that of the storm, but that of the specter moving across the waters. They did not know what it was. Do not, in your superior wisdom, say they ought not to have been frightened at ghosts. That is what you are frightened at this morning! What you are fearing you will find presently to be the Lord Himself! So do not be angry with these men. Try to sympathize with them. Their intelligence was menaced by mystery; and when He came to them, He said, Do not be afraid. There is nothing to be afraid of. Banish panic, establish peace, be of good courage.

Then look at the group of men in that upper room. They were men full of a spiritual aspiration, but threatened by opposition, not merely the opposition of men who were angry with Jesus, and about to crucify Him; but that most subtle and forceful opposition of worldliness in the true and New Testament sense of that word, those materialized ideals for which the enemies of Christ stood, and which had gained so strong a hold upon the heart of the multitudes. That little group of men in the upper room saw Him going. They had been able to believe while He was with them. They had been able, with Him, even through tremblingly, to believe in His philosophy when He said, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." But He was going. How were they to be true to that high spiritual ideal, with all the forces of the cosmos as men were interpreting it, against them. To them, thus filled with foreboding, He said, "Be of good courage," there is nothing to fear. Do not be afraid.

And then we come to the picture of Paul, the man of high purpose, and unswerving devotion, who had said, "I must also see Rome," knowing that Rome was the very center of the world, the strategic point from which to proclaim the Gospel and send the messengers of the King along all her highways through the nations. Everything appeared as though he were not going to reach Rome. He was in Jerusalem, and there he had been mobbed, and barely rescued yesterday; and conspirators were planning to murder him to-mor-row. Paul was not grieved by reason of his own imprisonment. He was troubled because he was an ambassador in bonds, and his high purpose was being hindered. It was night, when suddenly the Lord spoke to him; and said, "Be of good courage," Paul, there is nothing to be afraid of, neither the mob of yesterday, nor the conspiracy of

tomorrow; be of good courage.

Now, I will say the thing some of you are thinking. That is all very well; but if Christ said only that, other men have said it, and it does not help us far. It does mean a little when I am troubled and perplexed, and harassed by fear, and my heart is trembling, to have someone bid me be of good courage. I like the man who comes and says to me, Put on a brave face! I think he helps me for perhaps half an hour. I would rather have such a man than the one who comes and says, I will tell you how you got into this trouble. Put that man out!

But the man who can say to me only, Be of good courage, is not the man I want on this first Sunday as I lift my eyes and try to peer into the mists that lie along the valleys, and wonder what forces are marshaled against my soul. If Christ is going to help me He must give me a reason for courage.

And so I pass to what I think is the central value of the meditation, the arguments of Christ in favor of courage as I find them scattered through these stories.

Inclusively, Christ had one argument with which to confront fear—Himself. There is nothing else to say. To every force which challenges the soul of man He opposes Himself.

In no case does He minimize the antagonistic forces. That is not merely a passing word. That is something to be thought of and remembered. To the man sick of the palsy He did not say, You are quite mistaken about this palsy. You have none. He did not say, There is no such thing as sin, cheer up. Is there anything more deceitful, dastardly, devilish, than to tell that to a man who knows what sin is in his own blood and life? That is not the word of Christ. He was not minimizing the fact of sin; He did not tell the woman who for twelve years had been in the grip of an infirmity that there was no reality in her suffering, that if she would make up her mind there was nothing the matter, there was nothing the matter. Oh, these utterly foolish, devilish things by which men are being deceived. Jesus did not laugh at His disciples because they were afraid of a ghost. He did not even rebuke them for that fear. He did not tell the men in the upper room that there was nothing in the force of the world as against them. He knew its force, He knew its lure, its subtlety, its insidiousness. He did not tell Paul that the opposition through which he had come was nothing. Christ did not, and does not, minimize the reality of the antagonistic forces which await us and confront us. No, what He did in each case was to place Himself between the assaulted soul and the assaulting foe.

Now let us again pass over our stories. He said to the man sick of the palsy, "Thy sins are forgiven." The rulers immediately objected: "This man blasphemeth.... Who can forgive sins but One, even God?" To this objection the Lord replied, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house; and immediately he took up his bed, and departed."

That action on the part of the man was the demonstration of the fact that Christ had dealt with the principle of evil out of which the physical limitation had sprung, that when He said, "Thy sins are forgiven," He had spoken not merely a word of judicial authority but a word of redeeming power. He stood between the sins that assaulted the soul of the man—and righteously assaulted his soul,

for had he not been guilty of them?—and the man himself; and therefore He was able to speak the infinite and abiding and perpetual mysterious word of Christianity, the word of forgiveness, the authority and power of which was demonstrated by the new power that appeared in the life of the man.

To the woman He said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," and before He had said it she was healed. How was she healed? I cannot paint pictures, but there are some I would like to paint, and this is one. Jesus was walking along, with crowds jostling Him; just ahead of Him was Jairus, eager if possible to hasten Him to the house where his little girl lay dying, when, somehow edging her way through the crowd, the woman touched—a better word would be "clutched"—His garment with the grasp of the last, despairing agony of a needy soul. Jesus immediately turned round, "Who touched Me?" His disciples reminded Him that multitudes were thronging Him, and pressing Him; but He said, Someone has touched Me, for I perceive that dynamite has gone out of Me. That was the argument of His call, Be of good cheer. His virtue came between her and the assaults of her limitation and pain, canceled them, banished them, lifted her back to life and joy. Daughter, be of good cheer, be of good courage, by My virtue thy need is supplied.

I look at the men as they crossed the sea, and with terror on their faces gazed on the strange, mysterious phantom moving slowly and yet surely toward them over the storm-tossed waters. Christ challenged that fear in the words, "Be of good cheer; it is I." If I but knew how to say that, I need say no more. "It," phantom, ghost, terror, "is I." He did not say to them, Never mind, you do not understand it, it will pass presently, and you will forget all about it. No, out of the heart of the infinite mystery He spoke. That is a parable in itself as well as a miracle.

To the men in the upper room, afraid of the forces of the world that would be against them, He said, "Be of good cheer," and His argument for courage was expressed in the words, "I have overcome the world." Over those very forces which they feared He had been victorious through three and thirty years of life; and in His Cross and in His resurrection He perfected His conquest by the reclamation of the cosmos, and the reintroduction of regenerate men to it as having dominion over it instead of being enslaved by it. In fellowship with Him in overcoming life, men find the very cosmos which man's abuse had turned into an enemy, becoming God's minister of light and healing and help and blessing, cooperating with God in all high and holy purposes and enterprise. This, then, was His argument: I have overcome, I have remastered, I have recaptured the very cosmos. Do not be afraid of it. Find in it, in fellowship with Me, that which shall minister to all your need.

And, finally, in the quietness and silence of the prison He stood between His servant and the brutality of the mob and the subtlety of the conspirators, and Himself was the argument for courage. No longer present among His people in bodily form, He appeared to this man as to one born out of due time in a great crisis of need, when the heart was disappointed because service was hindered, and He said, "As thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome," and thus He was the argument for courage, the inspiration of cheerfulness.

I think that after that Paul lay down in the prison and had a wonderfully restful sleep till the morning. Be of good courage!

If you will take those stories and go through them again in some half hour when you are alone, I think you will find that there is at least a suggestion of sequence in them. First, be of good courage because thy sins are forgiven by the Redeemer. Then be of good courage because all thy weakness and limitation can be supplied by the virtue that comes from Him. Then, when thy soul is assaulted by some mystery, be of good courage, resting assured that out of the heart of every mystery He will emerge. Then, when the sense of the forces of materialism and of worldliness are opposing thy soul, and thou art conscious of the difficulty of loyalty to Christ and high spiritual ideals, be of good courage, because He has overcome. Then when devoted to high purpose and holy service, thou art baffled, beaten, prevented, hindered, be of good courage, for in the silence of the night He will assure thee that He has made the plan of thy service, and all hell cannot prevent thy coming to Rome if He would have thee there.

Whether this is a sequence or not, it is at least certain that the first is the fundamental word. Christ calls men to courage by dealing first with sin, that deepest reason of trouble, of fear, of panic; and He builds the superstructure of His palace of peace on the purging of the conscience and the putting away of defilement.

Now, how are we to obey Him? That is the final inquiry. The importance and difficulty of this are patent. Intellectually we agree when He says to us, Be of good courage; but actually we so constantly fail.

Suffer me to clear the way by one or two negative considerations. How am I to obey Him when He says to me, Be of good courage? By love? Nay, that fails in my experience. By hope? Nay, on many a day that fades from the sky. By faith? Nay, for in my case faith fears oftentimes; it fears as well as falters.

All this may be confession of weakness. You may say to me, You have no right to have these experiences. Love ought not to fail, hope ought not to fade, faith ought not to fear. Well, if they are confessions of weakness, and they may be, they are certainly statements of fact. What, then, is the condition of courage? Love, hope, and faith are the outcome of the fulfilment of a condition. Love fails, hope fades, and faith fears, when that condition is not being fulfilled. The abiding condition of courage is clear vision of the Lord. Change the word "vision," if you will, and say "definite consciousness of the Lord's nearness." Or better, cancel the preliminary words, the vision of, and the consciousness of, and leave only this, the Lord Himself. I change, He changes not. My love still ebbs and flows. His love can never die. Not my faith, not my hope, not my love, are the final conditions of a real courage, but Himself.

Go back over our illustrations. Did that man, sick of the palsy, lose the sense of fear I think he did. How? Because he made himself believe? No. How, then? Because he believed without being able to help it. How? He saw Jesus, he heard Jesus speak, and he believed. The woman's faith procured her healing without banishing fear, for mark the place in the narrative of the word of Jesus. She touched and was immediately healed. Yet she was full of fear. But when she came in front of Him, and told Him all the truth in trembling; and when those love-lit eyes looked down into her sorrow-dimmed eyes, eyes haunted with the fears of all the years, then fear fled, and courage filled her heart. It did not matter to her that she was excommunicated, ostracized, poor; she had seen Him, and fear folded its raven wings and dropped dead.

I am talking out of my own heart. I am a fearful soul, and I am ashamed of the fact. I have been trying to find out how to be courageous. I have found out! God help me to be true to the revelation! It is to see Him! Looking off unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith! Consider Him Who endured such contradiction of sinners!

I am speaking to Christian men and women, to those who are familiar with Him in some sense. All our fear and all our panic result from a dimmed vision of the Lord, a dimmed consciousness of Christ. I believe that is the trouble with us all today, individually and in Church life, all these tremors, all these fears result from lack of the sense of His presence.

Another word, and I have done. Have you no fear in your heart at all? There are those who are quite without fear. Well, let them suffer me to ask a question. Why not? I believe that there are men and women who answer my inquiry by saying, Because we have seen Him; because we see Him now. I have no more to say to them. Such men and women have found the secret of peace.

But there are others who are not conscious of fear today. Let me press upon them the same question. Why not? I charge all such most earnestly to remember in these days, when there may seem in their case to be no cause for fear, no trembling, no panic, weakness, foolishness, that any reason for absence of fear, short of the vision and consciousness of Christ and confidence in Him, is false and your confidence is misplaced, and it may be that before this first Sabbath day of the year be gone to its last hour the crack of doom will come to you, out of the light will come the darkness, and from behind the mountains will rush innumerable foes to assault your soul. There is no refuge for the soul of man other than the Lord Christ.

But now, finally; trembling, terrified, troubled souls, I pray you look and listen! Look to your Lord, and with eyes fastened upon Him listen to His word, "Be of good courage." That means, when He says it, that He puts Himself between thy soul and all the forces in hell and earth that may be against thee.

What shall we say to Him? Well, I am prepared to say that because of what He is my heart is full of courage. I believe, I hope, I love! And having this confidence in my own heart, my message is expressed perhaps most perfectly to my own consciousness by one of those great old hymns of Charles Wesley. Let me conclude with it:

Surrounded by a host of foes,
Stormed by a host of foes within,
Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
Single, against hell, earth, and sin,
Single, yet undismayed, I am;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
What though a thousand hosts engage
A thousand worlds, my soul to shake?
I have a shield shall quell their rage,

And drive the alien armies back;
Portrayed it bears a bleeding Lamb;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
Me to retrieve from Satan's hands,
Me from this evil world to free,
To purge my sins, and loose my bands,
And save from all iniquity,
My Lord and God from heaven He came;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.
Salvation in His name there is,
Salvation from sin, death, and hell,
Salvation into glorious bliss
How great salvation, who can tell!
But all He hath for mine I claim;
I dare believe in Jesu's name.

Matthew 11:27-30. Burdens: False And True.

Matthew 11:27-30.

Burdens: False And True.

All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

Matthew 11:27-30

In all probability no words that ever fell from the lips of our blessed Lord have more remarkably and profoundly taken hold on the heart of man than those of the last three verses of this paragraph.

There is something here that charms the heart of man, not in one age, but in every successive age, and not among one class of people, but among all classes of people. It is a remarkable and arresting fact that it is impossible by translation to rob these words of music, or to weaken their appeal. In every zone, frigid, temperate, and torrid, they have the same effect.

We are driven to ask, Why is it that this passage has so remarkably taken hold of the heart of the human race that wherever the Bible comes, and the words are given to the people, they are almost invariably taken out and committed to memory, and passed from mouth to mouth until men everywhere who know anything about the Bible know these words? Why have the words so profound an effect?

It may be said that their attraction is due to their simplicity; but that does not touch the deepest reason, for the simplicity of superficiality may charm for the moment, but it does not live. The general answer I make to this inquiry is: The words have had a profound effect because they are profound words. This is not merely the language of a tender and beautiful sentiment. Sentiment is an excellent thing; God have mercy on the man that affects to disapprove sentiment. But sentiment does not live century after century. You must create new sentiments if you would move men by sentiment. Something infinitely more than a soft lullaby that appeals to the tired side of humanity is needed to grip humanity's heart and hold it; something infinitely more than what I have already described as a wooing winsomeness is needed to take hold of the heart of a man as he fights his battles and bears his burdens and feels the strenuousness of life. And the infinitely more is here in this call, or it would long ago have been forgotten.

That which has made these words live is revealed in the verse that comes before them. The profundity of the invitation is not understood if you begin with the words of invitation. Immediately before this, Jesus uttered stern words; He upbraided the cities in which most of His mighty works were done. Suddenly He ceased, and, standing still in the midst of the crowd, He lifted eyes and

heart to God, and spoke no longer to men, but to God. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Thy sight."

Having thus spoken to His Father, He turned back to the crowds, and said, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me... and I will give you rest."

Most reverently and carefully may I put this into another form? Jesus upbraided the cities that had not known Him, the cities that had been blind to His presence, deaf to the music of His voice, unconscious of their day. Then, suddenly turning to God, He said, "I thank Thee, O Father," that these things are revealed to the children, and the simple-hearted and the men that lack understanding. Turning back to the people, He declared: God has put everything in My hands. He has committed all things to Me, and yet men do not know Me, no one understands Me; My Father understands Me. But it is also true that no man understands the Father but the Son, and the man to whom the Son will reveal Him. And to whom will He reveal the Father? "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What rest? The rest of the revelation of the Father, the one and only rest that man needs, the rest that comes to the soul when God comes to the soul and the soul comes to God.

Jesus Christ thus virtually said to men: All your restlessness is Godlessness. All life's fitful fever is the result of the exiling of God; all the tempest-tossed experiences of men are due to the fact that they do not know the Father. Jesus, looking at the multitudes, sorrowing and suffering, tempest-tossed and driven, restless and tired, weary and heavy-laden, said to them, in effect, If you could know God all your restlessness would cease; but you cannot know Him except through Me. But if only you will come to Me I will reveal Him to you, and you will find your rest.

That is the reason why the verses live and the music wins its way through all the centuries. Jesus is not saying to men: Never mind, do not trouble, it will soon be over; He never deals with sorrow and trouble that way. He is saying to men: Get right at the foundation of your life and the surface will be right. He does not come to men and say to them: Cheer up, it is all right; I sympathize with you, I pity you. That is not the way Christ deals with the restlessness of human life. It is not pity He offers men, it is power. His gift is not an opiate that puts them to sleep and makes them forget; it is life that wakes them, and makes them triumph. Get right with God, and the only way in which you will get right with God, says Christ, is by coming to Me.

Having seen the setting of the words, let us examine them in that setting and in that relationship.

Confining ourselves from this moment to the actual words beginning, "Come unto Me," I shall ask you to notice three things. First, that Jesus here makes His appeal to something that is a necessary part of all human life. Second, that in the words of His great appeal Jesus separates humanity into two camps. And, finally, that the call of Jesus is a call in which He appeals to this underlying fact of life, and invites men from a false position into the true.

I do not care for the moment whether you are a Christian man or no, whether your life is godly or godless, pure or impure, restful or restless; there is an essential fact in human nature, and it is to that fact that Jesus makes His appeal.

In order to find it, I am going to take you to my second division first. I shall return to it for consideration in detail at a later stage. Jesus divides humanity into two camps. Notice carefully these words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; that is a description of one class of people. Pass to the end of the verses, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." That is the condition of the other class. Mark the contrast: People that labour and are heavy laden; a Man Who says, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light." Remember that when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light," He did not mean the yoke He was going to give us and the burden He was going to impose upon us. He did mean that also, but fundamentally and primarily He was speaking out of His own experience. The yoke I wear is easy, the burden I bear is light. "Labour." "My yoke is easy." "Heavy laden." "My burden is light." The contrast is self-evident and arresting.

Now we will find our way into the discovery of that which is common in human life by looking at those contrasts. What is common to both conditions? There are people who labor and are heavy laden. Here is a Man with an easy yoke and a light burden. It is a great contrast, but the common quantity is a burden. These people are carrying a burden. This Man is carrying a burden.

When that is seen, there is discovered the underlying fact in human life to which Jesus appeals. No human being lives without carrying a burden. I am not now speaking of the burden of sorrow, of the burden of care, of the burden of grief, of the burden of trial. When Paul was writing to the Galatians, toward the close of the letter, in very close proximity, he said two things: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," and then, "Each man shall bear his own burden." That is not a contradiction. Whereas the word "burden" in neither case is incorrect, as a matter of fact, the apostle did not use the same word; the words that lie behind are different words. Those who are familiar with the Greek Testament will remember the fact, but to those who are not, if I simply utter the words that lie behind, you will see the difference in the sound—Baros and Phortion. The first word means a burden of sorrow, of pain, of difficulty, of trial. We are to bear one another's burdens of that sort; but the second burden is the burden of responsibility. Every man must bear his own burden of responsibility; no man can carry his brother's responsibility. No man can live and work under the impulse that drives his brother man.

What, then, is this burden of responsibility? It is the master passion of life, whatever that may be. It is the conception of life that dominates it, drives it, sends it through the days. It is the aim that a man has in life, the thing that has taken hold upon him, and is molding him; it is the conception that lies at the back of his will, creates the reason for its decisions, and, therefore, is the motive power in his life.

There is no man who has not such a reason, has not such a master passion; it is present in every life.

A great many men have never named it, have never taken time to ask what is the all-inclusive conception of life that drives them through the days; but if it has never been written down or found, it is there. In these days of psychological investigation we hear men correctly talking of a subconsciousness; and the burden may lie in a man's subconsciousness, but it exists.

I do not want to lead you into any metaphysical disquisition, but in the name of God I want you to find out the deepest thing in your life. I want to deliver you from surface living, and therefore I beseech you to recognize this deepest, simplest, profoundest thing. Back of your life there is a

reason, a motive, an aim, an impulse, a master passion: the conception of life that is mastering you and driving you, making you rise in the morning, toil through the day, rest at night. Back of all the externalities is some dynamic, and this is so in every life.

A friend of mine once said to me, when I had said something like this in preaching, I do not think you are quite right about that. I think there are men who have no aim in life, no motive power, no master passion. And I said, Well, tell me of one. And he named someone whom we had known for long years. Look at So-and-So. You know as well as I do that he has just drifted through the years, and done nothing in the world, simply because he has no aim in life. And I said to my friend, The man you quote is a forcible argument in favor of my position. And he said, But surely his trouble has been that he has had no aim in life. I replied, His aim in life is to do nothing. And it is a most remarkable thing how hard some men will work to do nothing. This man had one conception—to shift responsibility and shirk work. Mean and contemptible, but there it was, the master passion that made him shiftless and lazy.

We all have a master passion, and that is the matter with which Jesus is dealing in these old sweet words. He is getting underneath the external action, and underneath the surface thinking. He is getting down to the deep subconsciousness of life, putting His hand on the thing that molds and makes all the externalities, and He is saying to men, in effect, If you will get the right master passion you will have rest. If only you will find the right motive, the right aim, the right reason, then the friction will go out of your life, peace will take its place, and you will find yourself at the secret source of all strength.

Now let us pass again to the second point for more careful examination. Jesus divides men into two camps. On the one side are people trying to carry a burden too heavy for them, and the yoke in which they are attempting to carry this burden galls and frets them. All life is a weariness because they are attempting to carry a burden that they were never meant to carry. Jesus looks on them in pity and declares, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light."

Let us endeavor to discover these different burdens.

What is this burden that Jesus described as light? What was the master passion in His life? What was His aim, His motive, His impulse, the reason for everything He did, every journey He took, every word He uttered, all the output of life, in thought, and speech, and deed? There was one unswerving principle at the back of the life of Jesus, one master passion that always drove Him. I take you back for a concrete and wonderful answer to an Old Testament prophecy concerning Him, and then ask you to hear how through His life the music was always true to the chord of the dominant.

In the roll of the book it is written of me;

I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

That was His master passion. Take His life for a moment, a fascinating and delightful study, which we can only glance at, but of which we may see enough as we go to learn the truth. The first recorded words of Jesus are, "Wist ye not that I must?" Now listen. That is what I want to find out. When a man says, I must, I am getting at the deepest thing in his life. It is not when a man says, I ought, or I would like; that does not matter, but I must. "I must be about my Father's business."

There the master passion flamed out. His Father's business for Him at that moment was that He should go home and be subject to His parents, that He should learn the trade of His reputed father, Joseph; and then that He should remain for eighteen long years in the seclusion of the carpenter's shop, doing what men call "the daily round, the common task."

Then He passed into public life, and again we listen to some of the things He said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." "I can of Myself do nothing." "The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing." "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "I... have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Oh, ye masters of the modes of music, tell me, is not that harmony? The will of God, the master passion operating through all Jesus' days and doings. Back of Calvary, and back of the carpenter's shop, back of the infinite teaching, back of the sweet human life, back of the majestic marvelous unveiling of God, and back of the tender patient unveiling of man, the will of God was His master passion.

Now listen and be astonished. He says, "My burden is light." Some of the simplest things Jesus said are the most startling if only we take time to listen to them. My brother, you have been saying in your heart, I would like to be a Christian, but I cannot be one because it is such hard work; it is very hard work to please God always. Jesus says it is not. He says it is easy; and let me say it very kindly, I would rather believe Him than you. I would rather believe Him, because He always did it, and you and I have not always done it.

This is one of the superlative notes of the Gospel which needs to be delivered today. Jesus says that the light burden is the will of God, says, in effect, that it is easier to please God than not to please Him. My testimony by the side of His is very imperfect, but I have discovered that it is far easier to please God than any man.

I would rather please God because the law of God conditions human life according to its first intention and its true possibility. Oh, but a man says, if I am going to be a Christian everything will go against the grain. Nothing of the sort. Everything will go with the grain. You have been going against the grain all your life. Our Lord will take hold of the inherent and created capacity, and put it into its right relationship with God. When a man is born again all the essential facts of his first birth are found and realized and crowned. The second birth of a man is finding the first birth, and putting it into true relation with God.

And now let us look at the other camp. Jesus said, "Ye that labour and are heavy laden." What are the burdens they are carrying? Let us try to find out. We need not go back to Palestine. Some of you have been honestly exercising your heart and mind in the last few minutes. You have been saying, Well, what is my burden? The preacher says that perhaps we have never found it out. What is it? Some man is getting down to the undercurrent of his life, and is trying to find out. What is it, my brother? Well, says one, if I am honest, the master passion of my life is money; I am living for money; I am living for wealth. I am thinking and planning and working and toiling for money; that is my master passion. Some other says, I care nothing about money; but, if I am to confess the truth, the thing that is driving me is the passion for fame; I want to be known, I must make a name among my fellow men; that is the goal toward which I am running. Yet another says, No, I

care nothing for money simply for the sake of money, and fame never attracts me; but if I had to confess, the master passion of my life is pleasure. I want pleasure, enjoyment, a thrill, and a sensation; I must have it; that is what I am working for; if I work hard it is that I may earn the wherewithal to secure pleasure. Oh, what thousands are living for that today! They work hard, and the goal is always the pleasure that is to come presently. Still another says, I care nothing for money, nothing for fame, nothing particularly for pleasure; all I want is ease and quietness and to be let alone. If you will just let me alone, that is all I ask; I want to go through life peaceably and quietly, not to be perplexed or bothered.

Now let us be very careful. As a matter of fact, none of these constitutes the burden of any human life. Money, pleasure, fame, ease—not one of them is a burden. You have not thought deeply enough; you are confounding the yoke with the burden. These are the yokes in which men are trying to carry burdens, but the burdens lie deeper.

Will you let me cross-examine you for a moment? What do you want money for? Why do you want money? For whom do you want it? Want it for? Of course, I want it for myself. Exactly; now you have named your burden. For myself. Of course, there may be a man who says he wants it for someone else. Well, he is so rare a specimen that I will not discuss the question with you. I am dealing with the average man, the man who wants money for himself. Or this man who says, I want fame. I am not seeking fame for anyone else. It is my name I want to be carved into the granite. Or this man who is seeking for pleasure; he seeks it for himself. And the man seeking ease, the answer is always the same: self.

There are only two burdens that men can carry. One is the will of God, and the other is self. The life of every man, woman and child having come to years of discretion and understanding is centered around God, or around self. Self is very subtle, very insidious, hides itself in all sorts of masks, dresses itself in all garments; but if God is not at the center of your life, man, you have put yourself on the throne. There are only two burdens but thousands of yokes.

Now listen again to Jesus. He says you are heavy laden if you are living for self. What does He mean? He means that it is very difficult for any man to please himself, very difficult for any man to satisfy himself. Difficult? I dare venture to go further, and say my blessed Lord meant that no man can satisfy himself. A boy at school dreams of the day when he will be able to please himself. I know that I did; I know I thought when I was once out of school, and away from discipline, I could please myself. And I have found out that I pleased myself more in those days than I ever have done since.

Can you find me a self-satisfied man anywhere? You say, Yes, quite a number of them. Self-satisfied men? Yes, have you never heard of one? I have heard of many, and never seen one. Oh, but if you only knew this man whom I know, he is just that; he is self-satisfied! Get in to his inner life, and you will find that the man most self-satisfied in outward manifestation is always uneasy lest some other man should not think of him as he thinks of himself. He is never at rest.

Oh, men, oh, women, hear me; I would not trifle with this tremendous and awful truth. If you want to know what hell is enthrone yourself, try to please yourself, live for yourself long enough. The lady in the West End, she lives for self, talks about ennui. And what is ennui? Hell! The poor soul in the East End, when that soul lives for self, speaks only of despair. And what is despair? Exactly

the same thing as the other, only at one end of London they give it a French name; but it is the same thing. It is the worm that dieth not, gnawing at the vitals of the life. It is the fire that is never quenched, burning at the center of the soul. Live for self, and you are trying to carry a burden that crushes you as you carry it. Jesus says, Mine is a burden that is light; take Mine, it is the will of God.

You will not find any woman of culture and refinement who is devoting her life to God who talks about ennui. My dear sisters, if you are suffering from ennui give your heart to Christ, and come and give your life to service, and I will cure you of ennui. I will cure it by putting your life in contact with the suffering of some poor fallen sister, and as you begin to take that poor fallen life, and care for it and love it, the peace of God will flow through your life. My dear brother, troubled with restlessness, anxious when there is a fall in the market where you wanted a rise, or a rise where you wanted a fall, give your heart to Christ, and bring your business acumen and your splendid possibilities and say to Him, Lead me into the will of God, lead me where God wants me, and you will find that the peace of God, as a river, will come surging through your life, and the song of the everlasting rest will be the anthem of all your days. Live for yourself, and you are heavy laden. Live for God, and life is a rapture, and the burden is light.

Finally, Jesus called men from the false into the true. He said, "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son." "My burden is light." I know my Father, and because I know my Father I delight to do His will, and that makes life restful. And to the heavy-laden people He declared, You are trying to please yourselves because you do not know My Father. "No one knoweth... the Father, save the Son." You will never try to please God until you know Him.

Oh, God, of good the unfathomed sea,

Who would not give his heart to Thee?

That is the language of a man who had come to know God. And when a man comes to know God, he yields Him everything. And how did I get to know Him?

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

"Come unto Me and rest."

I came to Him, and He revealed the Father to me, and when I saw God in Jesus there was nothing left that I did not yield to Him.

Let the last word be of the simplest. What is this that Jesus said? He said, "Come unto Me." Oh, thank God for those little words. There is no room for pope, or priest, or pastor, or preacher, or penitent form. There is room for nothing but Christ and the soul. Get to Him, man, get to Him. Get to Him now, come to Him Whom you know so well theoretically, and say:

Just as I am, Thy love unknown

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,

O Lamb of God, I come.

And to whoever will do that, He will reveal the Father, and you will find God through the Son, and your whole life yielded and trusted and reposed in Him, you will accept His will as your master passion.

What then? Rest, sweet rest, deep rest; rest in the midst of the battle, rest while the testing and the trial and the triumph press, rest all the way until the final rest be won.

Matthew 12:50. Christ's Next Of Kin.

Matthew 12:50.

Christ's Next Of Kin.

Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew 12:50

In order to have an accurate appreciation of the meaning and value of these wonderful words of Jesus we must carefully consider the circumstances in which they were uttered. The story is told in a brief paragraph, of which these are the final words. There is a similar paragraph in the third Chapter of Mark's gospel; indeed, the similarity is very remarkable. The story as Mark tells it is hardly changed by sentence or phrase. There is absolutely no difference in any essential matter.

However, in his context, Mark does give some details which Matthew omits. Christ was so pressed with His work, so eagerly sought after by the crowds, so eagerly responding to their seeking, so completely giving Himself up, without stint and without reserve, to the demands that were being made on Him that "when His friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself" (Mark 3:21). After recording that fact, Mark goes on to tell the things that were happening in Capernaum, and then, at the thirty-first verse, he resumes the narrative commenced in verse 21, "And there came His mother and His brethren."

Christ, as I have said, was giving Himself without stint, without reserve, to the thronging, pressing multitudes; they followed Him from place to place, came with their criticisms and with their agonies; and with patient courtesy He replied to their criticisms, and with infinite compassion He relieved their agonies. He was so busy that He had not time to eat, was so perpetually occupied that He had no time for rest. That news was conveyed to His mother and to His brethren after the flesh, who evidently were in very close association with Mary, and shared her anxiety and concern for Jesus. His mother heard, and she said, and they said, "He is beside Himself," He is losing His reason. In consequence of this conviction they started on a journey to reach Him, in all probability from Nazareth to Capernaum. When they arrived, they found that He was in a house, surrounded by a crowd of people.

The word was passed to Him that His mother and brethren were without, seeking to speak to Him. He knew why they had come. "He knew all men,... He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." His mother had come, full of anxiety for Him, persuaded that He was beside Himself, eager to prevent Him from killing Himself by excess of zeal and toil. She did not understand Him. That is revealed in the gospels from beginning to end. She loved Him with a great mother love; she knew the infinite and appalling mystery of His being; but she never understood Him. When He began His ministry she sought to hurry Him to some demonstration of power, and He had to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

Mine hour is not yet come." Because she loved Him she would have persuaded Him to take care of Himself.

Knowing this, Jesus said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" and, pointing to the little group of disciples, exclaimed, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

This word was not a slight cast on the natural love of Mary for Him. He was not speaking slightly of the mother love that had come after Him to stop Him injuring Himself. It was rather a revelation of the fact that there is a closer affinity than that of natural relationship. His word was a declaration that those next of kin to Him are such as share His spiritual conceptions and compulsions. He was revealing to His mother, to His disciples, and to the crowds, the fact that men and women who have fellowship with Him in spiritual vision and spiritual toil are nearer kin to Him than even the woman who had been highly honored as the one who bore Him and gave Him that natural life, through the mystery of which He wrought out into human history God's redeeming purpose.

Let us, then, consider two matters: first, our Lord's teaching in these words concerning the essential nature of that kinship with Him which all those of us who are truly His disciples share; and, second, the particular privileges of kinship which He here described.

First, then, as to the teaching of this declaration concerning the essential nature of our kinship with Jesus. May I ask you to observe negatively that our kinship with Jesus is not that of our humanity; neither is it that of His divinity. I think, perhaps, these things need to be carefully considered and most earnestly stated, for our investigation during recent years, our search, our inquiry, our pressing nearer to the fact of Christ, have resulted in real values, but also they have created grave perils. We have come to a new apprehension of the actuality of the humanity of our Lord. If there are any great artists in the world today they will not paint Christ as the great artists of the middle ages painted Him. We have escaped from those conceptions of our Lord which put Him at a distance from the ordinary things of everyday life. The music of the declaration that He was a carpenter is understood as it never has been understood. Whereas I believe there is great value in this rediscovery of the human Christ, I feel that there is peril in the use we may make of the discovery. I hear people perpetually speaking of the Lord Jesus as though He were entirely, absolutely of their own humanity; or speaking of their own humanity as though it were entirely part and parcel of the humanity of Jesus. That is not the case. No man can come to anything like a careful study of the human Jesus without discovering the infinite distance between Him and ourselves. In all the things that demonstrate His nearness we find the supreme evidence of His distance. If you tell me that He was a Man tempted, and therefore of our humanity, I agree. But His attitude under temptation, and his victory over temptation, demonstrate the fact that in His human life He was infinitely removed from any other man. If you suggest that He was a man Who lived on the principle of trust and faith, I perfectly agree; but in that very activity of trust I find Him at infinite distance from myself. His trust never faltered, never wavered; mine has been faltering and wavering all my life. It is when you press on me the fact of His humanity, and I come most perfectly to an apprehension of the truth that He was human, that I am most startled, ashamed, driven back, defeated by the vision of His perfection.

The teaching of the New Testament is that He was not merely of our humanity, but that He was the second Man, the last Adam, the Founder of an entirely new race. As the first race was created in the economy of God by the inbreathing of the Spirit of God to dust, the new race is to be created of that very humanity by a new birth of the Spirit of God. I go back to the Genesis story, and there I see a living creature of the dust, enswathed in Deity, and by that enswathing, inbreathing, created man, differentiated by infinite gulfs from all the creation that lies beneath him. In process of time, out of that human nature, fallen and degraded, in an awe-inspiring mystery the Holy Spirit took of the seed of the woman and made a new Man, the first of a new race, all the members of the succeeding race, to be of fallen humanity but remade, reborn, recreated by the activity of the Holy Spirit. The first Man of the new race was, in an infinite mystery, of the old race, but separated from it by the mystery of His birth. I am not kin of Jesus by virtue of my humanity. That humanity is of the race fallen, and Jesus is the Head of a new race.

Neither is our kinship that of His Divine nature, I am not one with Him in essential spiritual life, for my spiritual life is created, His spirit life is uncreated, His spirit life is of the very life of God, absolutely without beginning. He was in Himself, in a mystery that has for two millenniums defied the analysis and explanation of the schoolmen and theologians, and which will defy them to the end of time, the very logos of God, with God, of God, very God from everlasting. To speak of that in man which may be of the Divine nature, that in which He is in the image and the likeness of God, as being kin with the essential mystery of the Deity of Christ, is to show there is no true comprehension of the Christ of the New Testament.

Thus the statement of Christ becomes illuminative and remarkable, for He reveals what kinship with Himself really is, in its deepest and profoundest. Not here does He tell the mystery of its genesis; here, rather, does He reveal the marvel of its expression. What is the expression of our kinship, what is the actuality of it, the nature of it? "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." He is next of kin to Me, that soul who does My Father's will!

Kinship with Christ consists in doing the will of God, doing the will of God, interpreted in the light of His immediate actions, those very actions which His mother had come to hinder, and doing the will of God as interpreted in the light of His perpetual attitudes. If one should inquire what it is to do the will of God, there is but one answer: Behold that Man, and know what it is to do the will of God. Mark well the impulse of His activities; mark well the doing of all the days; observe carefully that the greater part of His life was spent, not in public service, but in private duty. Remember that first there was the naturalness of the child life and its development. Remember that, second, there was the daily round, the common task for eighteen years in the carpenter's shop. Remember that, finally, when the Voice called there was the abandoning of the carpenter's shop without any of that hesitation or modesty which is of the essence of rebellion. He went forward immediately to face the crowds, declaring the will of God, revealing the heart of God in tenderness and compassion. Know what the will of God is by observing Him pouring Himself out in sacrificial service, violating false sanctities in order to establish the true sanctity, breaking the Sabbath to heal a man in order that the man may forevermore find unbroken sabbath of rest in God. Now, said Jesus, whosoever is doing that is next of kin to me, My brother, My sister, My mother. That is the final word.

What lies behind doing the will of God? Knowing the will of God. The man who does the will of God is the man who knows the will of God. The will of God is discovered and must be discovered in a life of personal, direct, immediate communion with God. The will of God must be discovered by persistent and perpetual inquiry as to what the will of God is. All these things are illustrated in the life of our Lord. We hear Him saying such things as these: I speak nothing of Myself; what My Father gives Me that I speak. I do nothing of Myself; what My Father commands Me, that I do. I am not alone, My Father is with Me. He did the will of God because He knew the will of God. He knew the will of God because He lived in communion with God, waited for God, submitted to God, inquired of God. He said, The men who do that are My next of kin.

What, then, is the fundamental thing? What lies at the back of this doing, deeper even than this knowing? Now, we touch not the activities of Life, not even the intelligence of life, we are at the central citadel of human life, the will of man. Once again let the light of the Lord's perfect revelation flash on our thought. We go back, as we so constantly have to do, to the prophetic Scriptures, in order to hear the very keynote of His life:

In the roll of the book it is written of me:

I delight to do Thy will, O my God.

The will of God chosen, the will of God inquired after in communion, and consequently known, the will of God done in the actual activity of life—that is the story of Jesus, the whole story, including the stoop from the height to the depth, including the whole mystery of incarnation and the process of the incarnate life and the ultimate darkness of the Cross. Everything is there. The will of God chosen, the will of God known as the result of communion, fellowship, inquiry—the will of God carried out.

Said the Lord: The men who live on that principle, choosing the will of God, inquiring after it in perpetual communion, carrying it out in all the details, in the crises and the commonplaces—these men are next of kin to Me. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Now we turn to what seems to me to be the peculiar and remarkable emphasis and value of this declaration concerning the privileges which He suggested. Let us hear the words again, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." That declaration emphasizes what we are to Him rather than what He is to us. Again, remember the local circumstances: His mother and His brethren after the flesh were outside; she was there out of great love for Him, but she stood outside the circle of His own vision, His own passion, His own mission. She did not understand Him; but these men did, and the grace of the declaration is most marvelous when I remember the men, when I remember how they blundered and faltered and failed. Nevertheless, He did say this thing concerning them, and He did say afterwards that they had been with Him through all His temptations. He knew these men, and knew that the choice they had made of discipleship was far finer than the blunders they had made on the way. That is God's attitude towards man. God judges us at last, not by the accidents, but by the motive, the passion that lies underneath. They were twelve valiant saints. I take them at the Lord's measurement rather than at that of any man. They failed and blundered; but He knew them in the deepest of them, and He said, I know all the imperfections, and failings of these men who

are with Me, but I know that the central passion, the master passion of their lives is to do the will of God. They supply what I lack in the sympathy of My own mother. She has not yet reached this inner circle; they have, and they are to me all that is suggested by these wonderful words of human relationship, brother, sister, mother.

In that is the exceeding wonder and glory of my text. It does not declare that if I do the will of God Jesus will be Brother to me. That is true, perchance. The text does not declare that if I do the will of God He will be Sister to me in all the sweet suggestiveness of the word. That may be true. That is not what He said. The text does not declare that He will mother me with infinite tenderness. That is true, but that is not what He said.

There He stood, lonely, criticized, misunderstood, and He declared that those blundering, frail souls who nevertheless had chosen the will of God, and who were seeking to know it, and to do it, were by that attitude coming into such affinity with Him that they were to Him brother, sister, mother.

That is the highest, holiest privilege of doing the will of God. Oh, the privileges of doing the will of God! What are they? The perfecting of my own personality presently? The realization of all that is profoundest in my own being by and by? These are privileges; but this is highest—oh that I may say it reverently and yet say it as our Lord said it on this occasion, when He was being misunderstood by everyone—the highest privilege of doing the will of God is that I can minister to the heart of Christ, that I can be His brother, His sister, His mother.

Everyone sees that the words are suggestive, beautifully, exquisitely poetical, chosen by the Master of words and thoughts in order to convey to human hearts that are touched by these human affections great spiritual truths of the possibilities of the influence exerted upon Himself, by the men who do the will of God.

Did you struggle all last week my brother, my sister, to do the will of God in difficult circumstances, in places of temptation, with sorrow wringing your heart and problems pressing on your spirit? Did you steer straight for the goal so far as you were able? Was the passion of your Heart to do His will? Then you were brother, sister, mother, to Jesus.

What do these words suggest? Now, you must use your own faculty of imagination and interpretation. Imagination and interpretation never succeed save as they are love-inspired. You must begin with human love. What is a brother? "A brother is born for adversity." Yes, that is it! Those two boys live together; they are often terribly rude to each other; yes, they are brothers, but wait till one of them has been hit by sorrow, by sin, then you will discover that the other is his brother. "A brother is born for adversity." I love the Hebrew word there: A brother is born for a tight place! "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother." God help us to see this thing. The words of Jesus can touch to heavenly music only chords that are already in our hearts. Is Jesus ever in a difficulty? Yes, in London He is in difficulty, in a tight place. Men are still buffeting Him, bruising Him, crucifying Him. Will you be His brother, standing up for Him, helping to bear His burden? I would like to be. We may be if we will do the will of God.

Not His brother only; His sister. Sometimes I think I could speak better of this. I never had a brother, but I had a sister. When I was getting this sermon ready I was greatly impressed to notice that there is no tender reference to a sister in the Old Testament, except, perhaps, the references

to Rebekah and to Miriam. When I come into the New Testament, every reference to a sister is thrilling with tenderness. You are quite welcome to charge me with imagination—I believe in imagination—but I wondered why this was. Among other things, I noticed a story which said, "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary." That is how Mary was known, as Martha's sister. John, in writing of them, put it the other way, "Mary and her sister Martha"; yet even he, in the course of a few sentences, was saying "Martha and her sister." Mary was a sister. When Jesus said, "My sister," I wonder whether He was not thinking about Mary. If the courage that stands by you when you are in a tight place is the peculiar quality of a brother, what is the peculiar quality of a sister? That you confide in her because she understands. There have been hours in the lives of many men when they had some confidence, tragic confidence; they could not tell father or mother, but they told their sisters. When, presently, the priests seemed to be winning, and Judas was plotting, Mary made her way to Jesus and violated all the economies by pouring costly nard on His feet. What did it mean? She knew His secret. She was doing it to His burying. I would like to be able to hear His secret. I would like to have some little part in the reception of His confidence in the hour when He needs someone to tell His secret to. Is it possible? Yes, "whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My sister."

We come to the last word, and it is the greatest word of all, "mother." What does "mother" stand for? There is but one answer. If brother is a synonym for courage, and sister for confidence, mother is the synonym for comfort. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Comfort: the heart of Christ comforted! Yes, said Paul, "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf." We can comfort the heart of the Lord.

How shall I comfort Him, the sorrowful One, for He is still sorrowful in the presence of the world's sin and agony and sorrow—how can I comfort Him? By doing the will of God. Every life conformed to the Divine will, conditioned within it, devoted to it, busy about the Divine will, ministers comfort to His sacred heart.

"Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Notice that the figures end there. He did not say the same is My father. Other than of God, He never spoke of any in that relation to Him. When at twelve years of age His mother came to Jerusalem looking for Him, having missed Him from the company, she said, "Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." He answered her, "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" That inquiry was a revelation of His recognition of the fact that God alone was His Father. The figures made use of in my text were all on the human level. We can never be to Him in the place of His Father. When we apply these relations as implying what He is to us, He is brother, sister, mother, and all because He is able to look into our eyes and souls and say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Those who do the will of God enter into the sacred possibilities of ministering to Him. Does not that make it supremely worth while to do that will? How have I sought to appeal to some of you to do the will of God for the saving of your own souls, for the sake of the influences you can exert upon other men for their healing and help. I reach a higher level of appeal now: I pray you choose the

will of God as the principle of your life, find your way into fellowship therewith, and seek to do it, not merely for the sake of your own soul, not alone in order that you may help others, but that you may minister to the need of the heart of Christ. I feel that is the highest motive. Oh, if in a life of service, by suffering and by sacrifice I might place another gem in the Redeemer's diadem, weave another garland wherewith to deck His brow; if by devotion to the will of God, and service expressive of that devotion, I can stand up for Him in a tight place, can receive the confidence of His sorrow, and break upon His feet some alabaster box of ointment; if I can only comfort the sorrowing Heart of Christ, then, so help me God, as I know it and am able, I desire to do the will of God.

The final word of the message is this. He made the assertion of my text not only with regard to those disciples who were there, but as a proclamation, and He introduced it with the greatest of all the words of the New Testament, in some senses, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father."

If my name had been written there, I would have thought some other man had borne my name and that it did not mean me; but "whosoever" includes me, includes you. That is my appeal tonight. For Christ's sake, because He needs brothers, and sisters, and mothers, for courage, for confidence, for comfort, seek, and do the will of God.

Matthew 13:51-52. Things New And Old.

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Things New And Old.

Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea. And He said unto them, Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Matthew 13:51-52

Jesus had been instructing His disciples in the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven; and at the close of His parabolic teaching He declared to them the purpose thereof. He had not been instructing them merely for the satisfaction of their own spiritually intellectual curiosity. There was a practical bearing and value in all that He had been doing. He asked them, "Have ye understood all these things? Do you understand the meaning of the present hour? Have you caught any vision through the pictures which I have presented to your view, of the purpose of God, of His plan?" I am always astonished when I read their answer. "They say unto Him, Yea." I am the more astonished, that He did not rebuke them. He is wonderfully patient with us when we think we understand the things He says. He knew, however, that they had at least seen the broad outline; and He knew that presently, when the Spirit, the Comforter should come He would bring to their remembrance all the things of which He had spoken, and would explain in greater detail and with infinite patience the meaning thereof. Therefore, even though as yet they certainly did not perfectly understand, as their subsequent action demonstrates, He told them the reason of His teaching. "Every scribe," and one is halted by the word, for it is an interesting thing that Jesus uses that word here of His disciples, "Every scribe." What was a scribe? A scribe in the days of our Lord was a moral interpreter. The office of the scribe was created by Ezra, and had continued from his time. The scribes in the days of Jesus were in opposition to Him, but their office was that of moral interpretation, that of exposition of the law, and application of it to the conditions in the midst of which they found themselves. Christ used the word and appropriated the office on behalf of His disciples for all the coming ages. "Every scribe."

Mark the preliminary necessity. "Every scribe who hath been instructed to the Kingdom of the heavens." There can be no doing of His work, no fulfilling of His purpose, no cooperation in His travail, until a man is himself a disciple to the Kingdom of the heavens, and is instructed in the principles of that great and gracious Kingdom.

Let all this be taken for granted, what then? What is the responsibility that rests upon the scribe, the instructed one? "He bringeth forth things new and old."

In these two verses we have one of the smallest, as to number of words, of the parables of Jesus, the parable of the householder; a final picture to teach these men the value of the pictures already given them. The picture is that of a wealthy householder meeting the necessity of all those who

are in his household, by scattering to them his treasures.

That is the perpetual responsibility of the Christian Church. Jesus said to the Hebrew people as His ministry was approaching its close, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." In that great and remarkable sentence, He transferred the responsibility for certain teaching and certain work, from the Hebrew people who rejected God's King, to a new nation which Peter described in his letter as a holy nation, an elect race. This is the responsibility that is referred to here, as bringing forth things new and old.

"The Kingdom of heaven" is the supreme phrase in this parable. It is not local in its application. We must not narrow that application to Judea. Neither must we narrow it exclusively to the millennium that has not yet arrived. It is not necessary to discuss now the differences between such phrases as "the Kingdom of God," "the Kingdom of heaven," and "the Kingdom." The thing that matters is that we should find the quantity or quality which is common to the whole of them. It is that of the rule of heaven, the mastery of heaven, the establishment of the heavenly order. In preceding parables, Jesus had told the story of the vicissitudes of the Kingdom principle in the present age, showing how sometimes there is victory and sometimes defeat. Through all the parables the phrase, "the Kingdom of heaven," recurs. The word, "Kingdom," does more than mark a realm; it emphasizes a rule. We sometimes speak of the Kingdom of God as though it referred to a place, a time, a covenant, a method. It refers to all of these, but the fact of that Kingdom is greater than all. "The Kingdom of God," suggests the throne of God, the government of God, the reign of God, the sovereignty of God. "The Kingdom of heaven" suggests the supremacy of heaven over the things of the earth. That Kingdom of heaven abides. Take heart, my brethren, do not be constrained to believe that God's throne has trembled, or that the supremacy of heaven has ceased. Every man is in the grip of the Divine government and cannot escape it. The devil does not reign even in hell. God reigns there also. Because the Kingdom of the heavens abides, it has a message to every century, to all conditions of human life, and the responsibility of the disciples of the Kingdom is that of delivering that message.

I think sometimes our phrases mislead us all unconsciously. For what are we labouring? The establishment of the Kingdom? The Kingdom is established. What then is our business? To reveal its bearings upon human life, to dictate its terms to the sons of men; out of the treasure house of the established supremacy of God and of the heavens to cast things new and old upon the earth, and in that sense to establish that which is established, to bring to the consciousness of men the facts from which they can never escape; so to love and help men and the age; that their relation to the Kingdom shall be one that results in blessing upon themselves and upon humanity, rather than in blasting and in cursing.

"Things new and old." What are these? If we can understand this phrase, we are getting to the very heart of the teaching of Jesus here concerning our responsibility. These are one in essence. We are not to understand that Jesus said "things new," and "things old," as though He were speaking of two sets of ideas. There is only one set of ideas suggested; the things are new and old. The new here does not mean fresh in the sense of just about to begin. The old does not mean ancient in the sense of about to pass away. Everything is new and everything is old. The principle is old, the application is new. The root is old, the blossom and the fruit are new. The two are necessary to growth. Destroy the old and you will have no new. Invent a new by the destruction of

the old, and that new withers while you look at it. It is equally true that the absence of the new destroys the life of the old. Preserve your old and do not allow it to express itself in the new, and it withers. Some of you have planted bulbs in your gardens, all russet robed and devoid of beauty. Why did you put them in your garden? Why not lay them away on a shelf? Why not preserve them because they are the bulbs out of which flowers sprang two years ago? To preserve them is to destroy them. If you do not allow them to repeat themselves in new blossom and new fruit, they will die. Take the inter-relation of the thoughts of this phrase in another way. New things which contradict old things are not from old things, and therefore they are false; and the old thing which has no new in it is dead and valueless. Was it not this that Russell Lowell meant when he sang:

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth;

Lo, before us gleam her campfires! We ourselves must pilgrims be,

Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

But when you recite that, do not forget that if you attempt the future's portal with any other key than that which hangs upon the girdle of the Son of Man you will never unlock it. It must not be a rusty key, but it must be the same true key of David. The Kingdom of the heavens is old, and the application of its principles to our own age is new. Methods, manners, men may change, but this fact of the Kingdom of heaven abideth, rooted in the being of God, and blossoms afresh in every generation among the sons of men.

Let us turn from these generalities. Let me speak of some things new and old, for the bringing forth of which the Church of God is responsible at the present hour.

First the old things. The Church of God exists to affirm unceasingly and without apology the fact of the Divine Kingship; to declare that the throne is occupied and that government is exercised. The oldest of all the old is the fact of God; a fact which we are all so appallingly apt to forget, when we become practical. We remember God when we are poetical; we forget Him as the busy days run on. The Church stands in the midst of the nations, in the midst of the world, wherever her sons and daughters are found, for the old truth. I will use a phrase we are almost afraid of—our fathers loved it, preached it, lived it—the sovereignty of God.

The necessity for righteousness is also old. The fact that apart from righteousness there can be no permanence, no individual life, or social life, or national life. The fact that the wages of sin are still death. You may change your terminology and speak of sin by other words, but the old fact remains.

Or again, the fact that man is a sinner. I am quite willing to postpone discussion for a considerable period as to how he became a sinner. I am interested in the fact. Man today has the same passions, the same heartache, as had his father, and his father's father. We change a man's raiment, but the man abides, the slave of forces that mar, and master, and destroy.

The fact that plenteous redemption is provided is also old. Plenteous redemption for every man, and if not, for no man. Plenteous redemption to satisfy the human conscience; a word of pardon spoken out of the mystery of the bloodshedding of the Cross; and virtue communicated whereby men, gripped, enslaved by the forces that spoil, stand erect.

What of the new things? There is nothing new, save a new statement of the old things. There may be a new interpretation of those things, but in the new interpretation let us be very careful lest we devitalize the old.

There is a new interpretation of Kingship in the terms of Fatherhood. Do not be afraid of the thought. Do not imagine that Fatherhood merely means tenderness and love. That is weak and false fatherhood. Of all the books written on the atonement through recent years, in this particular respect the one that I think most illuminative is Dr. Scott Lidgett's, in which he shows that in Fatherhood there lie all the facts of God; Kingship is there, Judgeship is there. The King is Father, His law is love. That is not to make law less severe, but more severe. There are no eyes so keen in watching as lovelit eyes. The throne abides, but we have found that the King is Father. The reason of His law is His love. So that today we say to our children not merely, You must because you must, but you must because it is best.

Righteousness abides the old truth; but today we are coming to a new understanding of its reasonableness.

Sin abides, but we are gaining a new understanding of the truth that the essential sin is unbelief. Read the letter to the Hebrews. The master sin with which the writer of that letter deals is the sin of unbelief. What is unbelief? The refusal to obey intellectual conviction. That is the sin of all sins. That is the easily besetting sin. Drink is never an easily besetting sin; men acquire the habit. Lust is not an easily besetting sin. The easily besetting sin, the sin in good standing around, is unbelief, the dishonesty of the man who will not obey the call of truth. There is the new emphasis of sin. That is what we need to say to men today.

What of redemption? The old provision abides. The new emphasis needed is that redemption is necessary, that no man can live the life of his own ideal, the ideal born in the moment of vision, apart from a force that is beyond himself, and outside himself. Harold Begbie, an honest disciple of Professor James, the great psychologist at whose feet we are all glad to sit today, has given the Professor a few additional problems in his book, "Broken Earthenware." What are you going to do with O.B.D.? What are you going to do with the Puncher? Now if Harold Begbie will write another book, and I hope he will, let him not confine himself to slum districts, but let him cross to the West End here, and he will find the same problem. I know the thing of which I speak. I know it better tonight than I did five years ago when I began my ministry here. I know that beneath the veneer, the culture, the refinement, there is the agony of broken hearts, and of conflict with sin. Thank God, I know also that the redemption provided is as powerful in the West End as in the East End. I know that this plenteous redemption is redemption for man as man. What we need is to emphasize its necessity and proclaim its absolute sufficiency.

A new statement of the old things, yes, but more, a new application of the old things is what this age peculiarly needs. It needs a social application based upon a specialized individual application. Here is the trouble with our age. The gleams of light are everywhere, men are seeing visions of an

established order, in which man shall be brother to man; yet, the prophets of that new order are principally men who care nothing for their fellow men, but everything for themselves. That is the peculiar trouble of the hour; gleams of light everywhere, and visions of a great brotherhood of man; but how are you going to produce it? It is old, and trite, and commonplace; but it is true that we shall never have a brotherhood apart from a Fatherhood. To attempt the establishment of a social order without the foundation of God is the most fatuous folly. We must begin aright.

The Church of God needs the social application within her own borders. Here is the place where we ought to be in humiliation before God; that we fail within the Church itself; that we have men and women within the Catholic Church of God suffering alone and unhelped; that it is possible to cross the threshold of the Church of God and carry over with us the wretched, miserable caste conditions which exist outside. That is the paralysis, the devil, that is spoiling our testimony. We need the new application of the old principle of the government of God, in a new social life in the fellowship of the Christian Church. But we must begin aright. The commonwealth is created by the wealth of all. Socialism demands individualism. Individualism creates socialism. Do not be afraid of the word. I said socialism twice and some of you went pale. I decline to hand over any great word to abuse, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding. I make my solemn protest here again that the man is woefully mistaken who says we can have a perfect social order—for the moment whether it be competitive or co-operative is not within my outlook—wherein human wrongs shall be righted, without God. But grant a community of individuals remade by the grace of God, and you have your society. But, ah me, how is it the Church has failed in social realization? Because the children of the Church have held back part of the price. There have been successors to Ananias and Sapphira as well as to the apostles. Because we have not been true to the whole claim of the Divine Kingship in individual lives. Thus we have not been able to realize the meaning of the Divine Kingship in the corporate life of the Church, and reveal it to our own age.

One other word for the purpose of practical and immediate application. The scribes of the Kingdom of heaven are to be the moral interpreters of the law of the Kingdom to their own age. That is our business. In order to do it, we must see and understand our age. How are we to do it? The question is one perhaps more easily asked than answered. We cannot do it by reading newspapers. The whole of our press, with rare exceptions, is touched at the present moment with that sensationalism which destroys truth. The man who is going to see his age will not see it in a newspaper. Sometimes you must read books that do not sell, to see the age. What are the facts of our own age? I can summarize them in three words, Atheism, Animalism, Abjectness. I will grant that there are other things to be said. There is a wistful, longing and looking toward the East for signs of morning. There is an awful hunger after spiritual things which is manifesting itself in trafficking with the occult. There is a new desire everywhere for the heroic.

The secularist halls are closed, you tell me. It is a bad sign. It shows that atheism is more dangerous than it used to be. Atheism is without-Godism. That is very awkward, but it helps me. Without-Godism. One of the supreme evidences is the frivolity of our age. Men have no personal commerce with God, and therefore it is an age of pleasure, of light literature, of frothiness. It is an age of indifference. There is no sense of God, and therefore there are no infidel lecturers. There is no worship, for atheism is the mastery of material ideals.

Animalism is always the sequence of atheism. Men say of the prophet of God, "As for this Moses... we know not what is become of him," and the next thing is the making of the golden calf and the worship of it. Although the golden calf is intended to be the representation of Deity, it is in very deed also a representation of animalism. The story of the golden calf is a tragic story. They made a golden calf, and they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Then Aaron built an altar and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to Jehovah," mark that I pray you, "a feast to Jehovah." Then they worshipped Jehovah before the golden calf. What is the next thing we read? "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Now you have the whole tragedy of the situation. That is animalism. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink?" Oh for the return of prophet or apostle who dared to say true things to men even though their sensibilities were hurt. Oh for a Paul to say once more to this age, "whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things"; eating, and drinking and playing.

The consequence is abjectness, submission to forces that are destroying national life, and that without protest. Abjectness is trying to persuade itself that it is of the essence of courage to prepare for war. Abjectness has nightmare if an aeroplane crosses the eastern sky.

What is our duty in the presence of these things? To apply the fact of the Kingdom of God. In face of all the forces of the Kingdom of darkness, what are we to do? Bring forth things new and old, the new application of old principles. New phrasing of old truth, new channels for old streams. Taking the old for granted make appeal for the new.

First, there must be separation of the subjects of the Kingdom of the heavens from all complicity with the kingdom of Satan. That is where we must begin. The Church will have to say, "There is no room within our borders for any man who in his business is identified with the forces that are damning humanity." We must begin there. The Church must be true to the Kingdom of heaven within her own borders. Judgment must begin at the house of the Lord. Let the priests themselves believe and put on salvation. That is the first word.

Then, out of that life of true separation of the members of the Kingdom, the Church may go forth in a new witness to Godliness as against atheism, and spirituality as against animalism, to courage as against abjectness. There must be a new crusade against every form of evil; the Church forevermore manifesting herself as opposed to the things that destroy; the Church against war, and against lust, and against gambling, and against the drink traffic; against all the things that spoil humanity.

I plead today for a new enterprise in the interests of the old and abiding things, to reach the unreached masses of our cities. I am longing for the striking of the hour when it shall be possible for me to stand side by side with Canon Hensley Henson, or Mr. Stuart Holden, or the Bishop of London, somewhere off these ecclesiastical grounds, and preach the gospel to the unreached masses of the city. That hour ought to come. Surely we have some common belief on which we can stand together. My brethren, the concern of the Church ought not to be that of the defence of her own views, but attack upon the strongholds of evil and the proclamation of the evangel to the man who stands outside and with a fair show of reason says, "When you have done your quarrelling inside I will be prepared to listen to you when you talk to me."

I plead for a new enterprise in which we close our ranks, and carry the principles of the Kingdom of heaven to the age in which we live.

In order to close our ranks I think we may do these things. I would first of all, postpone all theological controversy to the calm of eternity. I think we shall be far more likely to come to a correct apprehension of the mystery of the Kenosis in heaven than we ever shall on earth.

I propose that we learn to sympathize with ecclesiastical convictions which we do not share, that we begin to believe that the man in the opposite camp is in heart sincere; that there are things about which we ought to agree to differ, and to cease our controversy in the presence of a common foe and a common God.

I propose that we abandon once and forever all petty jealousy, and rise into a great and grand conception of the Kingdom of the heavens, that we may speak with no uncertain sound to our own age.

In the name of God and of humanity let us act as though we believed the things we profess to believe.

Rouse then, soldiers! rally round the banner!

Ready, steady, pass the word along;

Onward! Forward! shout aloud Hosanna!

Christ is Captain of the mighty throng!

Matthew 14:28-33. High Purpose, Failing And Fulfilled.

Matthew 14:28-33.

High Purpose, Failing And Fulfilled.

And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were gone up into the boat the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.

Matthew 14:28-33

This is the story of one of the most wonderful pre-Pentecostal experiences of Peter. While it reveals an element of failure, that is not its only quality, neither is it its chief one. That element of failure, however, has so impressed us that we are in danger of failing to observe that it was failure on a singularly high level, failure in an hour of exalted and Christ-honoring experience. While we must not ignore the failure, we ought to consider it in the light of the whole story, for it is a story full of bright and tender light.

In the paragraph there are two sequences, separated by a very definite break. Matthew made use of a well-known Hebrew literary form in writing this story. It is called poly-syndeton, and consists of the linking of event to event by the repetition of the word "and" in order to indicate a sequence. You will bear with me if I draw your attention to it by a somewhat grotesque emphasis in reading. The first sequence is found in verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine:

"And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus."

The sequence is quite as evident, and even more marked in the second part of the story, beginning in the middle of verse thirty:

"And beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were gone up into the boat, the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

Between these two parts of the one story, constituting two sequences, there is a sudden break introduced by the opposite word "but": "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid." Immediately we are brought into a new set of circumstances. Then as suddenly we come to the next "and," which is not so much the beginning of a new sequence as the resumption of the first, and the process to

the climax which was at first intended. By that process we discover our divisions for this evening's meditation.

Let us consider, first, what this story reveals of an exalted experience, that of Peter, chronicled in the first sequence; second, what the story reveals of sudden defeat recorded in the break that interrupts for a moment the movement of the sequence; and, finally, what the story reveals of fulfilled purpose in the second sequence. Briefly: an exalted experience, a sudden defeat, a fulfilled purpose.

I particularly desire to lay emphasis on the first part of this story, that of the exalted experience of Peter. Over and over again it has been affirmed that his desire was one of presumption. The answer to that charge is that when he expressed his desire his Master said, Come, and He never encouraged mere presumption. We must look carefully at the story and attempt to understand it a little more particularly if we would gather its full value.

In that first sequence we have the record of a great venture, of the Divine warrant for that venture, and of the great adventure which resulted therefrom.

The great venture is recorded for us in these first words: "And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters." We are immediately arrested by the fact that our story begins with this word "and," and therefore cannot be considered complete in itself. We must go back, then, in order to seek the inspiration of the request of Peter. Here we need not tarry, for the whole story is very familiar. The disciples had been sent by the Lord across the sea. In obedience to His command, they had set the prow of the vessel toward the opposite shore; and when the wind was contrary, instead of doing that which would have been comparatively easy, tacking, and so finding the wind helpful instead of a hindrance, because loyal to the Lord, they kept the prow of the vessel toward the shore which He had indicated; therefore the wind was contrary, and the waves threatened to engulf the boat. Suddenly there was added to the terrors of the storm the nameless terror of the approaching phantom, and quite as suddenly the phantom, with all its terror, had merged into the Presence and the infinite music of the Master's voice, "It is I; be of good courage."

It was then that Peter said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters." If we are at all to appreciate the value of this story, we must attempt to discover the mood of the soul of Peter when he made that request. Imaginatively I am with him in the boat. With him I have been conscious of the rising of the waves, the beating of the wind, and the threatening perils. With him I have lost the fear of the storm itself, the fury of the elements, in the new, fresh fear of the approaching phantom. Suddenly with him I have known all fear banished by the consciousness of the Master's presence and the sound of His voice.

By coming thus into sympathy with Peter in those previous experiences we discover that when he said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters," he was expressing a desire for fellowship with his Lord in an activity beyond that which is possible to human weakness. It was a high hour of spiritual experience. The mood of his soul was an exalted one. He asked that he might be permitted to make a great venture in fellowship with his Lord in those powers that made Him superior to the forces and perils which had threatened to engulf their frail bark. Observe, moreover, that the method of the venture was that of absolute obedience. The very request was

obedience on the part of Peter to the command of the Master, "Be of good courage." Let me be courageous indeed; let me prove my courage; let me enter into all the possibilities of courage by walking on these waters; let me climb the higher heights and prove superior to the forces which filled my soul with terror not an hour ago. It was a high and exalted hour of spiritual desire and vision, and he waited for orders: "If it be Thou, bid me come." It was not a venture inspired by pride or presumption; it was a venture under the authority of Christ, waiting for His command. I wonder whether we really can follow Peter in his experience at this moment. It was such an hour as comes not often to a human soul; it was such an hour as, ever and anon, comes assuredly to every follower of the Lord, an hour when a new vision of the Lord's power produces in the soul a great aspiration after closer fellowship with Him in the exercise of that power, an hour when the Lord, having broken upon the spiritual consciousness in new glory, the heart desires to share His mastery over the forces that threaten to engulf the life. It was a high and holy aspiration, a passionate desire to do exactly what he saw his Lord was doing.

I think that even that attempted analysis of the mood of the man's soul and understanding of his request would not help us, and would hardly carry conviction, unless we had that word which follows, the word of Jesus, that answer that came across the storm-tossed waters, and was heard by the man who made the request, the single, quiet word, "Come." That was admission of the possibility of the impossible. It was a call to Peter to prove in actual experience both his Lord's own challenge, "It is I; be of good courage," and Peter's answering challenge, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee." "Come," said the Lord; the impossible is possible in that mood of the soul, in that attitude of the heart, in that consent of the will.

Yet we have the whole story before us, and we know there was more than that in our Lord's word. He knew perfectly well that within a few minutes that man would be floundering in the waves, and yet He said, "Come." By that "Come" He called Peter to the discovery of weakness in himself of which he was unaware, and that in order to make a new discovery of the power of his Lord in the victory and realization of the very desire that first prompted his request. "Come," said Jesus, the impossible is possible in that mood of the soul. "Come," said Jesus, and prove the challenge of My word, "It is I," and answer the inquiry of thy word, "If it be Thou." "Come," said Jesus, and discover the weakness that lurks within your own heart in order that I may bring you to a new realization of My power, and that through proof of weakness you may find mastery, that in fellowship with Me you may fulfil the high aspiration of the soul which asks to do the impossible.

That call of the Master was immediately followed by the great adventure. Here I ask you to notice with what particular care the evangelist records the fact: "Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus." He did the impossible thing. It is not the story of a man who, foolhardy and impulsive, ventures over the side of a boat who, immediately sinks. It is the story of a man who, suddenly lifted to a wonderful height, saw the possibility of the impossible in fellowship with Christ; asked for permission, waited for orders, and, having received them, obeyed and actually walked on the waters just as his Lord had been walking on the waters. His Lord said "Come," and without hesitation Peter yielded his will to the will of his Lord. With what result? He placed the frail, feeble foot of his humanity on the wave, and he did not sink; he was upheld; he did the impossible thing under the authority of his Master; his will was yielded to his Lord, his body was yielded to his yielded will, and between the frail man and the Lord Christ a union was established so that as he touched the waves Peter did not sink beneath them. He "walked upon

the waters, to come to Jesus."

That was a great moment. Whatever follows cannot undo that experience. Within a very few minutes the waves were threatening to engulf Peter! Yes, but he had walked on them! However much I fail and falter today, and the waters buffet me, I have walked on them. Whatever follows cannot undo the experience. Nay, rather, the experience will have its effect on anything that follows. As presently we see this man when the waves are engulfing him, and hear his cry for help as he sinks, we know that the cry is the result of the demonstration of his Master's power which he received when he accomplished the impossible.

Now we turn to the second stage of the story, the account of a sudden defeat. Because this part of the story is the best known, we need not tarry with it. On the other hand, because it is here in spite of the exalted experience, we must not omit it. There are three things I shall ask you to note. First, the reason of the defeat, "He saw the wind"; that was the assault of sense. The sensual and the spiritual are close together; but they are forever antagonistic. One must always reign, and whichever reigns masters the other. If the sensual reigns, the spiritual is dwarfed and imprisoned. If the spiritual reigns, the sensual is kept within true bounds and never allowed the mastery of the life. Suddenly, while Peter walked on the waters, his soul was assaulted through the senses, he became conscious of the fierceness of the wind, and the anger of the waves; and with his eye removed from the Master he became conscious of that assault, he felt its power. What next? Not immediately the sinking, but first the spiritual experience. "He was afraid." As the spiritual and sensual are always close together and forever antagonistic, so also are faith and fear; but they are mutually exclusive. Where faith reigns, fear has no place; where fear reigns, faith is driven forth. In the moment when Peter yielded to the assault of the senses and, taking his eyes from the Lord, looked at the waves and became conscious of the winds, fear dispossessed faith. The failure of faith came when he became conscious of self as opposed to winds and waves. Then he knew the actuality of his humanity, its weakness and its inability to walk in the difficult and impossible place.

Immediately following came the material, physical expression of that spiritual experience of the failure of faith, "beginning to sink." Paralysis of power followed when the wavering of faith failed to make connection with the Lord. He found the waves too weak to hold him, strong enough to drown him, and he began to sink.

That was a sad experience, but it was not the final one. The sadness of the failure does not for a single moment prove that the adventure of faith was unwarranted. The fact that a man today is failing, faltering, sinking, engulfed by waves on which he ought to be walking, does not call in question the fineness of the heroism, the splendor of the high hour of vision, when he made his adventure of faith. The sinking is not the inevitable sequence of the walking. The sinking is the outcome of failure to keep in close connection with the Lord, resulting from the assault of the senses, so that fear takes the place of faith, paralysis the place of power, and he is back again on the ordinary level of human life.

So we come to the second sequence, which tells the story of fulfilled purpose. Once again in Peter we have a great venture of faith, "Lord save me," as great a venture of faith as that in which he had said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters"; but the mood of the soul was different. The mood of the soul when Peter asked to walk on the waters was that of high vision, holy ecstasy, a new aspiration after power. Now the mood of the soul was that of a sense of

defeat. The high possibility was passing in paralysis, the sense of strength that came to him as he walked on the waters was ebbing away. Out of the depths and sense of helplessness, in the agony of conscious weakness, he made another venture of faith. It was no longer a request that he might be permitted to make some high adventure, it was no longer a request that he might be permitted to do anything; it was rather a request, helpless, direct, urgent, agonizing, to the Lord to do everything; but it was the request of faith. I believe you will discover its inspiration in the fact that Peter, in that hour of sinking, when the waves were engulfing him, saw the Lord still superior to wind and waves. With that vision of the Lord still victorious, where he was failing, faith expressed itself again, and made a new venture, "Lord, save me."

What followed? "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him." That was the first thing, the hand of power. Closely following came the word of love, rebuking Peter, and revealing the secret of his failure. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Little-faith is one word in the Greek; old Trappe the Puritan translated it petty-fidiam, small-faith. Jesus revealed the secret of failure in the question, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" What does "doubt" mean here? I shall seem to rob it of its significance if I am literal. Why didst thou duplicate? That is the root significance, not the final interpretation. Why didst thou think twice? Surely not that, you say! Yes, just that. But is it not wise to think twice? It depends on what the first thought was. Dwight Lyman Moody once told me that the only mistakes he ever made in his life were when he took time to think twice.

Little-faith—it was a beautiful, gentle word, but a rebuking word. Little faith: do not accuse me of irreverence when I say it was a nickname, such a name as love will invent when it desires to rebuke. Peter was Little-faith because he thought twice. "One thing I do" is better. If that had been true of Peter he would never have sunk. It was the thinking back on the decision of a high resolve, it was pausing to question the resolution formed in a high mood of soul, that caused his failure.

Jesus did not say that to Peter until He had saved him. He did not bend over Peter in the waters and say to him: You see what you have done for yourself; if you will confess it I will help you out. No, first the hand was outstretched, and the mighty power of Jesus lifted him; then when Jesus had placed him back on the waves He looked at Peter, and with a smile of tenderness and that sweet tone of which no other friend is capable, said, Little-faith, why did you think twice?

And now Peter walked on the water again. He did the very thing he wanted to do at first. First, he did it; second, he failed to do it; but, third, he did it, he walked back with his Lord on the water to the boat.

I like to look at these two sequences and see how they balance each other; there were three movements in the first, and there were three in the second, and they stand over against each other.

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the waters." That is the first movement in the first sequence. "Lord, save me." That is the first movement in the second sequence. The second movement in the first sequence is this: Jesus said, "Come." The second movement in the second sequence is this: "Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him, and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The third movement in the first sequence is this: "Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters, to come to Jesus." The third in the second

sequence is this: They walked on the waters and went back into the boat. It was a high hour for Peter when he suddenly thought that if indeed it were Jesus it would be possible to do the impossible thing; it was a high and glorious hour of light and vision and power in which he rose superior to the forces that master and trammel and limit. Then came the defeat, the wind and the waves, and paralysis, and sinking. But that is not the last thing. The last thing is, he walked back with his Lord over the waters.

Where did Jesus take him? Back to the boat, to the commonplace, to the everyday. High hours are given to us, and they all have their value, and if we will but answer their lure, their call in the strength of our Lord we shall have marvelous experiences of power to do impossible things; but He will take us back to the boat, we must cross the sea in the ordinary way.

Yes, but there is still something more. Jesus went with Peter into the boat. He is not only the Lord Who Himself is able, and Who enables others, to do impossible things—He is the Lord Who can walk the sea from shore to shore, yet He will stay in the boat with His people as they take the commonplace way. Matthew tells us that so they crossed over to the other side. I turn to the story in John. He does not tell us about Peter's heroic attempt and failure; he tells about the storm, and he tells us that when Jesus came on board, immediately they were at the land whither they went. Was that a miracle? Oh, no, that was the canceling of distance in the comradeship of love. Matthew says, We crossed over; we had all the distance to do, and we did it and worshiped as we did it, for He was with us. John says, We were there at once, because the Lord was with us in the commonplace boat.

Hours of exalted aspiration are to be prized, and they are to be acted upon. They will surely come to us. To every child of God, to every man and woman of faith there are sure to come hours when suddenly some new possibility of power is seen. Such hours are to be prized, and they are to be acted upon; and they are to be acted upon as Peter acted, in obedience to the Lord, waiting His word, seeking to know His will. The impossible is possible to faith, and there is no need to sink. Here, as I have often had to say, I am speaking of things that are in advance of my own actual experience; but I know the truth of them. Peter need not have sunk, and I need never sink in such circumstances. The life triumphant over storms and waves and billows is possible.

But we do sink. We also know the assault of sense, the hour in which we see the waves and the wind in its effect on the waves. Some of us are seeing that tonight, children of God, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, men and women who have known high hours of vision, glorious hours of victory, but who came up to the service in the house of God this evening discouraged, frightened about tomorrow. They are conscious of the assault of the senses. They are looking at the waves, listening to the howling of the wind; they are calculating the number of the demons from the standpoint of their own personal life and power. Faith is giving way to fear, power is being paralyzed. What shall they do? Let them do exactly what Peter did; cry out, "Lord, save me." But yesterday we said, Lord help us to do this thing, let us do this in Thy strength, energize us for high activity, nerve us for victory. But we cannot say that now; buffeted, bruised, and broken, the billows are overwhelming us. What then shall we say? It is no use asking Him to help us do anything; we are falling, sinking. Then what shall we do? Let each cry, "Lord, save me," do everything, undertake for me.

I am after the man who is buffeted by the waves, I do not know who he is; and let those of you who cannot follow me be patient, I am talking to some buffeted soul. Let any man or woman thus buffeted, cry out, Lord save me. That is the cry of faith, and as surely as it is made, that hand will be outstretched to grip and hold you; and He will look at you presently, when He has saved you, and He is quite sure He has gripped you, and He will say, O Little-faith, why did you doubt? He never rebukes the soul in whom the principle of faith is found, however much it waver, until He has restored that soul to the place of power. You will find that all through the Bible. You will find it in the parable which we call the parable of the Prodigal Son. Have you ever thought how unwise a thing it was, from the standpoint of worldly wisdom, for that father to go and meet the boy? Imagine him running to meet the boy, running to meet him in his dirt, embracing him in his rags. Is not that all wrong? Is not the proper thing first to induce the young man to recognize what he has done, and to hold him aloof until he confesses his sin? That is what you and I would do—unless the boy were our own; but that is not what God does. He takes the sinner in his rags and sin and filth, and wraps round him His arms of love; then the boy can confess. Hold him aloof and demand from him a confession of his guilt, and you harden him—or you would if I were the boy. Let me lay my proud head on the bosom of God, and my heart is broken, and I will sob out all the story of my sin. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and took hold of him," and then He rebuked Peter; but never until He was walking on the waters with Peter. That is our Lord. That is our Master.

The final word is that at last in comradeship with the Master our highest aspirations are fulfilled. Do not miss that from the story. Do not look on that early sequence as a high dream of faith that was utterly defeated. Do not think of Peter in that moment as being on some altitude which he never reached again. He reached it again. He reached it by the way of defeat. The Lord brought him to His side, and walked back with him over the waters to the boat. That is what Jesus did to the very end. That is what He meant when He said to Peter, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. You have asked Me where I am going. I am going to prepare a place for you, and in spite of your denial of Me I will come again and take you to the place I am getting ready for you.

Fainting, failing, faltering hearts, take courage! That high moment of soul when you saw the possibility of doing the impossible is yet to be realized, and even though you say I started on the way and was victorious for a week, a month, a year, but I am down again, and the waves are beating me and the wind is mastering me, the Master Himself is at hand. Cry out to Him, and His hand will be on you in power, and the sweet rebuke of His love will be in your ears; then He will walk with you on the waters for a little way, and then He will take you back to the boat—from Sunday to Monday, from the hill to the valley, from ecstasy to everyday experience; but He will be there with you, and the memory of the hour of vision and of triumph will be to you a perpetual inspiration. So may we take heart and be filled with new faith, and in comradeship with our Lord go forward through the storms until He brings us to the desired haven.

Matthew 16:16. The Sifting Of Peter.

Matthew 16:16.

The Sifting Of Peter.

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Matthew 16:16

He began to curse, and to swear, I know not this Man of Whom ye speak.

Mark 14:71

The contrast is a startling one. It is at first sight almost inconceivable that these are the words of the same man, and yet we know that they are. Then surely we have placed them in the wrong order, and ought first to have read "I know not the man," as language used in the days before he met the Christ; and his declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," must have been made subsequently. We know, however, that this is not the case. If, indeed, they have been read in their right order a long period must have intervened between affirmation and denial. As a matter of fact, not many months had passed between the hour in which Peter rose to the height of that most wonderful confession and the hour in which he denied any knowledge of Jesus. So startling an association of texts compels us to inquire the meaning of the change which has come over Peter since that glorious and radiant hour when, amid the rocky fastnesses of Cæsarea Philippi, in answer to the challenge of his Lord, he had said the one thing the heart of Christ had been waiting to hear, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I do not propose to consider particularly that confession of Peter, nor do I intend to dwell at any length upon the final words. I am desirous rather of asking you to consider with me the awful possibility of passing in brief time from the most blessed confession to the most dreadful denial. I think perhaps I might take another text from which to preach tonight, and if I did so it would be by way of application at the beginning as also at the close. The text would be, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The story of Peter's denial is the story of backsliding, and it is a story which reveals the truth which we perpetually need to remember, that no man openly backslides at once. The open blasphemy is always preceded by heart backsliding. If we would understand how it came to pass that from that height of affirmation to that depth of denial a man could pass in those few brief months, we must go back to the occasion of the affirmation. We must see what happened immediately afterwards, and then attempt to trace the downward progress of this man, until from mountain height we find him in the depth of the valley.

You will remember that immediately after Peter's confession our Lord told him of His purpose concerning His Church and His Kingdom.

For the first time He introduced the band of disciples, in so many words, definitely and plainly to the fact of which He had been conscious all the while, that He could win His crown only by way of

the cross. Immediately, while the light of the glory of the confession and the annunciation concerning the Church was still about them, I find the first movement in Peter's backsliding. He said to Jesus, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." As we hear him we are inclined to sympathize with him. We feel that we would have said exactly the same thing under the circumstances, and in all probability we would have. That, however, does not prove Peter to have been right. We may make every excuse that we will—and it is better that we should—for his limited light, for his fickleness and feebleness of character, but the fact remains that in that moment he passed out of immediate and close fellowship with his Lord.

When this man could not see Christ's method he withdrew from absolute and unquestioning loyalty to his Lord. So long as Jesus had spoken to him of building a Church, Peter remained loyal; but the moment Jesus ceased to speak about keys and began to talk about a cross he was puzzled, astonished, disappointed, confused. He could not see how suffering could be the way to the throne. He could not see how his Master's going to Jerusalem and being ill-treated, and finally—for he would use no other word—murdered, could issue in the building of that glorious Church to which his Lord had just made reference. He could not see how keys of any kind could be of use to him if the Master were to pass into the shadow and lose His life. Neither could I have seen it, nor could have you. So far, let us confess our perfect sympathy and fellowship with this man. It was a strange thing Jesus said to him. He had so hoped for the coming of a Deliverer. The Deliverer had come, and at last, Peter, in a moment of supreme, divine illumination, had looked into the face of the long-hoped-for Messiah and confessed Him. In his confession there was the outpouring of his soul's hope of triumph, and victory, of the breaking of chains and loosing of the captives, of the restoration of order and the setting up of the Kingdom of God. I am growingly reluctant to criticize Peter, but for our own soul's profit let us see wherein lay his mistake. It lay in the fact that he was not prepared to accept his Master's estimate of necessity, was not prepared to follow his Lord simply, even when he could not understand his Lord's method. That is the common mistake of the saints. We have all made it, and therefore, sooner or later, we have found ourselves at a distance from Jesus.

The great lesson of Peter's denial is that wherever there is arrested development of Christian life there must follow deterioration of Christian character. Life must make progress to higher levels or sink lower until it pass away. I must follow Jesus Christ wholly and absolutely without question, or there will be an ever widening breach between Him and myself, until I, even I, presently shall deny Him with blasphemy over some flickering imitation fire. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Your affirmation of loyalty is God-inspired. Your confession of Christ is true to the deepest within you. You are perfectly honest and sincere. God help you to follow Him all the way, whether you understand Him or not. God help you at least to keep by His side when clouds almost obscure the vision of His face, for if once you let yourself question His wisdom and His word there will be distance which must increase. Let us trace this in the history of Peter. The whole subsequent story is written for us in chapter 14 of Mark's Gospel. I am not going to read the whole chapter, but I desire to take you from stage to stage, that you may see how this man passed away from Jesus ever a little further, until we come to the open denial in our second text. Remember that the first step was taken when Peter shunned the cross because he did not understand it, and questioned his Lord's wisdom when He declared the method necessary to His crowning. You will find the next

step in verse 29 of this chapter. "Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then going on to verse 37, I read, "He," that is Jesus, "cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Notice, the Lord did not call him Peter then. He went back to the old name. The next step is to be found in verse 47. "A certain one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear." Mark is Peter's friend, and does not mention his name, but we know that the "certain one" was Peter. There we have the next step, and increased distance. I pass on to verse 54 and read, "Peter had followed afar off," and I think he seems yet a little further away from his Lord. At last he was sitting with the officers and warming himself in the light of the fire. Then, in verses 68-71, a serving maid charges him with being a Galilean, and tells him that his speech betrays him, and thrice, and finally with curses, he denies his Lord. Let us now notice the stages.

First, refusal to follow his Lord into the mystery of pain and refusal to believe that his Lord knew best. Next, boastfulness. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." What follows? Failure in the devotional life, inability to watch, and the cessation of prayer. Then zeal without knowledge, hastiness, the drawing of a sword, not under the command of his Master. What next? Following afar, because his Lord had rebuked him for his zeal without knowledge. Then in the chill of the night we see him warming himself over a fire which the enemies of Christ had built. And then a laughing serving maid and a lying Apostle. Christ is denied, and the man of the mountain is in the depths, the man who thought he stood has fallen. The first refusal to follow Jesus has culminated in dastardly and blasphemous denial.

These things need looking at a little more closely, that we may see how perfectly natural is the story. After the refusal of the cross Jesus Christ sternly rebuked Peter. "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." From that moment there was in the heart of Peter a consciousness that his Master was not able to trust him, a strange sense of distance between friends which is the most agonizing consciousness that can ever come either to one or the other. This man, knowing his Lord's attitude to himself, will endeavor to lessen the sense of distance by loud profession. John tells us the story far more fully than it is stated in Mark. Peter said, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Jesus looked at him and said, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards." Then Peter asked, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee even now? I will lay down my life for Thee." Jesus answered, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." Then Peter said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." I pray you notice the principle which questioned his Master's knowledge working itself out. Peter said, in effect, "You do not know me, although You think You do. You are suspicious of me. You think I will deny You, but I will never deny You." Moreover, his boastfulness is of that most objectionable kind which puts itself into contrast with other people. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." In that moment Peter went further from Christ. Jesus set His face toward the cross even though there was not a single soul able to sympathize with Him. He gathered Peter, James, and John, and took them to the somber shadow of the Garden of Gethsemane, and, withdrawing Himself from them, told them to watch. He returned to find them asleep, and going up to the man whose profession had been so loud He said, "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Peter boastful had become Peter

unwatchful. Peter confident in himself had become the man who did not feel his need for watchfulness or for prayer, and thus in the presence of the very agony which the Lord had predicted he fell asleep. Suddenly, upon the darkness of the night there flashed the torches of the foes of Christ who had come to arrest Him. Peter was there. He had been boastful and unwatchful, and now he must make up in zeal for what he lacked in devotion. He drew his sword and smote Malchus, cutting off his ear. The Lord immediately rebuked him, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Then we read that "Peter followed Him afar off." Oh, the humanness of it. Peter said in his heart, "I can do nothing right. Whatever I say is objected to. Whatever I do is wrong. Very well then, I will drop behind." He "followed afar off." Do you see the growing estrangement? He still followed, but it was "afar off." It was a cold night, and there was a fire in the court, round which the soldiers and enemies of Christ were gathered, in all probability laughingly discussing the arrest they had made, and perhaps wondering what it all meant, for in the garden they had seen the glory flame from His eyes and had fallen to the ground. They were now perhaps laughing at their own stupidity and superstition. Peter was cold, and he warmed himself at their fire. When a man gets there it is so easy for a laughing servant girl to make him swear that he never knew his Friend at all.

Let us turn from the picture, keeping it in our minds only as a parable and a teaching. Let me say to you that the steps of Peter's downward career as here revealed are always the steps manifest in backsliding from the Lord. It begins at some moment when it is impossible to follow Him by sight and we decline to follow Him by faith. It begins in some crisis when He calls to something higher than we have known, and because the way to the higher level is the way of the cross and shame we draw back. Backsliding begins in some moment when we think we understand the genius of Christianity better than Jesus Christ does. You say, "Does man ever so imagine?" Ask your own heart if you have not come there often. I believe and confidently affirm that the fact that you have left the Church of God and have turned your back thereto does not constitute the first thing in your backsliding. You were disobedient to the heavenly vision. Some of you have entered only today upon that first phase. The cross has confronted you, and you have shunned it. You did not believe that could be the pathway to the higher life of crowning and victory, and you have put your own thinking concerning Christian experience over against the clear command of your Lord and the word of your Lord, and immediately there begins to be distance between you.

The next thing inevitably will be boastfulness. I want to put this as practically as I know how. I am always afraid of the man who tells me he is never going to deny Christ. I have been in experience meetings, in testimony meetings, in fellowship meetings, and I have heard men say, "Whoever else turns his back upon Jesus Christ I am never going to do that." If a man should so speak in a Church meeting over which I presided he is the man I would watch over and pray for, because he is in danger. The moment a man says "I will never leave Thee nor forsake Thee, O Christ, though everyone else shall," that man already has passed a little way out of communion with his Lord. The trembling soul in the Church who says, "I walk fearfully, I am afraid lest I should grieve Him, I am afraid lest there should grow distance between me and my Lord," I need not watch over. That trembling soul will be found close to the Lord all the way.

What follows boastfulness? Always the same thing, lack of prayer and lack of watching. Young man, when you commenced your Christian life you were very regular in your habits of prayer, you were afraid of yourself and watched constantly for the coming of the enemy. You burned bridges

behind you which, alas, you are beginning to reconstruct today. You dared not walk down certain streets after you broke with evil and set your face toward following Jesus Christ, but you are beginning to frequent those old paths again. You are not quite so watchful as you were, and you excuse your lack of watchfulness by saying that there is no necessity for that carefulness and narrowness which characterize some people. There is great need for narrowness when you are walking amid precipices. The man who is sure he is safe, and who ceases to watch and drops prayer out of his life, who imagines he can live an independent life as a Christian soul, is falling already.

What follows? Again, always the same thing as in the case of Peter—zeal without knowledge. The Church of God today is cursed by zeal without knowledge. This is the age of fussy feverishness, and there are multitudes of people who are attempting to overtake their lack of spiritual life by service. It is not very long since a young lady came to me and said, "I feel my Christian life is at a very low ebb. I feel that there is distance between me and my Lord, and I do not know how to improve matters. Do you not think it would be a good thing for me to take a class in the Sunday school?" I replied, "A thousand times, no. In the name of God leave the children alone until you are right with God yourself." The same thing expresses itself in the invitations which sometimes reach me. People write, "Will you come and conduct a few days' special services? We want to see a deepening of our spiritual life, and we think if you came and held some evangelistic services it would help us." I invariably reply, "Get right with God first and then, if I have time, I will come." You cannot make up by doing for what you lack in being. It is well for us to remember that the last act of Divine surgery which the hand of Jesus ever performed was made necessary by the blundering zeal of a distant disciple.

What follows zeal without knowledge? A slackening of the zeal, following afar off. Let us speak in the language of the day—one attendance at church on Sunday instead of two! On Sunday morning looking out to see whether it is wet, a thing you never do on Monday morning. I do not say these things to raise a smile. If they amuse you, God have mercy on you. Following afar. Following, yes, I will not deny you are following, but afar.

If you are far from Jesus you get cold, and then you want to warm yourself, and you begin doing it at the world's fires. There are all sorts of fires—they are called fires, but they are not, they are only painted. You begin to talk of narrowness. Your father did not allow you to play cards or go to the theater, but you are so chilly you want something to warm you. There are scores of men who ought to be tramping to Calvary with Christ who are playing with the devil's fire trying to get warm. That is what I mean, nothing more and nothing less. What right had Peter at that fire? It would have been better for him to have been starving outside in the cold night than getting warmth there. The world knows you. You cannot drop the speech of Jesus all at once. You are of the same country and kin as He is, and your speech will betray you. You will have someone say to you when he meets you at one of the world's fires, where you are trying to get a little warmth, excitement, enthusiasm, "I thought you were a Christian."

Where ought we to draw the line as Christian people? Where the world draws it for us. The worldly man has a very keen and accurate estimate of what the Christian man ought to be. You will have some servant maid, someone in the world, say to you, "Really, I thought you were a Christian." God have mercy upon you—that is the moment of your last peril. You may not curse. You may not

take any oath on it. You may adopt the method of the age in which you live, and smile, and say, "Yes, I used to be." You may just as well swear at once. I do not think any worse of Peter for swearing that day. It is the fact that he denied his Lord which is the tragedy. The blasphemy was the expression of his nature. If he had remained true to Christ the same impetuous, impulsive nature would have expressed itself in a song instead of an oath. It is the relationship that is wrong, the distance is wrong. It is the tragedy of denial that is the agony of the story.

To you who have drifted away from nearness I might use the Apostle's words, "Ye were running well; who did hinder you?" This, is the final thing, that you break with the Church and break with the ordinances of religion, and break with the external manifestation of Christianity. You are now known among your friends as a man who once held religious views. God have mercy on you! The swearing word was the accident of a temperament; the denial was the sin of a soul. The fact that you do not swear is simply due to your temperament, and yet you may even do that. It is not long since a dear and beloved friend of mine, a Christian minister, sheltered in his own home for the last weeks of his life a man who had been a preacher of the Gospel, an evangelist, winning souls, but who, when my friend found him, was preaching his sermon and praying in a public house for a pint of beer. You say, "I will never do that." Beware, that is what Peter said. You say, "I could not sink to such a level as that." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You have made a glorious confession. It was sincere, true, high, noble, God-inspired, Christ-approved, and yet close to you is the depth of denial.

Another thing I would say to you is that if you have wandered the slightest distance from Christ your only hope of safety is in immediate return. You may return now, if you will. Listen to me—and God forgive me if there has been anything of undue and un-Christly sternness even in my tone—have you denied Him? Have you actually gone so far as to say you never knew Him? He will take you home now if you will come. Next Sunday evening I hope to speak about Peter's home-coming, but you need not wait for next Sunday, you can get home now. You have gone a long way from Him, but He has not left you. You say that is a contradiction. There are all sorts of contradictions in Christianity, and its paradoxes are its most blessed things. You are as far off from Him as denying Peter, but He is close to you; and tonight, without sign or sound for man's knowledge, fling yourself back upon His heart and He will blot out all your sin and love you freely. You are not as far as that perhaps. Where are you? Place yourself. Warming at the world's fire? Quit it. I am talking to those of you who have confessed Him and known Him, but have lost your power for witness because you are at a distance from Him. Are you warming at the world's fire? Leave it. Jesus can make fires for you if you are cold. He made one for Peter by and by. I know you are tired. I know the drab drudgery of the life that some of you live, but do not make the mistake of trying to warm yourself at painted fires. Go back to Him. Walk with Him. Talk to Him. Serve Him. Let Him talk to you. Then, suddenly, in the midst of the chilliness, you will say, "How my heart burns within me when He talks to me by the way." Or are you following afar off? Is the old first love, the love of betrothal and espousal gone? Press back to Him. It is you who have changed, not He. It is your love that has cooled, not His. Press back to Him, and you will find Him ready to receive you even now. Or are you among the number of those who are neglecting prayer in order to do more work for God? Do less work for God and pray more. Are you neglecting the hour of devotion because you have so many things on hand in connection with the Christian Church? Get some of the things out of your hands and hold your hands empty to heaven for a

longer space, I charge you. I often think it would be a blessed thing for the Church of God if for a little while she attempted to do less and worshiped more. The doing, in the end, would be not less, but more and mightier. I pray you hasten back to the mountain top, the place of quietness and seclusion, of keen watchfulness and prayerfulness, which marks your sense of dependence. Perhaps you have not come so far as this, and are a little angry with me tonight. You are saying, "Why does the preacher so talk to us? We shall never do this thing. I am never going to deny Christ." Is that the language of your heart? Then it proves you are a distance from Him. The nearer a man is to Christ, the more conscious he is of his own frailty, and the more is he possessed of strength, though he hardly knows it. The nearer a man lives to Jesus Christ, the more acutely conscious is he of distance between him and his Lord by reason of his Lord's superior strength and his own frailty, and the more he presses closely to Him.

Are you shunning some cross which His will appoints, setting up your own estimate of His will and method as against His? Do not shun the cross. He sees the cross as a means of grace. It is an old word and we have made a proverb of it. We used to engrave it upon bookmarkers—"No cross, no crown!" It is the whole philosophy of Christian life. Remember the cross there is not His cross, but your cross. Did He not say, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." It is when a man shuns the cross that he passes out of intimate fellowship and begins the downward course.

My final word is that already twice said. Wherever you may be, you need go no farther. Turn back to Him and to His love, back to His heart ere you rest tonight, and you will find Him the same loving, almighty Saviour.

Matthew 16:16-17. The Great Confession.

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The Great Confession.

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 16:16-17

These words were spoken at a time of crisis in the ministry of our Lord and in the experience of Peter. Indeed, they constitute the pivotal words of that particular crisis. The confession of Peter completed the first stage of His work, and prepared for the second and final one. When, in the consciousness of one man, the victory of the Kingdom propaganda was won, the King set His face toward the passion whereby all men might pass into the Kingdom.

Our present theme is that of the confession of Peter, and there are four matters to which I propose to ask your attention. First, the man who made the confession, Simon Peter; second, the confession he made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; third, how Peter arrived at that conclusion, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven"; and, finally, what that confession meant to him subsequently.

First, then, the confessor. There is no man in these New Testament stories more fascinating than Peter. Every story about him interests us, and the more the portraiture of him is considered in its entirety, the more powerfully does it appeal.

The reason for this persistent fascination is to be found in his essential human greatness, and in his constant failure to realize that greatness. The appeal is twofold. We cannot read these stories of his life without feeling how near akin we are to him in certain essential, elemental qualities. We cannot read the story of his life without feeling how near akin we are to him in his blunders and failures.

His human greatness consisted in the fact that the elemental forces of human nature were all strikingly present in him. Other of these New Testament men were in certain senses greater than Peter: Paul in massiveness of intellect, John in mystic intelligence, James in practical ethical convictions; but in this man we find all the elemental forces. In mental power he was a great man, quick of thought, eager of inquiry, swift of conclusion. In emotional power he was equally great, a man of hot affection, burning anger, deep depression. In volitional power he was capable of making courageous ventures, heroic choices, dangerous experiments. All these elemental forces manifest themselves in him, and we are all in touch with him at some point.

We are brought into even closer kinship with him as we observe his failure. He was a man of mental power, yet characterized by strange blindness: to use a phrase of his own, "seeing only the

things that are near," and unable to apprehend them in their true spiritual relationships; his was a mind quick, eager, swift, and yet never arriving at any final conclusion in his own unaided strength. He was a man of fine emotional power, yet contradicting the impulses of his love and wounding his lover. He was a man of remarkable volitional capacity, capable of courageous venture, heroic choice, dangerous experiments, and yet suddenly becoming craven in his fear and faltering by the way.

This is the man who at Caesarea Philippi uttered the confession which brought our Lord to the culmination of the first stage of His mission. He was more than a Hebrew, he was a human. He was a type of all men in his elemental forces and experimental failures.

We now turn to the central matter, the confession which Peter made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." There are very spacious values in these words. I believe that Simon said far more than he understood; in the thing he said there were values far beyond his comprehension, and the context proves it. I shall ask you, then, in considering this confession first to observe its structure, and from that observation to attempt to gather its value.

Evidently there are two parts to the confession. The unifying words are the first, "Thou art." After them the confession divides into two parts. First, "Thou art the Messiah"; second, "Thou art... the Son of the living God." The first was a confession on the part of Peter, of what he understood concerning the office of Jesus; the second was a confession on the part of Peter as to what he understood concerning the nature of Jesus.

"Thou art the Messiah." I use the Hebrew form of the word in order to interpret the thought of it. It becomes emphatic when we place it in contrast with other things that had just been said to Jesus. He had asked His disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"; and they had replied, "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Now we are immediately arrested by the fact that our Lord was not satisfied with these confessions, and that He proceeded to discover whether His own immediate disciples had formed the same conclusions—not to discover for Himself, but to discover to them—as He said, "Who say ye that I am?" Then came the answer, "Thou art the Messiah."

The multitudes had detected in the teaching of Jesus the prophetic note, the supernatural note; they imagined that He was a prophet of the olden times returned. Peter confessed that He was the One to Whom all the prophets had given witness. John had only foretold His coming. Elijah had been a prophet of reform; but he was not able to establish the Kingdom. He passed, having failed, having only borne witness to righteousness and truth. Jeremiah had uttered his lamentations over the failure of his own ministry, and in the dungeon had sung the songs of hope that told of Another Who should accomplish that in which he had failed.

But the deeper note of the confession, and the more surprising one, was that in which Peter declared his conviction concerning the nature of the One Who had come to fulfil the prophetic outlook and aspiration: "the Son of the living God."

This confession reveals three conceptions in the mind of Peter: first, the Messiah; second, the Son; finally, "the living God." We shall appreciate the value of the confession a little more perfectly if we take these three conceptions in the other order, for in the confession Peter moved backwards, from that final fact of which he was then convinced, through that which lay behind it,

giving it light and power and glory, to the fundamental truth of his religion. Let us begin where he ended. First, "The living God"; second, "the Son of the living God"; finally, "the Messiah." Thus the whole confession becomes far more glorious and wonderful.

Peter expressed in one brief phrase—which seems to be incidental, which passed his lips at the close of a confession—the central fact and truth of Hebraism, "the living God." That was the fundamental fact in the faith of Abraham, and in the law of Moses. The belief in one God was the very rock foundation of the national life. That this God was living was the message of all the prophets. With fine scorn, one of them had said of the idols which men worshiped, "There is no breath in them!" The God of Israel was "the living God," not a mere abstraction, not a mere force permeating the universe, having no personal consciousness, and therefore of no help to man in his personal life; but God, personal, alive, active—the living God. That was the fundamental religious conception of the Hebrew nation, and the ministry of Christ in the case of Peter had not destroyed it, but had emphasized it, set the seal of authority on it.

We now come to the central matter in the words, "the Son of the living God." Without staying to refer to the general teaching of the Gospel stories and the Epistles in detail, let me ask you to observe that the whole of the New Testament teaching concerning Jesus is that He was, in a lonely, unique, specific sense, the Son of God, not a son, but the Son; not one among a company of sons, but alone, different, separate from all others in the mystic relationship which He bore to God. This confession of Peter harmonizes with the whole teaching and attitude of Jesus toward this subject. He never spoke of Himself as on a level with other men in this respect, but maintained an attitude of separation whenever He approached the subject of His relationship to His Father. Even after resurrection He did not say, Our God and Father, but My God, and your God, My Father, and your Father. He did not identify Himself with men in His relationship to God. We have no account, for example, in any of the gospels that He prayed with His disciples. He prayed in their presence, but when He prayed He prayed on a different level. You will remember one remarkable word that seems contradictory, "As He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him." Have you ever observed that carefully? He was praying alone, away from them, while yet they were present. He never used the words to describe His own praying that He used to describe the praying of His disciples. When He told men to pray the word He used indicated an attitude which He never used of His own praying. When He spoke of His own praying He spoke of inquiring of a Father. When His mother came to him and said, "Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing," using the word that had been current in Nazareth to describe his relationship to Joseph, He replied, "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" In the first recorded words that fell from His lips He assumed separate and lonely relationship to God.

At Caesarea Philippi Peter looked into His face and said, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." The confession spoke of the revelation of the Father through the Son, and indicated a conviction of the closest relationship between the Father and the Son. Let us flash on the confession of Peter another confession to be found in the writings of another disciple, whom Peter never understood until after Pentecost, and of whom he then became the close friend. John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." That is the same thought of identity with the Father, revelation of the Father, co-operation with the Father. Thus in loneliness and separation, unique,

special, specific, never repeated and never to be repeated, Jesus was "The Son of the living God."

So we come to the last conception, which was first in order of statement in the confession of Peter. This One was the Messiah, the Administrator in human history of the Kingdom of God, the One Who came for the fulfilment of all aspiration, hope, confidence, and, consequently, the One Whose authority over the affairs of men is ultimate and final.

Having thus considered the confessor, and his confession, let us inquire what was the value of the confession? Peter had arrived at a conclusion, in harmony with the declaration with which God commenced the propaganda of His Son. As our Lord was setting His face toward His public ministry the Divine Voice declared, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." That was the Divine thought of the King. At Caesarea Philippi Peter had come to the conviction that this was true; he had arrived at a conclusion in harmony with the Divine conception.

There were limits to the meaning of this confession in the case of Peter. Jesus was Messiah, King, Head of the Kingdom; but Peter had no true conception yet of the nature of the Kingdom. Jesus was the Son of God, and therefore was Administrator of the Kingdom of God; but Peter did not comprehend the method by which the King would enter into His Kingdom. Such was the scope, and such were the limits of the confession. Here was a man, human as we are, with all our elemental forces manifest in him, with all our failures also, looking into the face of Jesus of Nazareth and saying, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

How did he arrive at the conclusion? Here we are not left to speculation; we have the clear statement of our Lord. Jesus looked back into the eyes of Peter and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." In that word of Jesus we have a threefold revelation concerning the method by which Peter had arrived at that conclusion. First, a negative word, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Second, a positive word, "My Father which is in heaven" hath revealed it unto thee. Third, a mediatorial word, a word indicating the method by which God had done it, the word revealed.

First, the negative statement, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Flesh and blood was a common phrase in Hebrew speech, which, in this connection, simply meant that the confession was not the result of human discovery, either his own or that of any other man. In the twentieth verse I read, "Then charged He the disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ." Why? Because flesh and blood cannot reveal it; no disciple can carry conviction to another man. Christian workers cannot convince men that Jesus is the Son of God. Our business is to introduce men to Christ, that through Himself they may come to know Him by Divine revelation. The attempt of "flesh and blood" to reveal Him is the secret of all heresy concerning Him. Therefore He said to His disciples: You are not called to prove to men Who I am. They have their opinions; you know me by Divine revelation, and your business is to take Me to men, and to bring men to Me; let Me be the intermediate One between My Father and men; let the Father show them Who I am, that I may show them Who the Father is. That is the meaning of the charge to the disciples.

The positive word, "My Father which is in heaven," is a clear declaration that the conviction which resulted in the confession was the result of Divine revelation.

That brings us to the central word, revealed. It is derived from the word apokalupto, which means to disclose, to unveil. My Father hath unveiled this to thee, hath disclosed this to thee. How had God done it? I want to suggest to your most earnest consideration that I do not believe that our Lord meant that in some sudden illumination direct from God, as apart from Himself, the revelation had come. Not in the whisper of the morning, or by the thunder of the noonday, or through the voices of the night, had God told Peter the secret. How, then, am I to understand this word "revealed"?

I turn to another passage of Scripture, not that it has any direct connection with our theme, but that there is light in it which will help us. Take the opening sentence of the book that bears the name, Apocalypse, Revelation, and mark the construction of it carefully, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show." The unveiling of Jesus Christ—that is the key to the Book of Revelation. However much we may differ in detailed interpretation of the book of Revelation, we shall agree that it contains three great movements: Christ unveiled in His personal glory to John, Christ unveiled in the mysteries of His grace, walking amid the candlesticks, unifying the Church; Christ unveiled in the process of His government by which He will ultimately set up the Kingdom. Now, how was He thus unveiled? God gave Him, Jesus, to show Himself; God, through Jesus, made Jesus known, as Jesus, through Himself, did make God known.

When Jesus at Cæsarea Philippi said, My Father hath revealed it unto thee, hath given thee this apocalyptic, inspiring confession, He claimed a victory for Himself. God had revealed to Peter the truth about Jesus through Himself, and so had ratified his fundamental convictions concerning God Himself. "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God." How did he arrive at that conclusion? By listening to Jesus, by following Him, by the processes of His ministry, until, at last, everything culminated in the conviction which expressed itself in the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I repeat, it was not the result of any whisper of the morning, thunder of noontide, or voice of the night, but the victory of the Word of God made flesh, and so revealing the truth about Himself and about God to man, that man through that revelation should come to conviction concerning Jesus, and confess Him as to office, Messiah, and as to nature, Son of the living God.

Let us glance over the whole process. How did it begin? It began in that wonder which John alone tells, of how one day Andrew found Simon and took him to Jesus, and Simon and Jesus stood face to face for the first time. Then Jesus said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Rock." In that moment the living God spoke to Simon through His Son, though Simon did not know it. There was music in the word; there was in it the revelation of a perfect understanding, as though the One had said, I know you, your name, your father, you are Simon, the son of John; and there was in it a prophecy, you shall be Rock. No one had ever said that of Simon before. It was the one thing no one ever expected him to become. What did he do? He surrendered, and went after the Speaker. Now, about two and a half years had passed away. Simon had listened to Jesus teaching, had heard the great ideals He had presented; he had watched His ability, had seen Him Master in every department of human life, material, mental, moral; he had seen all evil forces yielding to Jesus' word and banished from human life. He had watched Him, and had come into close personal touch with the supreme facts of the personality of Jesus. What were they? Let John tell us, "Full of grace and truth," that is, full of tenderness and thunder, full of love and light,

full of compassion and passion for righteousness. Through the years Peter had followed and observed.

Now mark the crisis. The circumstances were those of apparent failure. The religious teachers were refusing Him, the political leaders were against Him; yet there came to the soul of this man the overwhelming sense that his Master was superior to all the forces against Him, and all the experiences of the years crystallized into a master conviction and he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." God had been speaking to Simon through the Son, and when Simon came, apparently by this human and utterly natural process to conviction, Jesus said,—let me say it reverently as in His holy presence—I have won a victory in one human soul. God through Me has spoken, so that this soul is illuminated concerning Me, and consequently is admitted to an understanding of the Father; My Father hath revealed it.

Finally, what did this mean to Peter subsequently? I observe in the first place that this great confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi constituted an irrevocable committal to Jesus. I know what is in your mind! You are saying, not irrevocable: Peter denied Jesus! I say again, an irrevocable committal. Through all the failing experience that apocalypse remained with him, and that confession held him. He was constantly recalled to it. Almost immediately Christ was rebuking him, and calling him the adversary, "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto Me." Then there were six days of silence, in which no disciple seems to have spoken to Jesus at all; they were so amazed because He had spoken of the Cross. Then followed the holy mount and the Lord in a new and mystic glory, and Peter said, It is good to be here, let us build tabernacles! By a voice from heaven he was recalled to Caesarea Philippi, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Didst thou not say at Caesarea Philippi, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God?" "This is My beloved Son... hear ye Him." Thus he was recalled to his committal.

Presently in the judgment hall, when in answer to the flippant mocking of a serving maid, Peter denied his Master, the Lord looked at him, and that look recalled the committal, recalled the confession, and Peter went out broken-hearted to weep bitterly.

Then in the days that followed, days of darkness and despair—when he was saying within himself, The last words He heard me utter were words of denial, and my Lord is dead—suddenly, somewhere, no one knows where, somewhen, no one can tell exactly when, the same Son of God met him, and talked to him; and when long afterward he sat down to write a letter he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." When Jesus came to him and had a private interview with him, he was taken back to his confession that Jesus stood related to God as Son to Father, and the resurrection was the new birth of the old hope that had seemed to perish by the way of the Cross. I repeat, it was in irrevocable committal, and the power of the apocalypse and the consequent confession never departed from him.

Further, that confession resulted in his having to tread a new pathway of teaching and of testing. That confession was followed by the immediate glory of our Lord's confession to him, "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church." That was the result of his confession.

Then followed the first explicit mention of the Cross. The shadow of the Cross had never fallen on the lives of these men before. Our Lord never told them about the Cross until after that great confession. Having made it, it was necessary that they should know not only the King, but the method by which He must come into His Kingdom.

And yet another result was the appalling discovery to Peter of himself. Jesus took the man who had made so high a confession as that, and showed him himself. You will all forsake Me, you will all deny Me, you will do it even after this crisis! Never, Lord; if all others do, I will not! It was indeed necessary that Peter should discover himself; even by the way of denial he must come to an understanding of his own weakness.

And still once more. There was a new finding of the Lord in resurrection glory. To that we have already referred.

The ultimate confirmation of the confession is found in Peter's letters. Let me read the opening doxology of his first letter, and the closing injunction of his last letter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.... Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Let me close with the word to which I have already drawn your attention. "Then charged He His disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ." That conviction can come only by Divine revelation, and that Divine revelation can come only from the Father through the Christ Himself. What, then, is our business? To bring men to Him, to lead men to consider Him for themselves, to present Him as He is, not affirming thus or so, or attempting to compel men to accept our view, but to let them see the Lord. In proportion as we do that in life and in ministry, in that proportion we are bringing men to the place where they will know Him by the Divine apocalypse.

If there be some man listening to me who asks how he is to arrive at that ultimate conclusion, I say to him, You must begin exactly where Simon began. Where did he begin? He met Jesus. You have done that already. Hear me, I am not talking in a country called heathen, but in this church. You have met Him. You say, I am not sure of the doctrines concerning Him. I reply, you have nothing to do with them yet. He has made appeal to your will, shamed your sin, troubled your conscience, revealed a new ideal of life, suggested to you the possibility of a nobler life. But I want to be quite sure about all the doctrines, you say! No, you do not; and you never will be until you know the Lord!

What did Simon do when he met Jesus? He listened to Jesus, he followed Jesus, and came at last to conviction and confession; and beyond the confession he passed through processes of discipline and of testing, of growth and development, until at last in true communion with his Lord he died for Jesus—as he had said he could in the days of feebleness—and glorified his Lord in that dying. So must we begin if we ourselves at last would make the great confession.

Matthew 16:21-22; John 21:18-19. The Turning Again Of Peter.

Matthew 16:21-22; John 21:18-19.

The Turning Again Of Peter.

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee.

Matthew 16:21-22

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me.

John 21:18-19

Let us read these passages again, omitting all save the actual words of Peter as recorded in the first, and those of Jesus as recorded in the second. "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.... Follow Me."

Last Sunday evening I spoke to you on the subject of the sifting of Peter. This evening we turn our attention to our Lord's method in restoring him. Ere we trace the stages in his turning again, I would notice the significance of the two passages we have read. The one reveals the first movement of Peter out of harmony with his Lord, when for the first time Jesus definitely told His disciples that He must needs go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed, and the third day be raised up. Peter stood in the presence of the announcement astonished and afraid, and instead of following his Lord, though unable to understand Him, he said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." The Master immediately rebuked him in the sternest terms, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." When I come to the scene at the seashore, and to the final movement in it, I hear Jesus saying to him, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.... Follow Me." Thus Jesus brought Peter back to the cross, to his own cross. Peter failed in following when his Lord's cross was presented to him. He was restored to following when his own cross overshadowed his life. Yet there are many stages between that movement out of fellowship and that perfect restoration. This evening, to magnify His grace and to attempt to set forth the patience and persistence of the Lord in seeking after and restoring His wandering ones, I shall ask you to follow me as I attempt to trace the stages of the

restoration, for the man turning his back upon the cross is not immediately transformed into a man who consents to the cross and comes presently to glory in the fact that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his Master's Name. There was much—I speak it very reverently, although the much of human speech is an awkward word to use of the Divine activity—there was very much for the Master to do for this man. While we shall see Peter all through our study tonight, I pray you attempt to fix your eyes, not on him, but on the Lord, marking the method of His mercy and His patience, how He commenced to make a highway home for this Peter, and how He went after Peter persistently until He set his feet once more upon the broad highway of His commandment, and commissioned him to all the toil of the coming years.

Last Sunday evening we were able to trace the downward steps of Peter in the first chapter of Mark 14. In order to follow consecutively the method of the Master's restoration we cannot confine ourselves to one chapter, but shall attempt to follow it by turning to different passages in the Gospel writings. The first to which I shall draw your attention is to be found in Luke 22:31-32. Here the Master is speaking to Peter, and says to him (and here I very deliberately use the marginal rendering), "Simon, Simon, Satan hath obtained you by asking, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." That is the first step in Peter's restoration. The "you" is plural and the reference is to all the disciples: "but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." That is singular and personal and immediate. This does not mean that Jesus did not pray for the rest, but it is a special word for Peter. While He tells Peter that he, in common with all the rest, has been obtained by Satan for sifting, He singles Peter out because he is especially in peril.

The first step our Lord took toward the restoration of this man then was that of storing up in his mind words which would be of service to him in the days to come. In one flash of light He revealed a most startling situation. A human soul stands between two forces, the forces of evil and of good. "Satan hath obtained thee by asking... but I made supplication for thee." Satan has been asking about this man. Jesus has been asking about him. Over against the asking of Satan, Jesus has put His own asking. All that will pay for further consideration, and we postpone it. What I now want you to notice is that Jesus told Peter He had prayed for him that his faith should not fail. Was that prayer answered? Certainly. You say, "But his faith did fail." Never. He denied his Lord. Yes, and believed in Him all the time. What did fail? His courage, his hope, his obedience, not his faith in the Person. The faith of the disciples of Jesus never failed. The two men walking to Emmaus had lost hope and courage and confidence, but not faith in Him. They had lost faith, in the sense of having certain convictions about Him weakened, but they had not lost their faith in Him personally. They thought He had been mistaken. They thought He had failed. They said, "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." Their use of the verb "to hope" was in the past tense. They had lost their hope, but they said He "was a prophet mighty in deed and word," and that suggests that they still believed in Him. The faith which saves is not faith in anything heard about Jesus, but faith in Jesus. Peter's faith never failed. His courage failed, his obedience failed, his hope died out; but he never lost his faith in Jesus. I think the hour came when he thought his faith had failed. A great many people come there. But Jesus had prayed for Peter before his denial, before the outward and evident manifestation of the inner heart backsliding. He had taken an advance march against the enemy, had garrisoned the soul of His child against all the sifting of hell. Thank God, that is my Saviour. I hope He is your Saviour, dear heart. So He begins His method of restoration.

In this same 22nd chapter of Luke we find the next step in verse 61. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Just a look. I cannot interpret it. There was no theology in it. There were tears in it. Have you ever asked yourself quietly when you were alone how Jesus looked at Peter? I think I know how I would have looked at him. I am very much afraid, from what I know of my own heart, that if my bosom friend had denied me in answer to the give and take of a servant girl and the mockery of brutal soldiers just when I most needed him, when my life was being sworn away, my look might have been one of anger. Jesus did not look that way. I know He did not. If there be anything of His grace in my heart I might not have looked in anger, but I think the highest thing that could ever have been said of my looking would be that I looked reproachfully at Peter. Do you think Jesus did that? Do you think that day in the judgment hall He looked back where Peter stood by the fire cursing and swearing, and there was something in his look which said, "Peter, is that you? Can you add to my sorrow? Can you help to break my heart?" I do not think He looked like that. I think He was too self-emptied. I do not think there entered into the thinking of Jesus the sorrow caused to Him by His friend's denial. I think His was a look aflame with the pity of God. I think it was a look ineffable in its tenderness, which said to Peter, not, "What sorrow art thou causing Me," but "What sorrow art thou causing thyself?" I think it was a great look of compassion, full of tenderness divine. Overwhelmed with personal sorrow, He forgot His sorrow in pity for the grief which this foolish man was bringing to his own heart. That interpretation may not be correct. Therefore I simply remind you of what happened and ask you to find out when you are alone what the look meant. Of this at least I am sure, that look broke Peter's heart. I do not think a look of anger would have done that. I almost question whether a look of reproach would have done it. But, oh, the pity of those eyes! The unveiling of God's compassion in those eyes! Peter hurried out into the night. He is coming home. A man is always coming home when he quits the world's fire for the dark night in penitence. There are many tears and sighs and dark hours to go through, but he is coming home. My dear man, are you broken-hearted because you have denied your Lord? Have you quit the world's fires? Are you very dark and desolate and lonely in this house tonight? You are on the way home.

What is the next thing? We turn to chapter 16 of Mark's Gospel and find it in the 7th verse. An angel is speaking to the women, and in the midst of his speaking we hear these words: "Go, tell His disciples... He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." I am so glad you have Bibles and have noticed the omission. "Go, tell His disciples and Peter." I do not know how much that means to you. Have you ever thought how much it meant to Peter? The message was all wrapped up in two words, one of which was his own name, and the other the little conjunction which linked him to the other disciples—"and Peter." Imagine for a moment, if you can, what Peter had been passing through. Think of the judgment hall where they swore His Lord's life away, and condemned Him to the brutal death on the cross. Think reverently how they had buffeted Jesus and bruised Him: and think all the while, if you would understand it, from Peter's standpoint. Think how they nailed Jesus to the cross, how they watched Him die, and remember that Peter was saying in his heart, "He is dead, and the last thing He ever heard me say was that I did not know Him." May God deliver every man and woman in this house from the unutterable sorrow of losing a loved one, which loved one last heard you say an unkind thing. If you said an unkind word as you left home tonight, get up and go home and put it right. It may become the agony of your life. Think of it in Peter's case. Cannot you hear him saying, "I denied Him with curses, and swore I did not know Him, and He heard me, and He looked, and I have never had a

chance to say another word. He is gone. He is dead. Those eyes cannot look at me now. Those lips cannot speak to me. The hand that leaned on me as we walked will never rest on my shoulder again. He is dead." I have sometimes tried to go with Peter through those days and nights after the Lord looked at him, and I cannot help feeling that they were days and nights of unutterable sorrow.

It is the resurrection morning. The women are early there. They have seen a vision of angels, and are coming with swift steps to the disciples. Peter is somewhere among them, on the outskirts. He felt he did not belong to them. They had all run away, but he alone had denied his Lord. The women are delivering their message and Peter is listening with the rest. Suppose the women had said, "We have seen an angel who told us to tell His disciples that He has gone into Galilee, and we shall see Him there." Peter would have said, "That is not for me. He wants to meet the disciples, but I have denied Him. I have cut myself off from the disciples. I have put myself outside." The Lord knew it. The Master of angels, while yet in the spirit world, charges His angel to tell the women to deliver His message to the disciples and Peter. The women come to the disciples and say, "The angel said we were to tell His disciples and Peter." Immediately there is new hope in the heart of that man, or I do not know human nature. I am not sure that the sorrow did not grow. There is nothing breaks a man's heart like the sign of forgiveness. If I have wronged you and you are hard with me, I shall be sorry; but if you are kind to me you will break my heart. Peter is saying, "He has something to say to me. I wonder what." So the Lord has taken another step towards bringing him home. He has sent him a message.

The next step in the restoration is found in Luke 24:33-34, "And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." The Lord had revealed Himself to the two men walking to Emmaus, and they hastened back to Jerusalem with the news that they had seen Him, and found the eleven gathered together, and it was the eleven who said, "The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." I do not know how you are going to place that chronologically. I am not sure whether He appeared to Simon before He walked to Emmaus with the two men, or somewhere in the interim between His breaking of bread with them and their getting back again to Jerusalem. I think probably it was before the walk to Emmaus. When the two men from Emmaus got back to Jerusalem to tell what they had seen they found all the disciples filled with wonder and saying, "The Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon." Where He appeared to Simon I do not know. What He said to Simon, I dare not tell you dogmatically. There is no record of it. The fact that He appeared to Simon is chronicled, and it was so important that Paul knew about it, and when he mentioned the appearances which demonstrate resurrection, he included this, "He appeared to Cephas." This is the Lord's next step in bringing Peter home, a private, lonely interview. I am so glad I do not know where it happened. I am so thankful there is no record of what passed between them. There are things which pass between a penitent soul and Christ which no third man ought to hear. When Jesus is restoring a soul He is sure to get that soul alone somewhere, and when all others—apostles, prophets, and teachers—are outside, He will talk with that soul face to face. So He talked with Peter. I wonder if you will be patient while I try to imagine one thing He said to Peter. I am almost reluctant to do it. I would not do it if I had not had some such experience myself. I think, among other things, there would be something like this: "Peter, I told you I must go to the cross." Only you must not imagine that Christ said it as you say to people, "I told you so." It was not said in a triumphant tone, to rebuke him. "You did not want me to go to

the cross; but, Peter, I have been to the cross, and by My blood your sins are forgiven." I think He said something like that. I think Peter learned in that private interview the meaning of the cross. I think he felt the virtue of the cleansing blood. I think in that hour Peter found out the folly of his own mistake and the wisdom of his Master's method.

Thus finally we come back to John 21, in which we have the last movement in the restoration of this man. May I remind you of the steps already taken? First, Jesus prayed for Peter. Second, He looked at Peter. Third, He sent Peter a message. Fourth, He had a private interview with Peter; and now, in the story of the events which took place on the shore of the lake, you will find the fifth, sixth, and seventh steps. What is the fifth? He challenges Peter's love. The sixth, He gives Peter back his work and commissions him. The seventh, He puts the cross in front of Peter and says, "Follow Me."

First, He challenges Peter's love. There is such wonderful fitness in all our Lord does, and in all His ways. I know it is an old story. We have often read it, but it will not harm us to look at it once more. There are contrasts and similarities in this story which I think are very wonderful. Peter had denied the Lord in the city. Jesus takes him away from the city, with its rush and roar and all its seductions, to the sea. Peter had denied Him just past midnight. Jesus meets Peter there by the sea in the early morning hour, just when men are beginning to see clearly, and from the boat they looked and saw a stranger on the shore. Peter had denied Him by a fire which Jesus' enemies had built. Jesus builds a fire now for Peter, and calls him to confess Him over that fire. Peter had thrice denied Him. Thrice our Lord calls him to confess. Is there any picture in all the Bible more full of beauty? How does Christ begin? Is this a formal court to which He brings Peter? No. It is an informal breakfast. No ecclesiastical commissioners these before whom Peter is arraigned, but fishermen with the tang of the sea and the weariness of the night upon them, and the hunger of robust physical health. The risen Christ has built a fire, and cooked fish and prepared bread, and He said to them, "Come and break your fast." He waited on them. You did not miss that, did you? He made them sit down and He waited on them. When they had broken their fast, and the light of the morning was all about them, the fire glowing there, and no sense of chilliness, Jesus looked at His servant and said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" It is somewhat wearisome and academic, yet one must point out the difference between these words translated love. When Jesus asked that question He used a high word, which indicates love upon an intellectual plane. "Lovest thou Me with the love of illuminated intelligence?" That is not what He said, but that is what is in the word. Peter did not use that word but took a lower word, a warmer word, an emotional word. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Immediately Jesus said to him, "Feed My lambs." Then once again He said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" And still the word is the high word with all the light of God upon it. Peter again got down to his lower word, a very beautiful word nevertheless. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Peter dared not climb to Christ's high word. Then listen, the third time the Lord came down in great grace to Peter's lower word, and said, "Simon, son of John, fondly lovest thou Me?" That is why Simon was grieved. Not because Jesus asked him three times if he loved Him, but because the third time He descended to the lower word. He did not like His Lord to come down, but he had learned such a lesson that he dared not climb to the high word. "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I fondly love Thee." Did Peter ever climb to the high word? Yes. Read his Epistles. He never uses the lower word, always the high word of Jesus. That morning by the lake he just kept on the level of the love

he knew he possessed. Mark the contrast in this man. A little while ago he had said to Jesus, "Thou dost not understand me. Though all should forsake Thee, I will not." Now he says, "Lord, Thou knowest all about me. Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." A little while ago, over the fire the enemies of Jesus had built, Peter had denied Him thrice. Now, in the sunlight of the morning, in the warmth of the fire Christ had built, Peter thrice confessed Him, and every time Jesus restored him to his work, and so brought him back into full and perfect fellowship and communion.

I am bound to stop for a moment to say, in God's name get away from the fires Christ's enemies are building for warmth. He knows how to build fires. There is in your nature no demand that He cannot supply. You want enthusiasm, passion, fire? Let Him build it and kindle it and inspire it. Man, if you go to the world's fires, you will burn your passion out until it is nothing but ashes and dust upon the world's highway. Go to Christ's fires and He will take your passion and make it flame and burn. That seems to me to be the value of this fire which Jesus built. He is saying to men for all time, "If the morning is chill and you want warmth I can build your fire." So He has called for His child's confession, and has given him back his work by the fire which He Himself has built.

There is one other step. He looked at Peter once more and said, "Follow Me." "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." I think we may interpret that, "When you were young you were your own master, and had your own way, and went whither you would. You made your own choices and decisions. Presently, when you are old, when you most need comfort and help, there is a desolating experience waiting for you, Peter. You will stretch out your hands and another will gird you and carry you whither you would not." John listened, and he understood these mystic sentences better than any other man, so he put in a parenthesis, "Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Accepting that word of John as true, when Jesus said these words to Peter He meant to say to him, "When you were young you had your own way. You have been impulsive, girding yourself in great independence; but there is an hour coming when someone else will gird you, and bind you and crucify you." It is as clear a picture of the cross as came to Peter at Caesarea Philippi. But that is not all Christ says. Do not go away and think that is all. "Follow Me." What does that mean? "Peter, you were afraid of my cross. I have endured the cross. I have despised the shame. I have risen from among the dead. I am your Lord and Master. Peter, you are coming to the cross. Follow Me. Come My way. My cross leads to My crowning. Your cross will lead to your crowning. My dark day of shame issued in My glad Easter morning of glory. All the perils of your pathway and its pain but lead you out to the Kingdom and to life. Follow Me." And Peter followed Him. He was not changed into an angel, for the very next thing he tried to do was to interfere about John. "What shall this man do?" He is still the same impetuous, impulsive Peter, but he has heard the supreme word. I take his Epistles up presently and read them and find in all of them the glory of his knowledge of his Lord. I find in all of them his consciousness of the infinite meaning of the cross. I find in all of them his consent to the cross and his abandonment to its claims, and I find in all of them his triumphant, glorious victory.

The Saviour who brought Peter back is waiting for you. How shall I say it? Now the crowd hinders me as it always does. I cannot say it, but thank God that while I am witness of these things so also is the Holy Ghost. Listen now to the voice of the Spirit Who is speaking in your heart. Far away are

you? Broken-hearted, disappointed with yourself? You have denied Him and He has looked at you. He sends you a message, He is at your side. He wants to talk to you all alone. Let Him. There has been no cooling of His love, no failure in His faithfulness. Where are you, man? Wandering yet? Are you broken-hearted and disappointed? You have gone very far from Him. You have been very mean toward Him. You have dragged His name in the dust, but still His arm is about you. His hand is on your head, and it is a pierced hand. He presses you to His heart, against His wounded side. Trust Him. God help you to trust Him. At last, by the way of the cross, He will bring you also to the crowning. Is there distance between you and your Lord? Cancel the distance. Get back to Him. His love is stronger than death, mightier than the grave. No waters can quench it, and He loves you. I have no other word to say. God help you to see it for yourself, and to obey it by returning to Him now.

Matthew 16:21. The Pathway Of The Passion.

Matthew 16:21.

The Pathway Of The Passion.

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.

Matthew 16:21

The ultimate things in the earthly mission of our Lord were implicit in His doing and teaching from the commencement of His public ministry. They became explicit after the confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi. This is very clearly revealed in the synoptic gospels. Matthew and Mark distinctly say so, "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples..."; and Luke's narrative by its method corroborates Matthew and Mark. Until this moment He had said nothing concerning His Cross. In many a deed He wrought, and in many a word that passed His lips, there is evidence that He knew of His Cross from the beginning; but there was no definite statement, no clear word spoken.

In the words of our text we have a careful summary of the teaching of the dark days between Caesarea Philippi and Calvary. The statement of Matthew here is characterized by simplicity, definiteness, and clarity; and enables us to approach our Master as did those first disciples, in order to consider what He Himself thought of the final things of His earthly mission.

As we reverently attempt to do this, let us remember that these men failed to apprehend His teaching until after Pentecost; and, recognizing that the promised Interpreter is with us, let us reverently and confidently depend on His guidance as we attempt to consider this revelation of the Master's conception of the meaning of the last things in His earthly mission.

Before considering the statement itself, let us observe the Speaker, the occasion, and the hearers. In proportion as we can get back into the very atmosphere of that hour at Caesarea Philippi, and the days that followed, and are led to the Cross, we shall be able to understand the Master's statement better.

Let us first look at the Speaker, Jesus, and attempt to see Him as they, to whom He gave this teaching first, saw Him. What did they know about Him at that time? They knew much concerning His personal perfections, for I have no hesitation in saying that the supreme attraction to the early disciples was that of the Lord Himself. They knew Him as One characterized at once by majesty and meekness, as One—if I may use so simple and colloquial a form of speech—with Whom no one might take liberties: full of dignity, characterized in one sense by an aloofness even from His nearest disciples, so that they never came into very close fellowship with Him. Yet He was characterized by meekness in the broadest, largest sense of the great and wonderful word, being perfectly familiar with His disciples, and treating them as His own close personal friends. Thus they

could tell Him any secret, even though they knew they could not discover His profoundest secrets, and could come to Him with all their sorrows, even though they must always have been haunted by the sense of sorrows in His heart which they could not fathom. Paradoxically, He attracted them at once by the appalling severity of His terms and the infinite compassion of His method.

They had also caught something of the glory of His great ideals. If I believe they were first attracted by the personal charm of Jesus, I also believe that they were held near to Him by these great ideals and spiritual conceptions, His reverent and yet apparent familiarity with eternity and with God, that touch of His spirit on all things material in answer to which the material things flamed with the light and glory of the spiritual and abiding realities. They were held, too, by His conceptions of God and His conceptions of man, and His ideals as to the material conditions of life, as He had revealed them in the great Manifesto, and in many incidental words—that strange and wonderful picture He had given them of the Kingdom in which the King is Father, in which men will have no further anxiety for the luxuries of life, but will have a new joy in the possession of the necessary simplicities. There, He taught them, the carking care about what men shall eat and what they shall wear will pass away forever, there the passion for righteousness will be supreme, and the realization of the law of love will come to its great and gracious fulfilment.

They knew Him also in the strange activities of His ministry, a ministry of pity and of power. Unable to understand Him, they had nevertheless seen Him Master in every sphere of life: in the material realm, in the moral realm, in the mental realm, so that with apparent ease he wrought wonders that amazed them and always in answer to the surging pity of His own heart.

Thus they followed Him until He led them to Caesarea Philippi; and it was this One Who now began to tell them that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer, and be killed, and be raised again on the third day.

The occasion of the commencement of this teaching was that of the hour of triumphant foretelling following on the great confession of Peter. Peter had said to Him, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and in answer to that Jesus had made His great confession to Peter and His disciples, "On this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In that confession we detect the note of assured triumph: no doubt, no tremor, no conditions; certain, positive, complete: "I will build... and the gates of Hades shall not... I will give unto thee the keys."

"From that time Jesus began to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priest and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

The confidants to whom He told this hitherto unrevealed secret loved Him. They were those—I dare not have said this if He had not said it a little further on, under the very shadow of the Cross—who had continued with Him in all His temptations. They were those who were appointed to share His toil and His travail. They were, as at last, in infinite love and appreciation, He termed them, His friends.

We turn now from these preliminary matters to the teaching itself. The method I propose to adopt is that of examination and application. Our principal business is that of examination. By way of

application, I shall only suggest some possible lines of inquiry.

As I have said, Matthew summarizes all the teaching from Caesarea Philippi to Calvary in these words: "He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

In that summary there are three matters which demand our attention. The first is that of the compulsion: "He must go unto Jerusalem." The second is that of the course marked out: "suffer... and be killed." The third is that of the consummation: "and the third day be raised up."

We begin with the compulsion, for that is the supreme note: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must." He did not from that time begin to show them that He was going to suffer and be killed, and be raised again. That is true; but to read the text so is to entirely miss the supreme note and emphasis, that which must occupy our attention, the declaration that He must. The idea of the word is quite simply that He was bound, that He was in bonds; the thought is that of compulsion.

We are immediately at the very heart of our meditation as we ask the question, Why must He go to Jerusalem? I desire, as quickly as may be, to deal with certain insufficient reasons which have been advanced as explaining this declaration of compulsion.

It has been said that the "Must" is simply a revelation of the fact that He was in the grip of circumstances, that we should interpret the "must" by the inevitability of the circumstances into which He had now come as the result of His own ministry. A careful reading of the story will show that this was not so. If He go to Jerusalem He must suffer, He must be killed, there will be no escape. But why go? Why need He go to Jerusalem? His loved ones attempted to dissuade Him most earnestly during the months that followed. Let it be remembered that escape was quite possible at that time. There was no material necessity for Him to walk back into the trap men were laying for Him. Then why could He not escape? It would have been quite easy for Him to leave the region. We have not found the meaning of the "must" when we think of the circumstances in the midst of which He found Himself.

Once again, it has been said that the "must" of Jesus was simply the declaration on His part of devotion to a great ideal, that He had preached the Kingdom of God, and men had refused the Kingdom, and that now He said to His disciples in effect: I have preached the Kingdom, I have enunciated its principles, I have revealed its laws, I have given illustrations of its benefits in the works I have wrought; men will not have it; I cannot depart from My ideal; consequently, I may as well go to Jerusalem, even though I die in the going.

According to that view, there was the suggestion of a touch of hopelessness in the words of Jesus, loyalty to the ideal, but hopelessness as to its ultimate victory. No, that is not it; that is Elijah under the juniper tree saying, Let me die and not live, because this people will not have my preaching; that is Jeremiah cursing the day he was born, because his ministry was an apparent failure; but that is not Jesus, as He set His face toward Jerusalem. That would have been to have abandoned His ideal. If all that He came to give the world was an ideal, a suggestive vision, a few principles of life, then I ask you to remember that such an ideal could best be realized, such a vision be interpreted, such principles be started in their mighty working career, not by death but by life. I quote again the preacher of the olden time, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Moreover, that

method would have contradicted His perpetual habit throughout His public ministry. Over and over again when hostility was stirred against Him He withdrew Himself, hid Himself. More than once He said, sometimes directly to His critics, sometimes by messengers, that He would continue His work in spite of all opposition until the hour should come which they could neither hasten or postpone, and to which He was moving with full knowledge of the issue. To declare that He simply meant that He must be true to an ideal and die for it, shuts out of view entirely the last part of the teaching, the fact of resurrection. We have not yet discovered the meaning of His "must."

Let us now attempt to find it. Here I say solemnly that speculation is not to be permitted. Mere opinion is untrustworthy. Unless the Lord explained Himself we are without explanation. Did He explain Himself? Is there anything that will help us to understand the real meaning of the "must"? Did He ever say anything like this before? If I tax your patience a little I am sure you will bear with me. I am going back chronologically, and I turn first to Luke's gospel.

"I must preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent" (Luke 4:43).

There seems to be very little connection between the two, but I have found my word again, and on this occasion Jesus gave the reason for the "must"—"for therefore was I sent." I go back in the same Chapter of Luke and find the story of how at the commencement of His public ministry, He read concerning Himself from the ancient prophecy;

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,

Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor:

He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovering of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18-19).

That is the first light I have on my text. "I must preach the good tidings of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also." Why? "For therefore was I sent."

I pass a little further back in the chronological order and I find the next incident in John. Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, in the stillness of the night, and once more in this connection the word seems to be incidental, and somewhat separated from our present consideration, but you will immediately see how near it is to the thought that occupies us: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

But why the "must"? We are seeking the reason of it.

"God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17).

One other reference only, this to a very familiar passage. We have gone back now over more than eighteen years, and we hear the voice of the boy Jesus uttering the first words recorded of Him: "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?"

I interpret the "must" at Caesarea Philippi by the "must" as it recurred in the previous history of the Lord from the first uttering of it, and I discover that the compulsion which was laid on Him was that

of the will of God, the fact that He was in the world for a purpose, for the accomplishment of a mission which God had marked out for Him.

From that glance back we look ahead for a moment. Turn to the second Chapter of Acts, and listen to this very man Peter in the power of the Pentecostal effusion. What does he say about the Cross? "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" (Acts 2:23). Just a little further on in the New Testament, in the letter to the Hebrews, the writer quotes from an ancient psalm in application to Jesus and declares this to have been the keynote of all His life of ministry: "Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

He takes away ceremonial and ritualistic offerings that He may establish the final offering.

Gather up these passages in order that the light which comes from other portions of Scripture—that interpretation from the actual words of our Lord, that interpretation of the Holy Spirit on The Day of Pentecost and through the winter of the letter to the Hebrews—may help us to understand the meaning of the "must" of Jesus. Why must? Because He was cooperating with the will of God in order to achieve human redemption. That was the compulsion. Not the force of circumstances drove Him to Jerusalem. Not a heroic devotion to an ideal compelled Him to that last journey. The compelling power was the will of God and His devotion to that will. The compulsion was that of His volitional surrender to the purpose of that will in order to redeem the race. Because that was the compulsion, no friend could dissuade Him, no fear of coming pain could deter Him, no devil could deflect Him. He "must," because that was the will of God for the redemption of man.

Granted this compulsion, we are brought to the consideration of the course. If He will go to Jerusalem He will place Himself within the reach of the power of His enemies. Do you see Him going? Do not be afraid to let imagination help you. That One Whose radiant, gracious personality had wooed and won His disciples, that One Whose ideals had been so high and wonderful, that One Whose ministry had been full of pity and of power, resolutely setting His face toward Jerusalem, He is passing now into the very realm where His foes will be able to wreak their vengeance on Him. But He is not passing outside the will of God. He is walking right into danger, but into danger with God. That is the picture. Do not forget it as you watch the process.

The constituent elements in the life of Jerusalem were all represented in the Sanhedrin. That is, I think, why Matthew was careful to name all the forces that were represented. He must "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes." The elders were the civic rulers, the chief priests were the spiritual rulers, the scribes were the moral rulers.

What were their conditions? Let us begin with the chief priests. At that time, when Jesus was moving toward Jerusalem, the chief priests were Sadducean, and that meant a devitalized religion, as rationalistic religion always is. The scribes were externalists—how He had condemned them!—and that meant degraded conceptions of morality. The elders were timeservers, place seekers and that meant degraded authority.

The Lord was now moving toward Jerusalem. Conflict was now inevitable. There could be no escape. Ideals were in direct opposition. There must be what James Russell Lowell described as

One death-grapple in the darkness

'Twixt old systems and the Word."

As He passed into the region where these men ruled, Jesus went deliberately back to the place where He had denounced the priest, the scribe, and the ruler, denounced them because their rule had issued in the destruction of the city of God. Moved with compassion for the multitudes because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, angry with the rulers because of the suffering of the multitudes, He walked back into their sphere of influence. Now He must "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes."

I do not believe that Christ was referring in those words to any material pain that was coming to Him, or even to any anguish of Spirit that was in any sense self-centered. I think the suffering to which He went was sorrow of heart caused by the attitude these men were taking against Him, which attitude meant their own destruction. If you challenge me for a reason for that interpretation I take you to the letter to the Hebrews, and ask you to ponder most carefully the significant change in the Revised Version which I maintain is necessary to a right understanding of the sorrows of the Lord. The writer says, He "endured such gainsaying of sinners against themselves!" The Authorized Version reads "against Himself," There was textual reason for that, but other renderings of the manuscripts read differently, "against themselves." That was the nature of His sorrow, not that men were wounding Him, but that in their wounding of Him they were harming themselves, in their rejection of the ideals that He had presented they were making impossible the realization of their own lives. He must suffer at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and the sorrows of the Spirit of infinite love and compassion are created when men refuse the call of His love.

But there is another and final step in the course: "and be killed." The death of Jesus was sin in its final manifestation. It can do no other than crucify, for that is itself. That is sin in the heart and essence of it. Once more, it could do no more, for all is done. That is the crime of all crimes. That was the ultimate sin against love. That was the ultimate sin against life. It was the sin of all sins—they killed Him. In that killing, human sin said its last word, had its last day. It was the ultimate in evil; it was the murder of the Son of God.

Look again. Why did He die? He need not have died. He might have abandoned His great ideals; and He might have wiped the dust of the region that would not have His ideals from off His shoes. Or, like Socrates, He might have drunk the hemlock because men would not have Him. But that was not the meaning of His dying. We have seen that the compulsion was not that of circumstances. We have seen that our Lord died within the will of God, delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In His death He was not trying to persuade God to love men. He was God, loving men to the very end and to the very death. In the death of Jesus grace is seen in its ultimate mystery and manifestation. Here we stand in awe. That is the course of the "must": inevitable and unutterable sorrows and death, the death in which sin is compelled to its ultimate outworking, its last word, its final act.

Is that all? If there be nothing else, I have misinterpreted the story. If there be nothing else, Jesus was indeed as a son of man who died high and noble in his aspirations, but beaten, defeated. If there be nothing more, then sin has won, the last word of sin is the ultimate doom of goodness, the

last deed of sin is victory over every aspiration that is high and noble. If there be nothing other than Jesus' death, then God have mercy on me, I am of all men the most miserable.

There is more! There is the consummation: "and the third day be raised up." The overwhelming importance of that word cannot be insisted on too often or too earnestly. I want you carefully to remember that this is not an accidental word, it is not an occasional word. It was persistent through all the teaching of the shadowed days. Take the New Testament and read carefully the Lord's references to the Cross from Caesarea Philippi until it was an accomplished fact, and you will find He never referred to His Cross without also referring to His resurrection. Of course, if some man say to me, I question the truth of the records, I have only to say that such an attitude affects the whole story. It is not honest to make a selection of things that square with a view, and to reject a matter so persistent as this. There is no occasion when the Lord foretold the Cross that He did not also foretell the resurrection.

In view of that foretelling of the consummation what was His estimate of His own death? How difficult it is to answer that question! Let me try. When Jesus died death died; sin ended itself when it grappled with God; God in the unfathomable mystery of pain destroyed the works of the devil.

That is the final note in the must of Jesus. Geographically, Jerusalem; processionally, suffering and death; ultimately, the resurrection and life; spiritually, God willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. God made a way by which His banished ones may return to Him again.

In a few sentences let me suggest some lines of application. There is an immediate illustration in the protest: of a disciple: Not that; that be far from Thee, that shall never be unto Thee! Not what? Peter was talking about the course, about suffering and death. The things he did not understand, which were not in his mind when he made the protest, were the first thing and the last thing: the compulsion and the consummation. The "must" he did not understand; the raising the third day he did not understand. How was he answered? By one of the severest sentences that ever passed the lips of our Lord, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Why? "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." What are the things of men? The course, the suffering and death at the hands of lawless men! What are the things of God? The compulsion of redeeming love, the consummation of redeeming victory. Let that illustration be pondered and we have a line of application.

Is this ancient history? What of religion today? What of morality today? What of authority today? Are we in our national or civic life approximating to the ideals of Jesus? Is not much of our religion Sadducean, rationalistic? Is not much of our morality that of externalism? Is not very much of our authority that of office-seeking, place-seeking, selfishness, forgetfulness of all the shepherd qualities which are necessary to the exercise of true authority?

Are we not coming to an hour in which the Church of Christ has earnestly to ask herself whether indeed she really understands her Lord, whether she indeed is representing Him in the life of today?

I am not criticizing the Prime Minister, not for a moment, but when he had to make his appeal to two sides in the coal strike, which I am not now discussing, he pointed out to the owners that if this dispute went far they would suffer loss of property; he pointed out to the men that if this dispute

went far they would suffer most from hunger. It was an appeal to selfishness on both sides, necessarily so, because we are so far from realization of the high principles and promises of Jesus. How are they to be established? The first thing is that the Church of God shall act under the compulsion which sent her Lord to Jerusalem, the must of the will of God, and the must of the will of God in order to redeem and remake individual men and the whole race.

Is that the master passion that drives us, consumes us, inspires us? If it is, the world will provide the Cross, believe me! And believe me, God will take care of the resurrection! Oh that it may be given to us to see the meaning of the "must," and in some measure to enter into fellowship with God's sufferings and make up that which is behindhand in His affliction.

Matthew 16:21-24. "Spare Thyself!"

Matthew 16:21-24.

"Spare Thyself!"

From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Matthew 16:21-24

This chapter contains a most startling contrast between the two conversations of Jesus with Peter. The first is full of light and revelation and gladness. The second is full of darkness and misery and sadness. The first part of the King's mission, so far as the disciples were concerned, was accomplished. The second part was about to begin. He had first of all to teach them that He was the Christ, and at last one of their number had looked into His face and made the great confession. He now had to teach them that the Christ must suffer in order to accomplish the deepest purpose of His mission.

They had thought of the Christ, the Messiah, as of a King who would correct all that was wrong in the externality of things. They had to learn that the method of Christ was not that of beginning at the circumference, but at the center; not of dealing first with the issues of the sins, but with the sin itself, and that in order to this the process must be one of suffering. He began immediately upon the confession of Peter to tell them that He must suffer and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

I think it is of great importance that we should pay special attention to this statement of Jesus concerning His coming passion. The Son of man must "suffer... and be killed... and the third day be raised up." Had He simply said He must "suffer... and be killed," I might have been inclined to imagine that He spoke as one who merely foresaw the natural issue of what He had been teaching and doing. But He said more than that. He said, first of all, the Son of man "must go unto Jerusalem." He said, finally, the Son of man must rise again. If the foretelling of what His enemies would do to Him was merely the statement of what He knew of them, why must He go to Jerusalem? Why not escape them? That is what Peter asked Him to do. The "must go unto Jerusalem" has in it something deeper and profounder than Jesus' foresight of what His enemies desired to do to Him, for He might have escaped them. The "must go unto Jerusalem" was the result of His loyalty to the will of God, and the impossibility of His deviating from it by a hair's breadth.

Yet it may be said that the "must go unto Jerusalem" leaning back upon the will of God, followed by the must "suffer and be killed," merely meant, I must be true to the will of God, and I now see what the issue will be, these men will kill Me. But when He looks through the blinding mists of the coming passion to the blazing glory of resurrection morning, declaring—"the third day be raised up"—I know He is more than a man submitting Himself to fate. He is a Conqueror moving through battle to victory, through the crisis inevitable, not merely by the will of sinning man, but in the economy of God, to the great and final issue of resurrection and triumph.

The very first recorded word of the Master was, "I must be about My Father's business." He never changed and never deviated. Through teaching and through work, through rebuke and through tenderness, in long journeys and lonely vigils, was always the keynote, "I must be about My Father's business," and as He approached the end, it was the same "must" still. "I must be about My Father's business," and that takes Me to Jerusalem, and that takes Me to suffering, and that takes Me to death, and that takes Me to resurrection.

This morning our attention is to be centered supremely upon Peter, and the effect this new declaration had upon him. Peter taking Him aside, said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." One wonders whether those words carry to our hearts the real meaning of the thing he said. It was, as a matter of fact, an ejaculation. It has been variously translated. Dr. Young translates it thus—Spare Thyself. I personally think that gets nearer to the heart of Peter's meaning than any other. In the Emphasized Bible, Mr. Rotherham has translated it thus—Mercy on Thee, Lord! It has been translated, God pity Thee, Master! My own feeling is that the introduction of the word God there spoils the real thought and intention. I go back to the word as Young gives it to us, Spare Thyself, Lord! One is almost startled by the vehemence of the Master's reply, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me," an offense, something in the way, hindering My progress. I must go to Jerusalem and suffer, and be killed and rise again; thou art in the way, a stumbling-block to My going to Jerusalem, to My suffering, to My dying and My rising. "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"

May I now attempt to fix your attention on these two men, Jesus and Peter. We will allow all the other things in this wonderful chapter to stand on one side, in order to see these two. They stand facing each other, representatives of two opposing ideals, one representing humanity according to God's intention, the other representing humanity in the heart and essence of its failure. Both speak in the presence of the eternities, with hearts strangely moved within them. Both speak the deepest thing that is in them. All the surface things are out of sight.

Peter was absolutely honest and poured out in the word he spoke to his Lord his own thought and conception of life and the way it should be lived. Jesus, in His first declaration, and then in His answer to Peter, as clearly revealed His thought and His conception of life, and what it ought to be.

This is a permanent antagonism. So this morning, as I try to take you back to that scene at Cæsarea Philippi, I want you, if you will, gradually to forget the rocky fastnesses amid which these things happened, and the different robing of these men of the past, and the different circumstances in the midst of which they lived, and God help you, and God help me, to bring ourselves to the test of this revelation. I am standing this morning with Peter or with Christ. Which? I shall make no confession, but I pray God to find out for me and to show me ere this service be over. May He do so also for you.

First, what is this that Peter said, and what is this that Peter meant? The language of Peter was the language of angry and short-sighted affection. I am very anxious to insist upon it that it was affection. If you are going to put into absolute contrast realizations rather than ideals of life, you must contrast Judas with Jesus. Peter had come far upon the way. He had seen the Lord, and Jesus had said to Him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." I want you to see how the highest and the best in humanity, other than Christ, is leagues away from Him. It is Peter who stands in contrast with Christ, the one disciple who had made the confession, the one who had seen the most clearly, and spoken most accurately the truth concerning his Master. It is in this man I find the contrast. His language was that of affection. Lord, pity Thyself. Have mercy upon Thyself. Spare Thyself. And there is infinite pathos in the second part of what he said. Sometimes you may gather a whole tragedy into a word. As Peter said "this," he saw his beloved Master in the hands of the brutal men who had been plotting to take His life. He saw in imagination, keen, awful, accurate imagination, that sacred form battered and bruised, and mauled by the hands of brutal and lawless men. "This shall never be unto Thee." I am inclined to think there were tears in the man's voice, that in that moment his love—and how he did love his Lord—was driving him. This going to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed, this be far from Thee. Peter would not see his Master suffer. That is love, but love intermixed with other things, is paralyzed, blinded, and makes mistakes. Doubt very much, I beseech you, any philosophy which declares to you that love is all, unless that philosophy also declares that God's love contains within it not merely pity and mercy, but holiness and rightness and justness. This word was a word of love, but love mistaken, love not understanding perfectly.

If I have said there were tears in the voice of Peter as he said "this," let me add to that at once: it was indeed the language of anger. The word means to chide. He took Him aside and began to chide Him, to rebuke Him. This does not contradict the other. Love can be angry. Love can speak in tones of bitterness, sometimes when it ought so to do, sometimes when it ought not so to do. Here is a man rebuking His Lord. Pity Thyself. This be far from Thee. This was the language, not of love only, not merely of angry love; it was also the language of short-sighted love. Is it not remarkable that all through the story of those last days, Christ never spoke to His disciples about the Cross without also speaking of the resurrection. Yet how evident it is that the men who listened never heard, or never understood. When Peter said to Him, Pity Thyself, this be far from Thee, what did he mean? The third-day resurrection? No, the suffering and the Cross. Why did he thus ignore the resurrection? Because he did not perfectly understand, or because he did not take time to think and understand, and because in his own heart's thinking nothing could be considered sufficient to balance suffering and death. It was so all the way through. These men never seem to have heard about the resurrection. It was shortsighted affection. Affection blinded in blood. It was affection which could not see far enough. I am almost loth to take an illustration here, for the subject is high and sacred, yet I think I will. Here is a little child suffering from some form of disease which can be healed and cured by a painful operation. The mother says, Yes; but a friend says, Oh, no. It is a shame the child should suffer. They both love the child, but which loves the child the most? The mother who sees through the pain to the redemption and freedom, and to the lack of pain that lies beyond. Peter loved his Lord. He was angry with his Lord. He was short-sighted. He did not see through to the end of the suffering.

This language of Peter, which was the language of angry, short-sighted affection, expresses the common philosophy of fallen human nature. First of all, the language of Peter indicates man's misconception of the first duty of man. What did Peter mean when he said, Spare Thyself? He meant, Master, your first duty is to yourself. Please forgive me putting Peter's word into so up-to-date a form as that. You have often heard that. You have often said that. A man's first duty is to himself. How constantly we hear it. You hear it inside the Church, among the saints. When you get outside the Church they express the same philosophy in a more brutal way. Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. That is a great mistake. The devil generally gets the foremost in that race. That is the philosophy. Master, your first duty is to yourself. Jesus knew that was a lie born in hell. He knew that His first duty was to God. "I must be about My Father's business." That is the first duty.

In the next place, Peter's language, this common expression of the false philosophy of humanity, was a misconception of the value of sacrifice. Peter meant to say to Him, Master, this will be failure, the direst and most disastrous failure. Nothing can be gained by dying. How often you will hear that said. People say, You will kill yourself, and what then? Resurrection and heaven, according to Christ! Defeat, direst failure, and death, according to Peter! Master, I have just confessed Thee Christ, and Thou hast approved my great confession. Master, Thou hast spoken about building a great ecclesia, a Church, and about keys. How are you going to do this if you die? Sacrifice means failure. To hand Yourself over to Your foes, and let them maul, and brutally ill-treat, and murder You, is to fail. I need not argue the other side. Nineteen centuries have proved that by that defeat He won.

He death by dying slew,

He hell in hell laid low.

Peter meant that sacrifice was a mistake.

Once again, this common philosophy of fallen man is a misconception of the value of men. I do not think I do any violence to what Peter meant when I say that in his heart he was thinking something like this—It is the kind of sentiment we applaud. It is the kind of sentiment that still obtains.—I think in Peter's word to Christ this inner thought finds expression, These men are not worth Thy suffering. These men. have wronged Thee, they have persecuted Thee, and if they but can, they will lay their hands upon Thee, and put Thee to death. Spare Thyself. I think in the heart of Peter there was some underlying conception that his Master had some purpose of love in being determined to go to Jerusalem, and he said to Him, They are not worth it. Men are not worth suffering for in this way. How much Thou hast suffered, how much of misinterpretation and misunderstanding Thou hast suffered in these days of ministry. Give it up. Pity Thyself. Deliver Thyself from all this. Men are not worth it. Jesus Christ's answer is, that however black the deed of His murder, however dastardly the sin that finds expression in His dying, the men who put Him to death are worth dying for. "I must." It is the "must" of God's will, and the "must" of God's love, and the "must" of God's determination to make it possible that the men who put Him to death should find their way into life.

Now turn to the other side. How will Christ deal with this philosophy and this suggestion? My heart and mind are every day more and more amazed at the Master's method and His wisdom. He first

named the origin of the philosophy. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." James Garfield said that what the age supremely needed was men who would dare to look into the face of the devil and call him devil. There was a time when I was somehow hurt, or anxious, that Christ should call Peter, Satan, but I have come to see that His naming of Satan here was out of the compassion of His heart. Peter, I know that voice. I know that philosophy. I have heard that suggestion, not once or twice, but through all the years, and supremely once, in the lonely vigil with which My ministry commenced. In the awful loneliness of the wilderness I heard the voice which said, Pity Thyself, and take the kingdoms of the world by giving me one moment's homage. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." So the real enemy who had been speaking to the King, through Peter, was unmasked.

In the next place, our Lord revealed the true character of the suggestion. "Thou art a stumbling-block," an obstacle to progress, something which will not help, but will hinder. Peter, desirous of helping, was hindering.

Finally, the Master analyzed the motive. "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Will you put these things into contrast as they stand revealed here for a moment? The things of men, as I see them at Cæsarea Philippi, are not vulgar things, not things against which men conduct missions, and institute the signing of pledges. What are the things of men which Peter was minding? Ease, fame, wealth and pomp. These were the things in Peter's view. A king with keys upon his girdle, and his high officers of state. A king more occupied with his own dignity than with the welfare of his people. A king seeking his own ease, his own safety, his own comfort. The things of men, false ideals of human greatness and human royalty. What are the things of God? Peace based upon purity. Rest only after the conflict which destroys the things which create restlessness. Joy lifting itself into song because the fountains of sorrow have been dried up. Glory and honor, not won by the way of compromise, but by the way of fidelity to the eternal principles of right. These are the things of God. If a man is minding the things of men and seeking ease, and earthly pomp, and glory, living a self-cen-tered life, he is against Christ. If he is minding the things of God, the Kingdom of God which cannot be established save as the forces and evil things which have been against it are dealt with and destroyed, he must go to the Cross. By all of which I desire to say that when Jesus said "I must," it was not merely that He yielded Himself unintelligently to the will of God, but that He knew full well that the will of God which marked his pathway through Jerusalem, and suffering, and the Cross to Resurrection, was the good and perfect and acceptable will. We tell each other, and rightly so, that we are to submit ourselves wholly and absolutely to the will of God without questioning. Yea, verily, but why? Because His will must always be will impelled by love, and by light, and therefore will be of the highest and noblest and best. It is not mere blind submission to mechanical force, this yielding to the will of God. It is reason linked with faith handing the life over to what must be the highest and noblest and best. So it was with Christ. He minded the things of God. We all know the figure of the Potter and the clay. Have we not often done violence to the great figure by looking more at the clay and the principle than at the Person? If you tell me this is the principle of life, that I am the clay and God is the Potter, and you tell me nothing about God, but only that I am to submit myself wholly, absolutely to Him without regard to what He is in Himself, I cannot obey. But I watch the Potter at work on the clay. I know the Potter. I know the thought in the mind of the Potter is a thought of love, a thought of beauty and of purity, and I yield, not to the mechanism of a superior force, but to the love that can make no mistake. Peter had not seen this. He had not yet learned it. Presently he will, and I

shall see him rejoicing that he is considered worthy to suffer. For the moment he has not seen this, but Christ has. "I must," because I mind the things of God, not merely the purpose and program of God, but the heart and character of God.

As at the beginning, so at the close let me say to you that these two conceptions of life divide us as a congregation into separate camps. I would God that it might be that we are all in Christ's camp; but I am going to find no verdict, to pass no sentence. Hear me: you are living and I am living, answering one of two master principles, either, Spare thyself, or Do the will of God. The first is devilish. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." When Christ has put His measurement upon a thing, I have no appeal, and desire to make no appeal. The other is Christian in the deep, true, profound sense of the word. I must obey the will of God and that always means suffering in a world where sin is. In the presence of sin and in the presence of wrong, those who put the "must" of the Divine will at the center of their lives and answer it must come after Him, must know something of fellowship with His suffering. You can know nothing of fellowship with His suffering until you have put the will of God as the master passion of your life. You may suffer, but your suffering is not in fellowship with Him while you are persisting in sin. No man living in answer to lust and desire, suffer as he will, is in fellowship with Christ. Let us beware of specious blasphemy. When a man has yielded himself to Christ, when the will of God has become the master passion of a man's life, then if His will means passing down to Jerusalem, and suffering, and death, so be it. I want to make a distinction carefully here. Jesus did not deliberately choose suffering. He did not deliberately choose sacrifice. He chose the will of God, and because suffering and sacrifice lay in that will He chose them; but He did not imagine that He had to seek for the most unpleasant thing and do it. How many Christian people have that idea. How many people have the idea that they must do the thing that is most objectionable in order that they may be in the will of God. That is not Christ's idea. There are some people who carry that to the last extreme, and I hear of hair shirts and tortures for the flesh. Jesus Christ never scourged Himself. Jesus Christ never inflicted pain upon His own physical being. Jesus Christ never deliberately chose mental anguish. He chose the will of God, and when the will of God led Him through infinite and intolerable suffering, then He went. That is the master passion of life.

It is perfectly true that no man has any right to commit suicide. It is perfectly true that no man has any right to use the strength which is God's strength outside God's will; but no other man has any right to come in and interfere between the servant's loyalty and his Master's command. A man must be very careful that it is God's will when he is in the way of suffering. A man must search himself in the midst of suffering as well as in the midst of joy, as to whether it is God's will.

We need supremely today a Church of Jesus Christ, reformed to the pattern of Jesus Christ. I admit that I have said it is not right to choose suffering simply because it is suffering. A man must choose only the will of God; then if it lead through suffering or joy, he must rejoice alike in joy or pain if it be God's sweet will. Yet surely this voice of Peter is heard on every hand today in the Church. Oh that the Church could be brought to the high level of abandoning her comfortable ease and vulgarity, and come after her Lord with the "must" of God driving, then the world would see that the wounded Bridegroom has a wounded Bride, that the suffering King has a suffering army, that the Head wounded and heaped with abuse has in sympathy with Himself the souls that follow Him to do the will of God, even through suffering.

What then? On every cross there shines the light of Easter day. If you will not have the cross, you will never reach the Easter day. If you shun this rugged road of the will of God, you will never come into the far-reaching magnificence of the King's own great new country.

Someone here is suffering in the will of God. My last word to you is this: We come to the green hill. I have not brought you to the green hill as men who need salvation, but as a company of the children of God. You are in the midst of suffering. You might have missed it if you had been disloyal to truth and to your Lord. You might, young man, have had promotion in the world, but you were true, and you are poorer, and you will be all your life. Already upon that life of yours, limited perhaps, and bruised and broken in the will of God, the light of Easter day is shining, and flowers—not the flowers of earth, the grass that today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven—but the flowers of immortality that bloom from the blood of the Cross are in your pathway and upon your brow. So when we get to the Cross we are at the center of the universe, and all its measurements are the measurements of God. May He help us to see and understand.

Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:33 The Terms Of Discipleship.

Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:33

The Terms Of Discipleship.

If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Matthew 16:24

So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:33

In the words of Jesus, preserved for us in the records, there are two elements perpetually noticeable. There is that with which, perhaps, we are most familiar—the element of tenderness, of gentleness, or, as it has been very often recently described, the wooing note. But there is also manifest another element—that of severity, the element which sometimes seems almost to amount to harshness of expression, or, in contrast with the phrase already referred to, the element which may be described as the warning note.

These are also to be found in the story of the influence He exerted upon His own age, and in the influence He has exerted on every successive age, as well as in the influence which He is exerting today.

Jesus was and is the most attractive personality that the world has ever known. Yet, both when He was in our world in earthly form, and by His spiritual presence in every successive century, He has repelled the men He attracted—whispering, on the one hand, to the sorrow-burdened heart of humanity words so full of mother love and father love as to make men crowd and press round Him, and then, on the other hand, suddenly speaking words that flash and scorch and burn until men draw back in astonishment.

Let us think of this apparent contradiction a little more closely. The fact of the attractiveness of Jesus needs no argument today. The story of the life of Jesus as set forth in the four Gospels is the story of One Who was constantly drawing men to Him. I do not say for the moment with what issue; neither do I now deal with the motive which prompted the men that came. It was not always the same so far as their consciousness was concerned. I simply insist upon the fact that He drew men to Him. I think that perhaps the whole story may best be told in the somewhat rough and ready way of saying that the one thing the men of his age could not do with Jesus was to let Him alone. There was a strange attractiveness about Him in the early years. Luke has opened for us one or two windows through which we may see some of the facts about those hidden years. Among those windows there is one through which I love to look. It is the statement which Luke makes that He went down to His own home and that there "He grew in favor with God and man." Taking only one half of that double window, we have a declaration that Jesus as a boy, youth, and

young man, grew in favor with men. May I not be allowed to put that in another form and say that Jesus, the boy, the youth, the young man, was a favorite in Nazareth. I am not sure that this is not almost startling put in this form. We have, somehow, come to imagine that real Christian character is not popular among men. We have come to imagine that some of the traits of Christianity are awkwardness, and such peculiarity as repels men. It was not so in the case of Jesus. He was a favorite in Nazareth, that little town far up from the great high roads of the nations, one of those little towns where everyone knew everyone; there the boy was known, the young man was known and loved, and was a favorite. That is one of the windows looking through which a man is tempted to let his imagination run away with him. I think Jesus the carpenter was such a carpenter that children went to see Him, and took their broken toys to Him, and He mended them. If you do not understand that sentiment be sorry for yourself. Some of you are men whom no child would bring its toy to and ask to have it mended. I think young men loved to crowd to Him and talk to Him, this sweet, strong carpenter, about their difficulties and problems. I am not sure that the old men did not love to gather around the door of the carpenter's shop and listen to Him and talk with him about the Father's house of many mansions, and the rest that followed the turmoil and strife. Be that as it may, "He grew in favor"—they loved Him, they believed in Him in Nazareth. I know perfectly well that presently they tried to murder Him, that the day came when they took Him to the brow of the hill and fain would have cast Him down headlong. That was the effect of His teaching, the result of His having to rebuke their sin; but while He was living His quiet, strong, heroic life in the midst of them, He was a favorite. And when He turned His back upon the workshop and came into public life, how men pressed after Him wherever He went! I need not repeat it, you know your New Testament. "Much people... much people... much people." You cannot read the Gospels without feeling that you have been in the midst of the crowds. There are great, solemn, silent moments, midnight moments, but most of the time you are in the midst of the multitude, and men of all classes and castes are crowding after Him. I read that "the common people heard Him gladly"—which does not mean the poor people. The phrase translated "common people" is the identical phrase elsewhere translated "much people." So far from meaning people of the lower order, it means all sorts of people, rulers and ruled, learned and illiterate, rich and poor, privileged and oppressed.

In the early part of His ministry, the rulers were deeply interested in Him, and, more than interested, they hoped that they might have made something out of Him. They even went to the length of asking Him to dinner, and I never read the story of His going but I worship His strength, for more prophets have been spoiled by dining out than in any other way. This Man was able to sit at the table with the rulers, and with fine courtesy tell them the truth which scorched them. And the people followed Him out of the villages and cities. How many days' work were lost in following Him who can ever tell? How many long, dusty pilgrimages were undertaken, who can imagine? One day, tired of the throng, He entered into a boat and put across to the other shore, and then I have this wonderful declaration: when the boat had kissed its way across the water and arrived at the other side, all the multitudes were waiting for Him, for they had outrun the boat round the shore in their anxiety to be near Him. That is the first fact about the days of His ministry in the world.

Set over against it this other fact. He was constantly warning men as they came. There was the moment when they came to Him and would have made Him King, but He slipped away and hid Himself, and would not so be made King. There were moments such as those of which we read in

Luke's gospel when the multitudes were following, and even His own disciples fondly believed the opportunity was at hand when He should exert His power, and by popular acclaim become King, when He suddenly said, Unless you hate your father, mother, brother, sister, you cannot be My disciple. When you read those words after nineteen centuries is it not true you are afraid? I am. Is it not true that even now in the heart of most of us there is something of questioning rebellion? What does He mean? What are those strange, severe things by which He repels the very crowds He gathers? Instead of attempting to cover all the ground, I read these two incidents because they are typical. The words I read in Matthew 16 were not spoken primarily to the crowds, but to His own disciples. It was at Caesarea Philippi, at the parting of the ways, after He had fulfilled the first part of His ministry, and one soul at least had seen and known Him for what He really was, the Christ of God. There He began to unfold the mystery of His method, to tell them the story of His cross and His suffering and resurrection, and there and then the whole company of His disciples fell back, and they never came into close fellowship again until He was dead, buried, risen, ascended, and the Holy Ghost was poured upon them. They shunned the cross. Do not be angry with them—we are shunning it still, many of us, and we have more light than they. While He talked of the keys, their faces were radiant and their following was faithful; but when He talked of the cross, their faces were shadowed and their following faltered. Then it was that, looking at the little group of men, He said: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." And they dared not do it, and if we watch the story carefully from the beginning of His ministry to Caesarea Philippi, we see men perpetually leaving Him—rulers, scribes, Pharisees—until this little group is left alone. If you follow the story after Caesarea Philippi, you will reach its tragic last chapter and find it written in these few burning words: "They"—all the disciples—"forsook Him and fled." So that at the end I see the most attractive personality in human history absolutely alone, no one by His side, no sympathy in His dying. It is a strange story. It is a contradiction that needs careful examination. Why this repelling method of Jesus in the presence of His attractiveness?

Having asked that question, it is our business to answer it, not speculatively, but in the light of the Scriptures we read, in the light of the teaching they contain. I have read these two Scriptures because I think we have the one answer delivered in two sets of circumstances—first to the disciples, in Matthew 16, and then to the crowds, in Luke 14. Let us begin with the story of Luke. Why is it that Jesus upon such an occasion should say such strangely severe things? Mark the occasion. There went with Him great multitudes, and He turned and said—and you know the words. If you follow on you will find that He explains their meaning. "For which of you desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost...? Or what king... will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?... So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Here, for a moment, I must crave your very close attention and patience, because I want, if I may, to rescue this passage from popular misinterpretation. It is almost always read as though Jesus meant to say, "You must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren and sisters, because if you are going to build a tower you must count the cost; if you are going to war you must see whether you are able to meet twenty thousand with ten thousand." One little word in the Authorized Version has given color to this interpretation. In verse 33 we read, "So likewise," but in the Revised Version

we have an entirely new meaning suggested by the words, "So therefore." The difference is that, according to this rendering, what our Lord meant to say was this: You ask in your heart why I insist upon such severe terms, why I hold men away from me in this manner. And this is His answer. Which of you going to build a tower will not first count the cost, or going to battle is not careful about the quality of the men who will serve under you. So therefore, because my work is the work of building and of battle, I am bound to be careful about the men that I choose to follow me; because I am not merely asking men to come after me in order to save them, but in order to help me and help God and humanity. My business is to build—that is constructive. My business is to conduct a war, a battle—that is destructive, and I must have men I know where to find. Which of you going to build a tower doth not first count the cost, or what king going to war does not take account of the quality of the men?

Let us leave Luke for a moment and go back to Matthew and see what our Lord said there, and inquire if we find anything like the same explanation. Here the same two figures occur in the Lord's description of His work. Peter had confessed Him, and immediately He named something in the economy of His work which had never been named before. He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In that statement about the Church you have Christ's revelation of the nature of His work.

First, "I will build"; secondly, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Our Lord did not here state the same thing concerning the Church in two ways. He did not mean, "I will build the Church here, on this rock foundation, and when Hades comes against it it shall not prevail." When an enemy attacks a city, it does not take its gates with it. What Christ here meant is, My Church is, first of all, my building, and consequently impregnable; but my Church is also to be an aggressive force, which I shall lead to battle against all foes of God and humanity; and then, with the far vision of a great Conqueror, He sees the last enemy, death, the gates of Hades, the last citadel which His Church will storm, and sweeping over the intervening foes, He says: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Here, then, as in Luke, there are two things—building and battle. "I will build My Church"—"Which of you going to build a tower doth not first count the cost?" "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"—"What king going to make war doth not count the cost?"

Thus we find the answer to our question as to the severity of Jesus. Because He is committed to the building of the Church, and is committed to battle against all the forces that are against man and God, He must have those associated with Him on whom He can depend. He not merely seeks to save individuals, but also to gather about Him men and women on whom He can depend for co-operation in building and comradeship in battle. That is why He is so severe in His terms. That is why, when multitudes gathered about Him, He seems to have been sifting them.

Behold the crowds, oh, Jesus, the day of Thy crowning is coming. In a few moments they will put the crown upon Thy brow! No, I must build and fight! If any man will come after me, if there is one man among the crowd that really will follow, let him deny himself and take up his cross. Not by popular acclaim, but by solid building and hard fighting is my victory to be won. Who is coming with me?

The Son of God goes forth to war,

A kingly crown to gain.
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in His train?
Who best can drink His cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train.

Quality is always more than quantity. We are a little slow to believe it, but we all know it. We do not like the sifting process when Christ confronts us and sends back the multitudes that we fain would keep, but we know He is right. It is in the Old Testament as well as in the New. We read that thirty-two thousand men came up to fight the battle of the Lord, but Jehovah said, They are too many, sift them; and within a few moments twenty-two thousand men tramped home. Sing the Doxology!—we are stronger the moment they are gone. But still the people are too many—test them by the water brooks, and the men who take unnecessary time over necessary things are to go home. Nine thousand seven hundred of them went away, leaving only three hundred, but infinitely mightier the three hundred than the thirty-two thousand.

Not by popular vote, or acclaim, but by souls who can suffer and dare and die He builds the tower and fights the foe. Our Lord has not altered His method, and yet—here let me speak with great carefulness—there is not one in all this house that He does not want. There is no one that He will not enroll among His soldiers and employ in His great building enterprise—that is, if we are prepared to fulfill His conditions.

I am making my appeal tonight from perhaps a slightly different standpoint from the usual one. I am not speaking to you of the fact that you need personal salvation. In my heart is this great thought, that Jesus has need of you, not merely for your sake, but for His sake. He has not built His Church yet; He is building it, and will never finish until the top stone is brought on with shouting of, "Grace, grace unto it." He had not ended the battle yet. He has fought the Armageddon, the greatest battle is over; but battles are fought all along the line, and He it is who leads the hosts of God. He is building God's city, and He wants you if you are such a man as He can depend on. Jesus Christ in London today wants really faithful, consecrated souls far more than patronizing multitudes.

Christ confronts us all and says, "If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Who follows? You can applaud without following. You can admire without helping. You can be near enough to touch His sacred garment in a crowd, and never lay a brick in God's city, or strike a blow for God's victory. I dare believe there are young hearts everywhere that are sighing to help Him. Oh, young man, young woman, was there ever such a King, such a Leader, such an enterprise? Was there ever anything dreamed of by angels or men so calculated to stir the pulse and drive the heart as the King's building of the city, the King's battle for the victory? Will you come after Him?

Let us hear His terms, and God help us to hear them solemnly. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Three things, and yet only one. The essential is the last-named, the first two are preliminary. They are necessary; you cannot reach the third save through them, but the third is the final, the essential, "Follow Me." I have been interested anew in Christ's use of the word, and have taken these Gospel stories, and have been surprised how often He said, "Follow Me." The call is so simple that any little child will tell you what it means. It is so sublime that no Christian philosopher has ever exhausted the infinite meaning of the word. If we are to help Him in His building and battle we must follow Him. What is it to follow? Two very simple things are included; to follow is, first, to trust, and, secondly, it is to obey. I cannot follow unless I trust; but I can trust in a general sense and never follow. There are many who believe Him to be the one and only King and Saviour of men, who never take His name in vain, and would not allow anyone to speak disrespectfully of Him; but they are not following Him.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." Denial of self is the hidden and internal process, the taking up of the cross is the outward and external manifestation. If I may adapt and use in this connection old and familiar words, I would say that the taking up of the cross is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of self-denial. What is self-denial? Jesus says everything when He speaks, and there is nothing more to be said; our danger is that we minimize when we explain. To deny self is to say no to every wish that comes out of the personal life. To deny self is radical; it goes down to the roots of things. A man may practice self-denial all his life and never deny himself. A man may practice self-denial in this and that respect, and all the while his self-centeredness is strengthened. Jesus did not say, Exercise self-denial in externalities. He said, Deny self. Have done with choosing, wishing, planning, arranging for self. Choose no more; will no more, except to will that God shall will.

Our wills are ours we know not how,

Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

I deny self when I hand over the keys of the citadel to the King and say, Enter and reign in every chamber of the being, in all the possibilities of the soul.

Is this easy? How is it to be expressed? Take up thy cross. What is that? I do not know for you, my brother. I do not know for myself tomorrow. The cross in its practice changes perpetually, in its principle it abides. The cross is the one thing that intrudes itself upon your vision at the moment of your denial of self. I am increasingly impressed with the fact that whenever a soul comes to Christ the last battle is fought out over one thing. I do not know what it is in your case, but you know exactly what you have to do if you are to follow this Christ, to build and to battle—the thing that must be set right, the friendship that must be dropped, the habit that must be abandoned, the restitution that has to be made, pride that has to be humbled, prejudice that has to be crucified. God tells us what it is, and we know. Oh for one five minutes of soul honesty! Do not indulge in subterfuges. You are asked to be true about the thing that you know is between your soul and God. For some of you it will mean a hasty return home to find the woman you insulted ere you left. For some it will mean going home and telling your children that you were wrong in your treatment of them. For some it will mean asking for the money back that you put on the plate to make restitution. It is a real cross when you begin to follow Jesus. They are Christ's terms. Nothing I have said is quite so hard as the words He uttered. Unless you hate father, mother, wife, children,

brethren, sisters; unless you put every other love, every other interest in the background and Christ in the foreground, you cannot be His disciple. So help me God, I will not tone down my Master's message. I will not make this thing for my heart and yours one bit smoother than He made it. Take up your cross—not Christ's. You cannot take up Christ's cross. He took it up alone, and in the mystery of it made it possible for you to take yours and find the virtue of His; but you must take up your own.

There is one other thing I would say. If you stand where I stand you are appalled at the tremendous claim of Jesus. How can I ever deny myself and take up my cross? I come from the negative to the positive, and say to you that the only way in which you will ever be able to deny yourself and take up your cross is by fixing your eye upon Him and crowning Him. If I must stretch out my hands to the rugged cross in order to get to Him I can do it in only one way, that is by seeing Him and doing it for His sake. If I do it for my own sake, or for the sake of men, I shall fail, for I am such a coward; but if I may but look at His face as I come to my dying, I can say, "I am crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live."

From the ground there blossoms red

Life that shall endless be.

The cross is but the prelude to resurrection. How often shall we say it! Let us come, those of us who will, and say to Him, Christ, Thou hast drawn us irresistibly. We are here to see Thee, to hear Thee. Thou has frightened us with Thy terms, but we also would help Thee in Thy building and in Thy battle, and we will deny self and take up the cross with our eyes fixed upon Thee. And by the way of the cross we enter the army, and enter upon the enterprise, and if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. May God grant that there may be many who will join Him in His building and His battle by denying self and taking up the cross and following Him!

Matthew 18:3. The Kingdom: "Of Such Is The Kingdom".

Matthew 18:3.

The Kingdom: "Of Such Is The Kingdom".

Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3

Our theme tonight is that of the character necessary for entrance to the Kingdom. The words of my text were not addressed to the promiscuous multitude. I do not mean by that statement to infer that they have no application for such a multitude, but to insist upon it that their first application is to disciples. That fact makes them all the more significant, all the more remarkable and weighty.

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven? And He called to Him a little child, and set Him in the midst of them, and said: Verily, I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.

When His disciples asked, "Who then is greatest in the Kingdom?" He forced them back to the wicket-gate, and said: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

There has been no revolt in the great Kingdom of God save among angels and men—at least, so far as revelation has enlightened us on the subject. When Heber, in his great missionary hymn, looking out over all the world, said "... every prospect pleases, And only man is vile," he wrote something which has often been criticized and often objected to, but which is perfectly true. Apart from the fall of angels and the fall of man—resulting from the revolt of angels who kept not their first estate, but left their proper habitation—the whole creation is unfallen.

The words of Paul, in his letter to the Romans, involuntarily suggest themselves in this connection: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.... The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." When by reason of rebellion man lost his sceptre, and so lost the power to govern, all nature suffered. We are quite conscious that everywhere in nature there are things out of harmony with the will of God which has been revealed to us by Christ. Suffering, sorrow, limitation are everywhere; and all for the lack of the authority of a true King. In proportion as man, individually, socially and racially, is restored to true relationship with God, the whole creation will be lifted, remade, re-established, and so will be restored the whole great Kingdom of God. The redemption of creation waits for the redemption of man. That is a large subject with which we have not time to deal now. I mention it only that we may see its relation to the theme which is to demand our attention.

Man, living in the territory of God, is in revolt against Him. That sentence is very easily uttered. I would to God that conviction of its meaning might come to all of us. Man, living within the area of

the Kingdom, and in the territory of God, is yet in revolt. The emphasis I now desire is not upon the last part of that statement, but upon the first part. Every man is living in the Kingdom of God in some sense. There is no power of my life that is not a God-created power. I said power; I did not say paralysis. There is paralysis in my life which is not of God; but the power which is paralyzed is of God. Whatever there is essential to my manhood is God's creation. This is God's world. I am weary of the men and women who speak of it as the devil's world. It is God's world. In God's great Kingdom men are dwelling, and yet are in revolt, breaking His law.

The inquiry of this meditation is as to how a man may get back into the Kingdom. Now this may seem to contradict my assertion that all men are in the Kingdom. Let us, therefore, be very careful. Every man is in the Kingdom; yet men are in rebellion against the King. No man can escape the government of God, but he may fight against it. Hell itself is not beyond the reach of God. No man can utterly, finally, absolutely escape from God. It is impossible! It is possible, though a dire thought, that a man may live and move and have his being in God, and yet be out of harmony with Him, in revolt against Him. That man must still feel the touch of His power, but it will blast instead of bless. My own experience of God is created by my attitude toward God. God is eternal, unchangeable love. If I yield to the wooing of His love, I know its sweet and tender embrace; but if I am rebellious and set myself against the purposes of that love, by that very attitude of mine I find that God is a consuming fire. These are not two things, but the two aspects of one fact; the difference is always the result of the difference in the attitudes of men toward God. That fact runs through the Bible from the story of Eden and the flaming sword, to the last chapter in the visions of the Seer of Patmos. Out of the stately, wonderful movement of revelation in this matter let me quote an illustration, not very familiar, yet known I have no doubt. Malachi spoke of the day toward which men were looking. Notice his description: "Behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the proud and all that work wickedness shall be stubble"; and he continued: "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." These are not two days, but one. The sunrise burns as an oven things that lack root and life, and heals and helps the things that are planted by the rivers of water. God is unchangeable. Man's relation to Him determines man's experience of Him.

How, then, may a man enter His Kingdom? How can he get back to Him consciously, to find the Kingdom; not the Kingdom of scorching, burning, destroying fire, but the Kingdom of breadth, beauty, and beneficence—of light, and life, and love, and liberty?

Taking the affirmation of my text away from its context for a moment—returning to that by way of application—we hear the great King Himself answering our inquiry: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of heaven."

Now our danger is that we seek to read into this story and into these words certain generally accepted theological ideas. Would to God we could get back to the simple naturalness of the thing that Jesus said and did. Let us endeavor so to do. The matter of first importance is that we keep before us the picture of Jesus with His disciples round Him. They had come with an inquiry. He took a boy—our translation says a child, but the pronoun is masculine—I do not know who the boy was; in all probability he was playing near at hand, or standing on the edge of the crowd which had gathered around the Lord. He laid His hand on the boy, and put him in the midst of His disciples. Do not be angry with me when I say I do not think he was a Sunday-school boy. By that I mean, he

was not a boy prepared for the occasion. He had not passed through the class and learned his catechism in order to be put in the midst. He was a boy at play, a boy of the common crowd, a boy not specifically and purposely prepared and brought there. He took such a boy, and put him in the midst, and said, "You ask Me who is the greatest in the Kingdom. I want you to know and remember, that unless you become like that boy you cannot enter into the Kingdom." That is to say, Jesus declared that forevermore the child character is the character of such as enter into the Kingdom. I am not yet dealing with the question of how a man can be restored to childhood. I am simply insisting upon the teaching of Jesus Christ as to the necessity for such restoration. To enter the Kingdom a man must have the character of a little child.

I wish I could startle you with that. Notwithstanding the fact that centuries have gone, we have hardly begun to understand it. Gradually, slowly, very slowly, the Church of God is putting the child where it ought to be put—in the midst—and is making the child the type and pattern of character in the great Kingdom of God. If we wanted to show a man what he must be like to enter into the Kingdom of God, we should in all probability take down from our library shelves the life of some mystic saint, and say, "That is the type of character in the Kingdom of God." Christ did not say so. He said something much more revolutionary, much more startling. He took a child, and put him in the midst of the quarreling, wrangling, office-seeking disciples, and said, "You cannot enter into the Kingdom until you are like that child."

Now let us diligently endeavor to discover what this really means. What is this character that Jesus declared to be necessary in order to enter His Kingdom? To tell all the facts would be difficult, for simplicity is ever most sublime. The only people who can tell you all about children are the people who never had any. They deliver most of the lectures to mothers. Is there a child in your home? Put that child in your midst tonight; your boy—if he is mischievous, all the better—put him in your midst. That child, in his artlessness and simplicity, is the sublimest revelation possible of the character that Christ demands and that God asks.

Look at the simplest things about this little child. There is its perfect naturalness; secondly, its impressionableness; thirdly, its natural confidence; and, finally, its imperfection. Take all the life of a child, physical life, mental life, and spiritual life, and all these things are true of it. I have not exhausted the subject; these are only suggestive things that are true of the life and character of every child.

First its naturalness. The child answers the impulses of its own possibility. The child is curious, and it will ask questions. It is not until it gets older that it wears the veneer of a false restraint. The child will manifest, if you watch it, all the facts of its own being. If a child loves you, it will tell you so and fling its arms about you. It is only when you get older that your respectability cools off the ardour with which you dare to declare your love. In the child there is perfect naturalness. This is a very searching word, if we will let it search us. You say, "My boy is not natural." Then mourn over your sin, because you are that boy's father. The life of the child naturally is perfectly natural; it is life that does not dissemble, life devoid of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is acting a part. There is no hypocrisy in a child.

The child is impressionable, amenable to training, plastic to moulding, and receptive. I remember the statement of a Roman Catholic bishop: "Give me your child until he is seven, and I care not who has him afterwards. I will have made an impression upon him that can never be effaced." I

know something of the controversy as to whether heredity or environment be the stronger force in the life of a child. Personally, I have no hesitation in saying that I consider environment is far stronger than heredity. If you begin soon enough, you can mould any child. There are men here who are Christian, because the hand of godly father or mother was placed upon their character early enough, in order to mould it in that direction. If there be no other man, I am that man. I am a Christian tonight because from the earliest years of my recollection the hands of godly parents were placed upon me. The child is naturally plastic, impressionable, confident, trustful. I know about the boys in the slums of London who are cunning and artful; but what has made them so? The devilish system in the midst of which they were born. Think of that great institution, to which my mind always goes when I think of neglected children, the homes connected with the name of Dr. Barnardo; if they can get a boy early enough, though he has never had the influence of father and mother to help him, the child still has the capacity for faith and confidence.

The child is imperfect. That is not a sin. When I say imperfect, I will illustrate what I mean entirely in the physical realm. A child lying in its mother's arm is not perfect. Of course, you must not tell the mother so. That little aside helps me to draw the distinction between what I do mean and what I do not mean. It is absolutely perfect, but it is not perfected. If it be healthy, it is perfect; yet the perfection that you admire is the potentiality of a grander perfection that lies ahead. There is room for development, growth.

Now, said Jesus to His disciples, "Except ye turn, and become as little children." The character that He demands for entrance to His Kingdom is that of perfect naturalness, that which is impressionable, the character which has in it the elements of trust and confidence, the character which is not yet perfected. Thank God He does not demand absolute and final perfection; but He does demand the perfection of naturalness, impressionability, and confidence; all the things that make it possible for him to command and guide and develop, and ultimately to crown and glorify.

Now, in order that we may return to that with still greater force, let us go one step further. If that be the character demanded, looked at so far as we are able to do so in all simplicity, listen to the condition He imposes upon men: "Except ye turn, and become as little children." In that condition there are two things we need to notice. First, that it suggests the necessity for change; and, secondly, that the suggestion of turning reveals the fact that the nature of the change necessary is going back to first principles, to first ideals, to the simplicity of beginnings.

May I attempt to illustrate by passing over the notes, to which I asked your attention, when considering character? Turn to naturalness, from that which is its opposite, hypocrisy. Turn to absolute truth and simplicity, from the life that attempts to keep up appearances; turn to willingness to appear what you really are. Do you mean to suggest, someone inquires, that men are all hypocrites? I do; and I not only suggest it, but I affirm it. The one outstanding difficulty in the way of men coming into the Kingdom of God is that of hypocrisy. Take the story of the ministry of Jesus as you have it in the New Testament. What do you find? He never said a harsh word to a sinner—that is, such as we would call a sinner, the woman taken in adultery, for instance—but scorn, satire, anger, were always manifest when He dealt with hypocrites. Why? Because hypocrisy hinders a man more than anything else. This audience is in perfect agreement so far. You agree with this whole attitude of Jesus up to a certain point. You know the man who masquerades as religious and lacks religion—how you denounce him; the man who professes to

be in the world what he is not—how you despise him. Hypocrisy has fine shades, and there are subtle degrees of it. Here is a man who makes no profession of goodness, yet all the while, in the deepest of him, his heart is crying out after God. That is hypocrisy. There are scores of people listening to preaching who are moved by the messages they hear, who, nevertheless, go back to a godless life. Why? Because for years they have taken up a certain position, and if they confessed that they needed a Saviour and yielded to Him, it would give the lie to the position they have occupied for so long. There are hundreds of church members who need to be born again. Their difficulty lies in the fact that they are church members, that they are hypocrites, that they are naming a name that they do not hallow, praying for the coming of a Kingdom whose coming they hinder, asking for the will of God to be done while they do not permit it to be done in their own lives. From all hypocrisy men must turn and become as children, in simple, artless naturalness, ere they can enter the Kingdom.

Not only from hypocrisy to naturalness, but from hardness to impressionableness. Hardness; the fear of tears; the foolhardy love of false consistency; the rendering of the heart adamant against all appeal and argument. There are those who have so steeled themselves against the message, have so hardened their hearts in the presence of the declarations of truth, that they have become hard. They must turn and become children again; must get back to softness, simplicity, willingness to learn.

Once more; back from rebellion to confidence, from cynicism to trust. With the passing of the years, many have lost faith in God and in man. They are guided in all the doing of their life by doubt. They do business upon the assumption that every man is a rogue until they have proved him honest. They doubt their neighbour, every man; they doubt God; they have become cynical. Back, says Christ, to the capacity for belief in something, someone; back to childhood. You laugh at your childhood; you say you have escaped the softness of childhood, the dreamings of youth. That is the tragedy. You have shed no tears for years. There was a time in your childhood when you shed tears, when one morning you found your pet canary dead in its cage. You have not cried recently, though you have left a track of ruined men and women behind you. Back to childhood. In the name of God, this is not a soft word. It is a veritable fire. It scorches me now as I preach. I become tremendously conscious as I stand before you of how little I know of the child heart and spirit.

This King, so sweet, so gentle, so loving, stands at the wicket; and as I would argue about greatness and position and fame in the Kingdom, He says, "Back, you cannot enter until you get back into childhood."

This word of command is an awful word; a word that fills my soul with fear; a word that wrings from me this inquiry, "How can I ever find my way back to childhood?" To this inquiry let us hear the answer. On a housetop in Jerusalem this same King once sat with one man. The man had come to Him, a man of culture and refinement and influence, a man that Jesus could trust because of his honesty and lack of hypocrisy. Sitting together there, as Canon Liddon once suggested, perchance they heard the sighing and moaning of the wind in the streets of Jerusalem. To that inquiring, honest heart the Christ said this strange and mystic thing—He said it to no other man, it was too profound and too wonderful to be commonly spoken—but He said it to this man: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Let us put these two things together. "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven"; "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The human responsibility is revealed in the word "turn." The Divine activity is indicated in the phrase "born anew," born from above. If the King stands at the wicket-gate with a flaming, fiery sword, keeping back the hypocrite, the hardened man, the cynic, in His hand is the gift of life for that very hardened man, that very cynic, that very unbeliever. Thou mayest be born again—that is, thou mayest become a child. This King will lead thee back to the beginning of things. If thou wilt but turn back toward His ideal, He will turn to thee with dynamic suddenness, and the thing thou desirest shall be thine.

"Except ye turn, and become as little children." I can turn back in strong desire; I can turn back in solemn dedication; I can turn back in obedience; but I shall never become a child again until He touch me Himself, touch me with new life; then, wonder of wonders, He takes away by His transforming touch the heart of stone, and gives me a heart of flesh. Tears spring again, and tenderness permeates all my astonished life. I am willing to be taught and willing to be led; I put the crown upon His brow, and the Kingdom is within me because I have become a child by my repentance, and by the renewing touch of His life upon mine.

When can that be? Now. That Kingdom cometh, in this sense also, not by observation. It will come into observation presently, but it cometh not by observation. That Kingdom comes to the man who comes to the Kingdom. In the moment in which I turn back, and yield myself to His great demand, in that moment by the touch of His life He gives me back my childhood.

There are very many songs sung today which are full of nonsense; but there are some wonderful songs. There is an old one comes to my mind now; some of you have sung it, perhaps idly:

Backward, turn backward, O time, in your flight;

Make me a child again, just for tonight;

Mother, come back from the echoless shore,

Take me again to your heart as of yore;

Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,

Smooth the silver threads out of my hair,

Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,

Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.

This is not a cry for toys. It is the wail of a weary soul for home, for rest, for God. Is there anything more pathetic in literature and poetry than Tom Hood's song?

I remember, I remember,

The house where I was born,

The little window where the sun

Came peeping in at morn;

He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.

It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.

Is not that what you are saying in your heart tonight? If so, the King confronts you, and says to you, "Except you come back and become a child, you cannot enter into the Kingdom."

I will take for granted your interest, and that you are saying with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" The answer of Christ to you is this: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." At this moment we are in the midst of everything that is necessary for our remaking. Whether in the church or outside of it, this is the day of Pentecost. Do not talk of Pentecost as though it were a day nineteen centuries ago. Westminster Chapel is as full of the Spirit as was the upper room on that Day of Pentecost. We are in the midst of the river of life. What, then, shall we do? Turn back to the King, yielding to all that He desires and appoints; then He will give to us new hearts and new life—the child nature.

The King said another thing one day, which sounds contradictory, but is not so, "The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." That does not sound like getting back to childhood. Yet it is true that before some of us get back to childhood, we become violent men and women. In what sense? Another word of the King will help us: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye makes thee to stumble, pluck it out." So get back to childhood. I dare not, will not be untrue to the word of the Master, and end as though this were a lullaby. There is a lullaby beyond it. There is the mother-heart, the father-heart beyond it. Infinite peace and spaciousness are beyond it. The moment a man enters into that life, he finds all renewal. All restoration is beyond. But if we would be in this Kingdom, we must get back to childhood, however fierce the struggle be. May God help us to make that struggle for His name's sake.

Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5. Church Ideals: The Church Disciplined.

Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5.

Church Ideals: The Church Disciplined.

And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican. Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:15-20

It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as though I were present, judged him that hath so wrought this thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ. Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world: but as it is I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat. For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth? Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

1 Corinthians 5

I have read the whole of these passages because, if I may be permitted the phrase, they constitute the classic passages of the New Testament concerning the theme of our morning meditation, that of the discipline of the Christian Church.

We have on previous occasions considered the teaching of the New Testament concerning the constitution of the Church and the government of the Church, and we come this morning to this—shall I say—most difficult and yet most necessary and important subject, of the discipline of the Christian Church.

The discipline of the whole Church, of the catholic Church is necessarily part of the government of the Church, and is therefore the prerogative of the Head of the Church. That in itself is a theme full, not only of interest, but of importance, and I think of great encouragement. It is not, however, the phase of the subject to which I am now proposing to give anything like special consideration. But that we may be reminded of the fact that the discipline of the whole Church is within the government of the Head of the Church, and that He perpetually exercises that government, and maintains that discipline; we have read together the wonderful passage from the book of the Revelation, in which the seer describes the vision of the Lord which was granted to him before the letters for the seven Asian Churches were given to him.

That is the vision of the Head of the Church in the midst of the churches, exercising government and maintaining discipline. There are seven lampstands, representing the individual churches. Christ in the midst of them, by His presence and oversight, makes them the One Church. He holds in His right hand the stars of the churches, and deals in discipline with the churches individually; and so with the catholic Church, through His dealing with the angels, or the messengers, or the stars of the churches.

There in figurative language, full of exquisite beauty, every point of which is suggestive, the Head of the Church is seen maintaining His discipline. That is a vision full of encouragement; If, perchance, some one of us had found ourselves in the midst of one of these Asian churches, say that of Laodicea, we might have been tempted to write an article—if there had been a religious newspaper to receive it—lamenting the fact of the lost discipline of the church, and there would have been an element of truth in the complaint. But the true vision is the vision of John, who saw that if this be so, the Lord is still in the midst, and is dealing with Laodicea. Not by resolution of all the churches in solemn assembly can you deal with Laodicea, but by leaving Laodicea to the government of the living Lord.

Our attention, however, is fixed upon the symbolic and mystical vision of the Master Himself.

It is a night scene, the world's night. The Church is seen in its capacity of witness bearing. The light is shining in a dark place; lampstands and stars are things of the night. But it is a day scene; Christ is the unifying center amid the churches. He is the directing authority, and His face shineth as the sun in its strength. The Church's light in the night is derived from the fact that Christ has made day for her, and her members are children of the day, and walk in the light of His countenance; they are light-bearers for the sake of the night round about them.

But behold the Central Person. He was like, not "the Son of man," as though John here were borrowing the phrase so often upon the lips of our Lord as descriptive of Himself, but something bringing the vision a little nearer to our actual and essential humanity. Not that the earlier phrase removes Christ from our humanity, but that every title that describes Him has for us become associated with unspeakable dignity. And so John says: "I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks

One like unto a son of man," of our very humanity, but so entirely and utterly and absolutely different that all the description which follows is needed. I do not pretend to have the right finally to interpret the mystic symbolism of this vision; yet there are patent suggestions.

There is, first of all, the symbolism of function. He was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle"; and immediately we are reminded of that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call My servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." He Who walks amid the golden candlesticks is clothed to the foot with a garment, and girt about at the breast with a golden girdle—the garment symbolic of His activity in judgment, and the girdle of His absolute fidelity or faithfulness to God. Then there is the symbolism of character. "His head and His hair were white as white wool," suggestive of His purity and His eternity; "His eyes were as a flame of fire," suggestive of His intimate knowledge, perceiving, penetrating, so that nothing escapes His observation; "His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace," suggestive of His procedure, brass forevermore being the symbol of strength, and the furnace that of purification; "His voice as the voice of many waters." I do not know a single statement in the Bible that more overawes my soul than that, "His voice as the voice of many waters," and I never came near an understanding of it until I first saw Niagara. I had been told that I should be overwhelmed with the thunder of Niagara. I was not so overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed with the majestic music which never ceased, and yet never interrupted peace, but created the sense of it through all the district around. Many waters—waters that had run from the hills and through the valleys; the running rivers and the singing waters from far and wide, sweeping at last through the peaceful stillness of great lakes, and then finding final utterance in a perfect harmony as they swept over the height. His voice: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." The rivulets and the rivers and the streams of the past merge to the one music, and become the final speech of the Son; and His voice is as the voice of many waters, the perfect concord of infinite diversity, in the harmony of final speech. "He had in His right hand seven stars," suggesting administration, power, and protection: "Out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword," finding verdicts, passing sentences, and uttering beatitudes; "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Thus the Lord is seen in all the fulness of His glory; presiding over the witness bearing of the Church in the midst of the darkness; perfectly acquainted with all its folly and its failure, with the peculiar sin of this church and the peculiar difficulty of that; knowing the subtle peril which confronts the near, acquainted with the faithfulness of the far, and disciplining the whole. That vision, I repeat, is full of comfort.

Yet beyond that—or shall I say rather, as I would prefer to say—as part of it, there is the responsibility of individual churches concerning the maintenance of discipline within the borders of their own fellowship. As I have tried to think of this subject—and that, let me say, under the personal conviction that one of the weaknesses of Church life today is its lack of discipline—I have been driven to the two passages chosen, because in them I find the suggestion of two lines of discipline for which the local church of Jesus Christ must be responsible. The teaching of these passages is solemn, gracious, and clearly defined. In the first we have the words of our Lord

Himself, words in which discipline, in order to the maintenance of perfect fellowship within the church, is dealt with; and then we have words of the apostle—stern words and severe words as they certainly were—in which the church's duty toward individual members in the matter of conduct is brought clearly before us. While I read the whole passage, all that is possible this morning is that we should attempt to see the general line of teaching suggested by each.

Let us, then, first consider our Lord's words. They are so old, so familiar, that this whole congregation could recite them; and yet I was almost startled at a question John Wesley asked after reading them. He said: "If this be the true order of dealing with men who sin against us, where do the Christian people live?" That question is as pertinent this morning as when it was first asked; and it is because I think that inquiry is pertinent that I propose that we should listen to these words of Christ as though we had never heard them.

"If thy brother sin against thee." The true emphasis there is not on the word "against thee," but on the word "sin." The reason for action is not that I have been wronged, but that my brother is harmed, and the fellowship of the Church is injured by his sin. Notice the final words, "thou hast gained thy brother." That is the heart of the whole matter. The purpose of our going to our brother is not that we compel him to confess the fault! No, a thousand times no. That will be the process, the method. The purpose is the gaining of our brother. "If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." I am to go to my brother, not because my brother's sin has made me suffer, but because my brother's sin is harming my brother. Thou dost not go to thy brother to establish thine own right, to break his will, and bend his neck to own he was in the wrong, but to gain him.

Thus, we become conscious of the supreme matter, which is not on the surface. Supreme matters are never on the surface. The supreme matter is that the discipline of the Church is to be exercised in that which is the essence of the Church's life—love.

But if he will not hear thee, what then? "Take with thee one or two more." The "more" does not refer to the number, but to the persistent action. Do not give him up because he will not hear you. Yet, further, take one or two; and take trusted men, take men of the very spirit of the love which makes you go. And if he will not hear them, then tell it to the Church, the ecclesia—that called out, separated company of men bound together by the bond of the one life in Christ, impelled by the one law of love, walking in the one illumination of light; tell it to them, that where you have failed they may gain this sinning man. And if he will not hear them, then "let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." Then he must, if he will persist in sin, in spite of Thy attempt in love to win him, and in spite of Thy persistent attempt as Thou hast taken the one or two with Thee, and finally sought the persuasive power of the Church; if he will persist in sin, then he must be put outside the Church, he must be put outside its fellowship, he must not be suffered to continue to make his fellowship in the Christian Church a garment under which he hides sin. The Church is not to afford sanctuary to any man who persistently, and in spite of every attempt of love, continues in sin.

Now, my brethren, there must be no—forgive the ugliness of my word, I use it deliberately—there must be no shirking of this duty on the part of the wronged person. If your brother in this fellowship or in any fellowship has really sinned against you, because of his sin it is your duty to go and see him, and to deal with him. There is a false charity abroad within the fellowship of the Christian Church, which makes men say: "Oh, yes, this man wronged me, this man sinned against me; the

thing he said was a sinful thing, the thing he did was a sinful thing; but I would rather not take any action." We have no right to say that, because there is no purely personal matter among Church members. The whole assembly is affected by the sin of one. The tides of the Church's life are weaker because one in the fellowship continues in sin. The Church's testimony to the neighborhood, to the city, to the nation, to the world, is feeble by reason of that fact. Thus not in the interests of the man alone, although that is always first, but finally in the interests of the fellowship, we have no right to refuse to exercise the discipline of love in the case of anyone who has flagrantly sinned to our knowledge.

Take one brief glance at that more terrible passage in the writings of Paul. The inclusive law which the apostle enunciates is that the leaven is to be purged. Leaven communicates itself, spreads its own corrupting force wherever it comes. Leaven must be purged out of the fellowship. A little leaven—one man sinning, and permitted to remain within that vital fellowship and relationship of the Church—will spread, first unconsciously and insidiously, but most surely throughout the whole Church.

The individual case quoted by the apostle was flagrant illustration, such as in all probability we should rarely, if ever, have to deal with in these days; and I am not going to dwell upon it. But Paul gives us general illustrations. I read them again, not to consider them in detail, but to ask you to notice one or two simple matters. Notice, first, that if some of these forms are not present today, others are; and notice, in the second place, what strange and apparently unequal things, according to our moral sense, the apostle puts very near together. "Fornicators, covetous, idolaters, revilers, drunkards, extortioners."

A man said to me some months ago: "I am a church member, and if I were found drunk on the streets there would be a church meeting. But did you ever know a church meeting held to discipline a man for covetousness?" No, brethren, I am not going to deal any further with this list, but let it be very carefully considered.

Leaven is to be purged; the sinning man is to be put outside the fellowship of Christian men and women. The particular case, as we have said, was a most flagrant one, a terrible example of wrong-doing; and the most terrible fact was that the Church had tolerated this man, and allowed him to remain a member of the fellowship. I cannot tell what lies behind this picture in the Corinthian letter; I dare not dogmatically affirm; but because human nature abides so much the same through all the passing centuries, I wonder whether this man was a wealthy man! I wonder whether he was, in that false sense in which we use the word, an influential man! I do not know; perhaps I have no right to libel the Church in Corinth by the habits of the Church today; but this is the truth we have to learn: That for a Church to allow any man who is living in sin, and is known to be living in sin, to retain his fellowship, is to permit leaven to remain, which is corrupting the life of the whole Church, and rendering it weak where it ought to be strong.

Now, how are these sinning men to be dealt with? That man to whom you go, and he will not hear you? He is to be accounted as a heathen man and a publican—that is, he is to be put outside the fellowship. By what authority? "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The sinning man in Corinth is to be put outside the fellowship of the Church. By what authority? When you are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus. The whole matter resolves itself into this: that it is in the living presence of the living Christ that discipline is to

be exercised.

In the case of the sinning man in Corinth, Paul said he was to be handed over to Satan. He had already given himself over to Satan by his sin. Then the Church must deny him the shelter of her fellowship, that he may work out to finality his own wilful sin and his own chosen relation to Satan. The Church—I reverently say in this connection—is to act in harmony with the abiding method of God in dealing with persistent sin. It is to give sin its opportunity to work itself out to finality. It is to create circumstances for the man who persistently sins, which will compel him to make his sin visible; or else to turn back again from the sin, that he may be delivered, as this Corinthian man undoubtedly did. I hasten to add that, for when you read the second letter you have full instructions for receiving him back, for he was filled with sorrow.

It is a solemn method, but I pray you ponder it—it is God's method. Is there lust in your heart? God will put you into circumstances where that thing will be manifested sooner or later. Is Judas a thief? Give him the bag, and he will either demonstrate himself a thief, or be driven back to Him Who can make him honest. The Church of God is not only disloyal to her Lord, and paralyzing herself; she is violating the eternal order of the universe if she permit men to retain their fellowship with her, who are wilfully and deliberately continuing in sin.

One other glance at the two stories, taking now the Corinthian one first, and repeating that which for other purposes I have already said. When Paul wrote again to these Corinthians in his second letter, he said: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be made sorry, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all. Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many, so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to confirm your love toward him" (2 Corinthians 2:4-8). There is no doubt that the same person guilty of incestuous sin is here referred to, and that the discipline exercised had wrought within him repentance of soul. The attitude of the Church toward the one who repents is to be that of readiness to restore, comfort, and love. That we are never to forget.

This becomes far more powerful and forceful when we turn to the words of Christ Himself. If he will not hear the Church, what then? Now we need to be most careful! What then? "Let him be unto thee"—what? "A heathen man and a publican"? No! What then? "A heathen man and a publican"! You certainly cannot print that. The different tone is the evidence of different temper. We can say an orthodox thing in such a way as to make it the most damnable heresy. The supreme business in all this discipline is not that of mechanical activity, but that of spiritual tone and temper. If this man will not hear the Church, what then? Let him be a heathen man, excommunicate him, banish him, damn him? No. That is Rome, and that is hell; and let us be done with it! What then? Let him be the man for whom I came to die; let him be the heathen man, the Gentile, the publican whom the Son of man came to seek and save. That is what he is to become to you. He is to be the man that you will pray for, as you never did before; for whom you will watch, and whom you will follow to the ends of the earth, in order to bring him back, won by the compassion of your love.

That is Christian discipline. Not the anathema that rejoices in its curse, but the wail and the agony and the patience and the sacrifice which never lets this man alone until he is home again.

"Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." We must put him outside; we must not allow him to have the shelter of the Church; but the moment he is over the borderline, after him, after him, though the way be rough and long, and it means wounding and suffering; never give up hope—let him be the heathen man and the publican.

When the Church exercises its discipline in that tone, and in that temper, discipline becomes beneficent, gracious, producing purity, not only within her own borders, but in the very lives of those whom it becomes necessary for her to discipline.

The theme is difficult. I can talk freely here. I am under my own vine and fig tree. I hate discipline! I would rather do anything than go and tell a man about his fault. I would rather do anything than have to tell a man he has done something wrong. I always feel I am the culprit. But evil must not be tolerated within the fellowship of the Christian Church. You have no business, if there is someone over there with whom you are not on speaking terms, to remain inside the Church. Out with you, and get it settled! You are paralyzing the fellowship. Evil must not be tolerated; wrong conduct must be judged; the tolerated evil is leavening the whole camp and corrupting the Church of God.

To allow a wrong-doer to continue in Church membership is to inflict wrong on him by giving him a false sense of security. Put him out, in order that he may see the darkness, and that the lurid light of judgment may arrest him. Let him know there is no shelter for a man who persistently sins. Do not lull him into false security by allowing him to stay in the fellowship, and imagine that he may continue in sin that grace may abound. The Church must be pure. No consideration of delicacy, of sensitiveness, of peace, must prevent our loyalty to Christ.

But if, indeed, we thus act in obedience to the pure and holy impulses of the Christ life, that same Christ life is full of tenderness, full of compassion; and, as I have tried to say, will drive us out after those who must be dealt with in discipline.

And let it never be forgotten that repentance is always a door to reinstatement. Let us have no lengthy probation for a sinning brother. Get him in. The Church is not the abode of absolutely perfect men and women—at least, this is not! The Church is a nursery; the Church is a home. Home! That is the most sacred room in your home where the little child is sick, where the aged pilgrim lingers on. The most beautiful thing about home is that it is the place of refuge for the weak. Yes, for those full of trembling, and full of sighing and of sobbing; this is the place. Lest they be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, lest repentance should become hopelessness, they are to be received.

And the last thing of all, what is it? "I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw... One like unto a son of man... And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as one dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, Fear not."

There is no more difficult or delicate thing awaiting us in our Church fellowship than this of discipline, but amid the golden candlesticks walks the Son of man.

"In His feet and hands are woundprints, and His side." May He give us of His Spirit that we may dare to deal with sin, and refuse to find it harbor or refuge within our fellowship; and then that we may dare to suffer and die to save the sinning man, that he may find his place again in the

fellowship of the redeemed.

Matthew 18:18-21. The Powers Of The Presence.

Matthew 18:18-21.

The Powers Of The Presence.

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:18-21

These three verses constitute an incidental statement by our Lord of essential truths concerning His Church. After the confession of Peter He revealed two secrets to His disciples, that of the Church and that of the Cross. Prior to the experience at Cæsarea Philippi He had never referred to His Church, neither had He spoken specifically of His Cross.

The Church, according to that first revelation, was to be at once His building, embodying the principles of the Kingdom; His army, at war with all opposing forces; and His witness, holding the keys of the Kingdom as the interpreter of His ethic to the world.

The Cross, according to that earliest explicit statement, was by the appointment of God, Jesus' way through suffering and death to resurrection, and, consequently, to the place of full and final authority.

Both these secrets were arresting and amazing, and their influence is discernible in all Jesus' subsequent dealings with His disciples. It was in the midst of instructions in this atmosphere, on the subject of forgiveness of sins, that is, human forgiveness of sins, that our Lord made the statements which constitute our text. I deliberately take them from the context, because they are complete within themselves. I do not propose to show the bearing of these statements on the subject which our Lord was dealing with at the moment, but to consider them themselves. Taken in the order of their utterance, you will observe that they consist, first, of two declarations of power vested in the Church, and, second, of a revelation of the secret and nature of that power.

The words are very familiar, and therefore it is all the more necessary that we observe them carefully. This is one of those familiar passages which we read through quickly, imagining that we know them; and we do know them, and yet, because of our easy reading of them, we may miss the things which are of supreme importance in them. In order to understand this teaching of our Lord, we must observe the interrelation between the statements. There are, first, two distinct statements concerning powers vested in the Church, and these culminate in, and are completed by, our Lord's revelation of the secret of these powers.

Each of the first two declarations is introduced by a phrase arresting attention. First, "Verily I say unto you"; and then, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Second, "Again I say unto you," and then "if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."

But to take those two statements apart from that which follows will be to misinterpret them. We must link them with that which follows, which is introduced by a word relating the final declaration to the first two: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

So that we have—and thus we may divide our meditation—first, a revelation of the twofold power of the Christian Church in the two declarations, and a revelation of the secret of that power in the affirmation concerning His perpetual presence within the Church, when the Church is fulfilling the conditions laid down. Even at the risk of wearying you, I emphasize the importance of noticing the three declarations, and how they are linked to each other. First He said, "Verily I say unto you," arresting attention by that particular formula. Then, in order that He might note the fact that He was about to say something beyond that which He had already said, He again arrested attention by the words: "Again I say unto you," and then He made the second declaration. Finally He introduced His last statement by the word "For," showing that there is no meaning in either of the earlier declarations apart from the final one.

Let us first consider our Lord's teaching concerning the two powers vested in the Christian Church. These again must be seen in their interrelationship. As a matter of fact, in this wonderful passage our Lord passed from that which is manifest and external to that which, in the life of the Church, is secret and hidden; and, finally, to that which is the deepest and profoundest matter.

The manifest and external power is that the Church is to be the interpreter in the world of His ethic, that the business of the Church is to set up the moral standards for the ordering of human life, and to do that by revealing to men what God's will is concerning them. Now, in order to fulfil that, the Church must herself be familiar with the place where the secrets are discovered; and so He passed from that which is external and manifest to that which is secret, the power of prayer vested in the Church.

With regard to the first power, in order clearly to apprehend our Lord's meaning we must free our minds from false prejudices concerning the statement, "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." As we read the verse today we are in danger of being in bondage to certain false ideas concerning its meaning. If only we could hear the words as they were heard by the men to whom they were first said, I think many of us would be startled, because the simple meaning of the words would be so self-evident, and would be so different from meanings which we have associated with them. Let me say broadly—not to discuss the subject at any length—that when our Lord uttered these words to His first disciples they would not convey to the disciples the slightest suggestion that He was conferring on them anything in the nature of sacerdotal power. Gradually the idea of binding and loosing has been transferred from things to persons, and all unconsciously we read the verse as though our Lord had said something quite different, as though He had said, "Whomsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whomsoever ye shall loose on

earth shall be loosed in heaven," as though He had conferred on the disciples some power by which they should hold men in bondage to their own sins, or set them loose from the responsibility accruing from their sins. There is a certain sense in which that is true. There is a teaching of our Lord that reveals the fact that He has conferred on His people in the exercise of their ministry the power to declare sins forgiven or retained; but that is not the subject in this statement. Here the consequences of sins are not in view. Rather, the thought is of the determination of what sin is. It is the setting up of a standard. As I have said, if only we could have heard these words uttered we would have understood as the disciples did. These were the common phrases of the hour: to bind, to loose. They were the phrases of the scribes, who were the moral interpreters of the age. The literature of the time abounds in illustrations. Great masters or rabbis were set over against each other in ethical discussion. This man binds such and such a matter, while this man looses it. The meaning of the phrase was that according to this man's interpretation, we may do thus and so, and, according to that man's interpretation, we may not do thus and so. Binding and loosing were words used in the common speech of the times, and we can understand our Lord's words only as we understand the meaning in that sense.

Briefly, then, what does the statement mean? That what the Church allows morally, ethically, is allowed, that what the Church forbids morally, ethically, is forbidden; that in human life the Church's responsibility to her Lord is to interpret to men the law of God, to set up the moral standards. Her business is to enunciate the law, to determine standards, and in hours of crisis to decide questions.

However, let me immediately draw attention to what that really means. What is this authority of which He was speaking? Was He telling these men that they might sit down in council, to discuss together whether or not men might do certain things? By no means. "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," and why? Because these men would voice the will of heaven. What they bound on earth would be bound in heaven, and what they loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven, because originally these things were bound in heaven or loosed in heaven. The Church is not to discuss, not to attempt to formulate, but to express the law of heaven, the will of God, the ethic of eternity, in its application to the activities of time. The Church is to be the medium by which the will of God for man shall be known, shall be declared, shall be proclaimed, and that as to the standards of conduct and in the determination of questions as they may arise. But all the Church's decisions and determinations are of no value if they result merely from her discussions. They are valuable only as she is the voice of the good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

Therefore, the reading of this verse necessitates a warning. It is a most perilous verse if taken out of its connection. If today there should arise some new section of the Christian Church, which, basing its authority on this passage, should proceed to discuss the whole question of moral standards in order to give their opinion as to what men ought, or ought not to do in individual, social, and national life, forgetting that they have neither vision to see, nor right to affirm, nor power to enforce, save as this final thing is true in experience, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst," the result would indeed be disastrous.

Now, let us suggest an inquiry. How far has the Church of God this power today? No mere expression of my opinion would be of any value. I suggest, therefore, a simple test for your

thoughtful consideration. Whenever in past history the Church of God has enunciated the ethic of heaven for the government of life in the world, one result has followed—or shall I be more accurate if I say, an alternative of result has followed?—men have obeyed, or they have opposed definitely and positively. Wherever the Church has lost the power to speak the actual will of God to the age, then though she has spoken her own thought, her own opinion, attempting to foist on humanity her own conceptions of what humanity ought or ought not to do, what has been the result? Absolute indifference. The Church addresses itself to the age as to the moralities of individual life, and the age is amused and goes its own way. The voice of the Church is heard speaking in the presence of great crises, but those who are in the conflict are not listening to what the Church has to say. Is that so? If so, it is because somehow the Church has lost her power to speak the veritable Word of God. I do not say that if the Church shall speak the Word of God, and enunciate the law of heaven to men, they will obey. I do say they will either obey or fight. Look back over the history of the Church. Every hour of ethical revival resulting from her ministry has been an hour of conflict and persecution, as well as an hour of reformation, remaking, and restarting of the true inspirations of human life. The terror of today is this, that we are not heard, that we are not noticed. Men care nothing about what we bind. They do not ask to know what we loose.

Let us pass now to the second of these declarations of our Lord. Here we are coming inside the Church. Let us prepare ourselves to hear these words of Jesus without any reservation; for if in the first case we have been in danger at least of reading into the words of Jesus values which they were never intended to contain, in the second case we have been strangely in danger of reading out of them values that lie within them. These words of our Lord are most remarkable words. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." How many of us believe that? In general terms, we of the Christian faith and the Christian name immediately say, Of course we all believe it. But do I believe it? I challenge my own soul. With all reverence let me put this statement of the Master in another form. This is what the Lord said, If the desires of two expressed to the Father symphonize, sound together, about anything, it shall be done, generated, caused to be.

The things Jesus said about prayer are stupendous. In this word concerning the power of prayer vested in the Church two spheres are recognized: two of you on earth, My Father which is in heaven—the material and the spiritual, the things of which the senses may be conscious, the supreme spiritual fact that the senses may never discover. Notice again the contrast of persons, "two of you," "My Father." Notice, finally, the related activity: the two symphonizing in desire and in petition, the One causing the things to be for the two desiring. That is the picture. Whether that is scientific or not, I will postpone the discussion for a hundred years, because we shall know more about these things then. I am not at all eager to know whether this is true according to philosophy or science. It is true according to Jesus: two, their desires symphonizing, sounding together; One, the Father Who is in heaven, doing what the two desire. That is the power of prayer.

Here, again, a word of warning is needed. This is a most perilous verse if taken out of its connection, and we do not discover the real meaning of our Lord if we read it alone. We may build on it every form of heresy concerning prayer. We may imagine that this teaching is that if any two of us want something, and we agree together, we may get it straightway. That is not in the statement. We must read on: "because where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," His presence in the midst conditions the desiring, inspires the

asking, and produces the answer.

Let us pause again for inquiry. How far has the Church this power today? What do we really know about symphony of desire expressed to our Father in the consciousness that the Lord Himself is in the midst? Sometimes I have made my protest against attempting to measure the strength of a church by the number attending the prayer meeting, and I know full well that a large number does not constitute a prayer meeting; but I know also that the number of absences reveals weakness on the part of those who are not there. If preaching is enough, then our Lord was mistaken. If multiplied organizations are what the Church needs, then He was entirely blind, for He gave no instructions as to the multiplication of organizations. He said if things are to be done, God must do them, and God will do them when you know how to ask Him. That is brutal and vulgar language as compared to the exquisite and beautiful language of the Lord, but that is what He meant.

If our moral influence is lost it is because we are not making use of our spiritual resources. If the world is indifferent to us when we talk of things that ought to be, and that ought not to be, it is because we are attempting to touch the restless, rushing world and arrest it, while we ourselves are suffering from the same fever of restlessness and rushing, and know nothing of the dynamic forces that are generated in the place of fellowship and prayer.

And so we pass lastly to our Lord's revelation of the secret of power in these two matters. If we are to have that ethical authority that binds and looses, commands attention and creates obedience or opposition; if we are to have that spiritual power that enables us in agreement of desire and expression to ask, and thus to produce, how is it all to be done? And we come to the final statement, in a few moments to reconsider it. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Mark the place, mark the conditions, but supremely observe the presence.

The place, and the glory of this statement of our Lord is in its dealing with place. I can indicate it for you exactly in two words: "where... there." They signify exclusion and inclusion.

The exclusion of all special places. Walls are demolished. "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Veils are rent in twain, places are all superseded. Where? Not in Jerusalem, not in Mount Gerizim, not in St. Peter's at Rome, not in Westminster Abbey, not in Westminster chapel. Oh yes, in all of them, but in none of them! The where of Jesus is universal, cosmopolitan, inclusive as well as exclusive.

As I sat and thought of this morning's matter my mind went back over my own life, and some very simple incidents came back to me. I went back to the days of youth on the Cotswold Hills and to rambles with one friend. We walked and talked, and we came to a stile, and there we halted. The fields were all around us, and no one else was near. There we two sat and talked of our Lord and of our Master, and then together, gathered in the Name, we prayed. There was a Third, "I am in the midst."

Then I remembered how, when I began to preach, I was conducting special services in Yorkshire, and some miners told me it was easy to preach, but that it was a different thing to cut coal. And so I went down with them and cut my stint all day long in a Yorkshire coal pit. Going along the workings, I suddenly came to a siding, and I heard a man say, Hallelujah! He was a Methodist. I

paused a moment, and went in to that working, and two or three of us had a few minutes' talk, and we prayed there for the meeting to be held that night, and for someone whom they were anxious about. There down in the depths of the earth, three miners paused, for a moment, and a mission preacher prayed. There were the two or three gathered together, and the Lord was in the midst, and in the mine was the place of worship, and present were the priest, the altar, the sacrifice, the right of prayer, the power of prayer. There was generated the dynamic force that moves toward the coming of the Kingdom. Coming home from America on board a great liner with George Macgregor, one sunset evening, at the end of the boat, we talked of the things of the Master, and, our conversation merging into prayer, we knew the Presence, the real Presence.

Where? There! In the cottage, in the conventicle, in the citadel, in the church, in the cathedral. Not because these places have been officially set apart, but because they are consecrated by the two or the three gathered in the name.

But in these words of the Lord we have also the revelation of conditions. First as to number, two or three. There is definiteness and indefiniteness. Definite, two, the smallest gathering possible. You cannot have a gathering of one. You cannot be a church by yourself, my dear friend. A good many men would like to be. There must be two; this promise is not for the individual. Oh, thank God, there are gracious promises for the individual. I am not saying that I cannot pray alone. Our Lord was more insistent on private prayer than even on the fellowship of prayer. In the Old and the New Testaments the individual promises are many, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word." That is a great promise for the individual. But this refers to a gathering, an assembly, a fellowship, a koinonia. Two, there must be a definite meeting.

Then observe the indefiniteness of it. Two or three: units or tens, or hundreds, or thousands; it does not at all matter.

But what is the principle? In My Name! The more one ponders this word of the Lord, the more marvelous does it become in its mystic quantities, as well as in its clear and definite pronouncement. "In My name," quite literally, into My name. The phrase includes the thought of coming unto the name, and passing into the name, and consequently being in the name. It was in order that we might understand the phrase, "In My name," that we read those two passages, one in Matthew, and one in Philippians. They are the two great passages about the name "Jesus." I take those two passages, and I ask, What do they reveal to me? Jesus, according to the angelic prophecy, signifies His power to save His people from their sins. According to the apostle's teaching, God has given Him that name, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess." Then the two thoughts associated with the name are those of purity and authority. Purity not merely demanded, but communicated; He shall save from sins. Authority exercised: He is Lord of all.

What, then, is to be gathered into His name? To be gathered into His name is to receive His salvation, and to be made pure. To be gathered into His name is to submit to His authority, and to be ruled absolutely by Him. Now, give me two men, or a man and a woman, or two women, or two little children, who are gathered in His name, who have yielded themselves to Him, that He may make them pure, who have yielded themselves to Him that He may master them; where such are

so gathered, He says, there am I. That is the Church.

Gathered, or led together, suggests the idea that some attracting power brings these people together. It is the attractive power of the Lord, interpreted to the mind of man through the ministry of the Spirit. So disciples are gathered together.

Thus we come to the great central truth: "There am I in the midst." Oh, if we could but see that picture, two or three gathered, and the Lord in the midst. Who was the Speaker? A little while before He had said, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" The Son of man was the Speaker! And immediately He was answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and He answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father." The Speaker was the Son of God! Son of man, on the level of the two and the three; Son of God, identified with the Father. Son of man, on the earth; Son of God, in the bosom of the Father in heaven.

Now we see how that affects the other subjects. How does it affect this matter of prayer? If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything it shall be done for them of My Father, for I am in the midst of the two or three gathered in My name. First He is in the midst of those gathered, creating their symphony of desire and of asking. Second, He is in the midst, cooperating with the doing of the Father in giving. If these things be true, then the matter of supreme importance is that we get to prayer.

How does that affect the declaration concerning ethical authority? What you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, what you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, because I am in the midst, interpreting to you heaven's will, and so enunciating through you the true law for earthly conduct.

These, my brethren are high Church doctrines. These are the doctrines of our Lord Himself; and it is because we have so largely lost them, and have indulged in vaunting and boasting about a freedom that lacks the true spiritual note, that the world does not listen to us when we talk about binding and loosing.

Are we conscious of weakened powers in prevailing prayer? Then our first responsibility is that of gathering together in the name anew; and we must do so by the appropriation of His purity, by the way of His salvation, and by submitting to His authority, that in us the Kingdom may be established.

In proportion as He is King of my life and Lord of my salvation, in that proportion am I ready for the gathering together with other people of like loyalty to the Lord. Where there is such gathering together with the Lord in the midst we have the true place of prayer, and we hear the true voice of God.

If that first responsibility be fulfilled, then our consequent responsibilities are those of exercising the powers created, both in the practice of prayer and in the proclamation of the law, that through us our Lord may carry on His ministry and win His victories.

Matthew 20:20-23. The Pathway To Power.

Matthew 20:20-23.

The Pathway To Power.

Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping, and asking a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wouldest thou? She saith unto Him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand in Thy Kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto Him, We are able. He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left hand, is not Mine to give but for whom it has been prepared of My Father.

Matthew 20:20-23

The first word of the paragraph directs attention to what has preceded it. "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping, and asking..." When?

The face of the King was set toward Jerusalem. Between the disciples and Himself the relationship was strained. Mark supplies these words in the narrative, "They were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid." That is a graphic description of the condition of affairs. Our Lord, with His face set toward Jerusalem, was going alone; the disciples, who had been His close companions during the years of public ministry, were following a little way behind Him, amazed, as our word has it, dazed, as the actual word suggests; they were filled with a sense of coming calamity, and utterly unable to understand what He meant by His perpetual references to a cross, and His persistent setting of His face toward the city that was hostile to him.

During that period He took them apart especially, and repeated His statements as to what lay before Him with even more detail than before concerning His sufferings, in the most remarkable way foretelling the actual indignities to which He was about to be subjected: "They shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify." "Then came the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping, and asking" that James and John might sit the one on the right hand and the other on the left when He came into His Kingdom.

Observe the simple facts of the story. Salome spoke for her sons. When the Lord began to deal with the request, He addressed the sons, not the mother. That is indicated by the fact that He employed the plural pronoun, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? And it was the sons who answered, "We are able."

James and John He had surnamed Boanerges, sons of thunder; and it is important that we recognize the fact that when our Lord so surnamed these men, He was not describing them as they were, but as they should be. We have only the story of the surnaming in one connection; it is

Mark who tells it, and he does so in close connection with another fact. In giving the names of the twelve whom He appointed to apostleship, he wrote, "Simon He surnamed Peter;... James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, He surnamed Boanerges." In each case the surnaming was prophecy, an indication, not of what the men were as He found them, but of what they should become as the result of His dealing with them. That is quite clearly evident in the wonderful story of Simon, the elemental, restless man of great human forces but lacking the cohesive principle which welds them into rock. Jesus looked into his eyes when He first met Simon and said, "Thou art Simon... thou shalt be called Rock." He surnamed him according to what he should become. So also when He met these two brothers, or when He appointed them to the work of the apostleship, He surnamed them Boanerges. When He first looked into the eyes of Simon, He did not say, Thou art Rock, but Thou shalt become Rock. When He first looked into the eyes of James and John, He did not say of them, Behold two sons of thunder; but Behold two men who shall become sons of thunder. He surnamed them prophetically.

It is true that He surnamed them according to the capacities He saw in them, when those capacities should be fulfilled under His own ministry. He saw in Peter all the elements which, mastered by principle, should become rock. What Simon lacked when he first met the Lord was not any element of strength, but the master principle which should weld all the elements into strength. When He looked at James and John, James, of whom we know so little, and John, with the mystic, far-away look, John, who, looking at you, seemed to see not you but something infinitely beyond you; John the man whose eyes looked languorous with very weariness of things material, yet in whose eyes there lay the slumbering fires of infinite vision—these men, said Jesus, shall be Boanerges, sons of thunder. The word was Aramaic, and was intended to convey to Hebrew minds Hebrew conceptions. We must interpret the practical values by the poetic suggestions. If we take the word Boanerges to pieces we discover that the word for sons is the word which refers to the son as the builder of the family, as the one who continues its values and influences. Quite a different word from the word bar was this word ben, referring to the son as the one who received an inheritance of responsibility and transferred it. Thunder was always symbolic of power and authority. It is an interesting fact that in the Old Testament the word is almost exclusively employed to express something of the authority, power, and majesty of God.

Jesus looked at James and John and said, These shall become Boanerges, sons of thunder, offspring of the Divine majesty and authority, men who shall realize it and repeat it. These were the men who preferred the request.

Quite simply, that request was that when He comes into His Kingdom they might occupy positions of power in association with Him. Our Lord immediately challenged them, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" With equal readiness, and with remarkable immediateness they responded, "We are able." What, then? Mark it well: Jesus said, "My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not mine to give except to those for whom it hath been prepared."

I need not tarry long to defend my change of the word "but" at that point; this Greek word *alla*, neuter plural of the word *allos* means contrariwise. You will find it in the New Testament translated by many words: and, but, even, howbeit, indeed, nay, nevertheless, no, notwithstanding, save, therefore, yea, yet. Twice you will find it in the Authorized Version translated "save"; once that

translation is retained in the Revised Version. On the holy mount it is stated, "They saw no one, save Jesus only." Because this passage has been misunderstood, I use the word "except," which is equivalent to "save." Our Lord did not say it was not His to appoint to positions of power in the Kingdom. What He did say was that it was not His to appoint to positions of power any except those for whom the positions were prepared, and the positions are prepared for the men who are prepared for the positions.

The values of this story are persistent. General and hasty condemnation of James and John is very unwise. It is also futile, because in the moment of our highest spiritual aspiration and experience we share their ambition. However much we may condemn them, however much a superficial reading of the narrative may lead us to say they had no right to ask, however much we may be in sympathy with the other ten as they were moved with indignation against the two, in hours when spiritual life is rising to highest levels there is the desire for power and position, and we cry out that we also may sit on His right hand and on His left in His Kingdom, that there may be fulfilled in us also the prophecy that He whispered in our ear when in some holy hour of secret communion He declared that we should become sons of thunder. That was their request.

Let us endeavor to understand these men and our Lord's dealing with them. These, then, are the simple divisions of our meditation: first, the request of the sons of thunder; second, the answer of the Son of God.

The request of the sons of thunder was for places of power. It was, if you like to make use of the word, a selfish request; but it was a desire for self-realization in relation to their Lord. "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy Kingdom."

It is to be noted that when presently He dealt with the contrast between the rule and authority in His Kingdom and the rule and authority in the Gentile world, it was in answer to the indignation of the ten. He was not correcting James and John; He was correcting the ten who were angry with James and John. There was far more unadulterated selfishness in the ten in that hour than there was in James and John. I repeat, in some senses the request was selfish, but it was an expression of a desire for self-realization in relation to the Lord; it was in His Kingdom that they desired to occupy these places. As I have pondered the story I have come to the conviction that what they really meant was this: Oh, Master, Thou Who didst surname us Boanerges, fulfil the promise, make us Boanerges, true sons of thunder, men of authority, under Thee in Thy Kingdom, and over the affairs thereof.

Let us look at this a little more particularly, for in an understanding of it is the supreme value of our meditation. Observe, in the first place, that the request was founded on faith; in the second place, that it was conceived in ignorance, and ignorance is not sin save where it is persistent, wilful; in the third place, that it was expressed in magnificent heroism.

I say, in the first place the request was founded on faith. Then, when His face was toward Jerusalem, and He was persistently declaring to them that He was going to suffer and be killed, then they asked that they might sit on His right hand and on His left in His Kingdom. The request was founded on faith, the faith that He was King; on the conviction that was mightier than all their trembling, that He was coming, somehow, into His Kingdom. They were amazed, dazed, filled with fear; yet had they not seen Him, had they not tabernacled with Him, had they not listened to His

words, had they not caught some glimpses of the high ideals of His heart? They were convinced that it was absolutely necessary, that, somehow, He would enter into His Kingdom. So, in spite of the threatening Cross, it may be that they were attempting to banish it from their minds, that out of some sort of compassion for Him they were trying to make Him forget it for the moment—it may have been for one, or both, of these reasons that they avowed confidence in the Kingdom and in Him as King. It was a request founded on faith.

It was also a request conceived in ignorance. They did not know Him. Verily, they had seen Him, they had listened to Him; but they did not know Him. They never knew Him until He was dead, buried, risen, and ascended! In one sudden rush of new life and light they knew Him in the Pentecostal baptism. They did not know Him when they made this request. They were ignorant of all the profoundest truths concerning Him. Neither did they know His Kingdom, they were still thinking within the realm of the material concerning the Kingdom. They were still thinking, in common with others of their nation, and in common with all the disciples, that He was about to set up an earthly kingdom with material benefits, with all the blessings of this life for humanity.

And they were not wholly wrong. That is another subject, yet I am bound to touch on it in passing. There are men today who seem to imagine that our Lord is not set on that kind of kingdom. But He is, and He will never be satisfied until the last wrong is righted, the last tear is wiped away, and humanity finds itself in a true brotherhood in relation to the Fatherhood of God. The King will never be satisfied while wrong persists, He will never rest until He reigns in this world, until

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;

The world, and they that dwell therein;

and until the Kingdom is established in this world the King will never have finished His work.

But These men were only looking for the material; they had not discovered that truth which we are still slow to believe, that the material can be realized only through the spiritual. We shall never set up a true social order save as the men composing it are regenerate, renewed, remade within themselves. These men had not seen that the Lord's first work is spiritual, that He can proceed to His Kingdom only by the use of weapons, not carnal weapons, but spiritual. When they preferred their request their vision of Him was limited, their understanding of His Kingdom was imperfect. Moreover, their request was conceived in ignorance of what it involved, They had not realized what it would mean to them if ever they were to realize this character of authority. They did not understand what their request excluded. If He should give them these places of authority they would lack exactly that kind of authority of which they had been so constantly thinking. It was a request conceived in ignorance, but ignorance is not sin.

Once again, it was a request expressed in heroism. I listen to the story once more and I hear our Lord as He said to these men, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" And then I listen to their reply, "We are able." I know exactly what we have so often said; It was a foolish word! Yes, perhaps it was. Yet think again. What did it mean? "We are able." They meant to say, The purpose that inspires us makes us entirely reckless of possible consequences! It was exactly the spirit which actuated Peter when he said, Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will die for Thee! With our cool, calculating, cynical habits of mind, we have criticized Peter for his foolhardiness. What did our Lord say to him? You shall follow Me; that profound passion that is ready to risk

death shall be fulfilled in spite of the fact that within a few hours you will deny Me! It was exactly the kind of passion our Lord was ever seeking, reckless disregard of cost in answer to a driving impulse of purpose. When we declare that Jesus called men to count the cost before they followed Him we are saying what is not warranted by any story in the New Testament. He never came to men and charged them to count the cost. He came to men telling them to follow at any cost, at all costs, without counting cost. I know there was one occasion when He said to men, What man of you if he is going to build a tower would not first count the cost; or what king going to war will not first count the cost? But the context shows that neither the man going to build nor the king going to war is the disciple, but the Lord. He was not teaching men that they must count the cost, but that He must count the cost, and therefore His terms must be severe. The severity of His terms was marked. If men will follow Him it must be regardless of cost. That man who sits down and quietly counts the cost of becoming a follower of Christ will never follow Christ. The only man who really follows Christ is the man who says, I am able, whatever the cup may be. It may be true in some sense that he is not able; but the venture of his faith, the heroism that dares, the passionate abandonment of himself to high enterprise, that is what the Lord is ever seeking. When a man says, I am able, in that spirit, even though he is not able, he will be able before the Lord has done with him. Let there be that heroic abandonment of everything, refusal to count the cost, that says, I am able; then the Lord will immediately look into the eyes of that man and say, You shall!

So we touch immediately on the response of the Son of God. Observe with great care, speaking generally of the response of Jesus to this word of James and John, that there was in it not a single touch of anger, not a single note of scorn. Let me emphasize that. I think if I had dealt with James and John (and that is the word, dealt with them—how fond we are of dealing with people) I would have shown them the unutterable folly of their request. I would have shown them their amazing stupidity. But there was no touch of anger, no suspicion of scorn, in the answer of the Lord. Let me very carefully illuminate this story by an earlier one. There was an occasion when Jesus answered in anger, when He answered, as it seems to me, with a touch of scorn. There was a moment when He said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling block unto Me." That was when a man said in the presence of the Cross, Not that, not the Cross. But to these men who in answer to His question, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" said, "We are able," there was no such rebuke. His anger was for the man who was not prepared to follow along the shadowed, mysterious way of the Cross. There is no anger toward these men. These men were very foolish! Yes, that is what you said about that girl who desired to leave her home and go to the foreign mission field where the climate was likely to kill her. It is exactly the same thing. When the soul faces heroically the drinking of the cup in comradeship with the suffering of the Son of God, even though that soul does not understand all it is doing, the high resolve, the noble purpose, the fine abandonment, hear from the King only an answer of great tenderness.

Then I pray you observe how the Son of God responded. He revealed their ignorance, He honored their heroism, and He indicated the line of their responsibility.

He revealed their ignorance by the declaration, "Ye know not what ye ask." That was not a rebuke, it was a statement. Then He helped them to understand what they were asking, and He did it by illustration. He brought them back to the beginning, "Are ye able to drink the cup? He recalled them to His previous teaching, when He told them that He must go to Jerusalem and that there He must suffer and be killed and that He must be raised again, that He Himself was to become a son

of thunder through suffering, death, and resurrection. So He revealed their ignorance to them.

Then they replied, "We are able," and He immediately honored their heroism. He admitted them to the fellowship of His sufferings—"My cup indeed ye shall drink." I am well aware that there are senses in which they never drank His cup, there are senses in which He drank the cup of unutterable, unfathomable sorrow alone; but it is equally true—and the New Testament is full of it, the epistles reveal it and teach it—that He did, and He does, admit those who follow Him to some share in His sufferings: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings,"... "fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." These are the words of a man who came to understand his Lord and who was wonderfully admitted into fellowship in the travail that makes the Kingdom come. So our Lord said to these men, "My cup indeed ye shall drink." How verily they did! For one of them it was swift, sudden martyrdom by Herod's sword. For the other, the long, lonely exile in Patmos: "I, John your brother in affliction." Yea, verily, they drank of His cup.

But in that moment when He admitted them to fellowship with His suffering He admitted them also to the triumph of His glory. When in response to His challenge they said they were able to drink of the cup of His sufferings, the cup that was even then being pressed to His holy lips, in that moment He admitted them to resources of power, vision, virtue, victory. Then He admitted them to the forces that would make them sons of thunder, men of power, men of authority in the spiritual Kingdom.

He not only revealed their ignorance and honored their heroism, He indicated their responsibility. First by suggestion as He talked to them; and then by interpretation as He talked to the ten.

By suggestion; "My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left hand, is not Mine to give, but for whom it hath been prepared of My Father." Thus He suggested that the places are for those for whom they are prepared; and He confronted them with the cup, and left them uncertain about the positions of power; confronted them with the travail, and uttered no final word as to how they should be prepared for prominent places of power and position in His Kingdom, save only that He told them these were prepared by the Father.

The ten were indignant, and made their protest; and Jesus called them to Him, and interpreted the suggestion He had made to the two as He contrasted authority in the Gentile kingdom and authority in His own Kingdom. The perpetual law of power in the Kingdom is that of disrobing, stooping, bending, serving. The man who stoops the lowest rises the highest. That was Jesus' final word.

Of all this wonderful incident the ultimate is found in the words with which our Lord ended His instruction to the ten, those great, wonderful words that have in them so much of music, so much of the thunder of mystic power, that I hardly need do other than read them: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Lord, suffer us to sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand in Thy Kingdom. Yes, the Son of Man is coming into a Kingdom; but He will enter into His Kingdom, not by compelling men to serve Him, but by stooping to serve men. How near to the Kingdom of God are we in the Church? How near are we in our theologies to an understanding of this strange, wonderful law of the Kingdom of God? Are we not yet thinking and preaching as though our Lord is demanding

service from men? He says, No, "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Change the words, simple as they are, and use simpler ones. The Son of Man came, not to compel men to serve Him, but to serve them. This is His way to His Kingdom. Not by enlisting recruits, but by Himself enlisting to serve, is this Son of Man coming into His Kingdom. That is a strange and puzzling thing to human nature. That troubled John the Baptist and made him send the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" What art Thou doing? Gathering no army, consulting no committees, prosecuting no great propaganda! What art Thou doing? Walking about, serving people, binding up the broken-hearted, going to a village to help a suffering soul, spending long hours talking to one man! What was He doing? Serving. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Let James and John, the ten, the twelve, the whole Church, hear this: His way into the Kingdom is the way of service, and service that shall crown itself in sacrifice; He is crowned by life, not preserved, but given as a ransom for many.

So with His followers. The disciples of supreme power are those of the lowliest service. I go back a little to look at James and John. Our Lord was on His way to Jerusalem, and going through a Samaritan village He fain would tarry there; but the Samaritans knew that His face was set toward Jerusalem, and they would have none of Him. Then James and John said, Let us call down fire from heaven to consume them! They were not sons of thunder then! They thought they were. So do we still when we curse those in opposition. But later James passed to hidden service, as one of the twelve on whom the Spirit fell, and at last to martyrdom. So he became a son of thunder. John went to Ephesus to write love letters tremulous with Divine affection, saturated with Divine compassion, musical with Divine tenderness; and on to Patmos, brother of all afflicted souls. So he became a son of thunder, a man of power, of authority. They learned the secret of service and of sacrifice through suffering.

The passion for power Jesus does not rebuke. It is a high and noble moment when we look Him in the face and say, Master, make us men of power in fellowship with Thee, let us sit at Thy right hand in the Kingdom, let us be close to Thee in the exercise of authority. It is a high and noble aspiration.

But the way of fulfilment is always the same. You must come with Me, says the Lord, drink this cup, and abandon all your rights; and girding yourselves with humility as with a slave's apron, pour out your lives in serving others. You will be misunderstood; they will smite you on the cheek! You will be misinterpreted; they will spit on you, scourge you, laugh at you, bruise you! But so you will rise to power. All this, the story is saying to me, to my shame. God help us together to catch the vision of the way to power, and help us to consent.

Matthew 22:35-40. The Great Commandments.

Matthew 22:35-40.

The Great Commandments.

One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? And He said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets.

Matthew 22:35-40

It was a day of questions and answers in the final ministry of Jesus. The last hours of His life were approaching. His enemies were closing about Him. The hour and power of darkness were at hand. Yet never did He stand out more clearly in matchless wisdom than in this dark hour. They had come to Him with the challenge of unbelief, questioning Him as to His authority, and He had replied to their inquiry in such wise as to silence them. They had come to Him in the spirit of political worldliness asking Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not. Compelling them to produce the current coin of the realm, the Roman denarius, He had uttered a word so full of philosophy that it abides until this time as the central teaching for all men who would relate the affairs of state to the affairs of the Kingdom of God. The rationalistic Sadducees had come with their preeminently foolish question concerning marriage and the resurrection, and He had so answered them as to rebuke them and silence them—or to be quite accurate and to translate the Greek word literally, the Sadducees were gagged, and asked Him no more questions.

Then it was that the lawyer spoke to Him, asking Him the most subtle of all the questions, "Which is the great commandment?" The Greek word translated "which" in this question is qualitative rather than quantitative, so that what the lawyer really asked was, What is the nature of the great commandment?

On an earlier occasion, according to Luke, a lawyer had come to Jesus, asking Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and the Master had replied, Thou knowest the commandments. "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer had answered in these very terms, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus replied to him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." It may be that the question of the lawyer in the present text was the outcome of that earlier episode. The question was simply, What is the nature of the great commandment, as though there were no difference of opinion as to which was the great commandment. The wisdom of our Lord's reply is revealed in the fact that He quoted from the law, for these words are found in the law of Moses. In Deuteronomy we have the first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and in Leviticus, the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thus our Lord replied to the question by quoting the

commandments, and the very two that a lawyer on a previous occasion had quoted as summarizing the whole law. To that quotation He added the declaration, "On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets."

The Lord's answer was of the very nature of the question. The question was, What is the nature of the great commandment? Our Lord's reply was not, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; but Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. If you suggest that this is a distinction without a difference, I would point out that it is a difference between quantity and quality. All the heart is quantity; the whole heart is quality. Just as in the prophecy of Malachi it is not, Bring all the tithes into the storehouse; but Bring in the whole tithe. It is possible for a man to bring all the tithes, to be mechanically, mathematically accurate in his giving; and yet he does not bring the whole tithe unless he bring in the true spirit and for the true reason, thus introducing into the activity and attitude the spiritual element, which is the supreme. Our Lord does not merely ask for all of anything; He asks for the whole. The question was qualitative, What is the nature of the great commandment? The answer was qualitative: obedience must be qualitative. Speaking of the essential, spiritual man, the Lord declared that he must love with all the complex instrumentality of personality, with the whole heart, life, mind; heart, life, mind constitute instrumentality. Personality was addressed, and it was claimed that love must be with all the instrument, and that in the entirety of each part.

We turn from that examination of the question as to its true nature, and from that brief and hurried examination of the method of our Lord's answer, that we may consider this declaration of Christ for our own profit. We shall therefore consider, first, these great commandments themselves; second, these great commandments in relation to ourselves, ending with a final word on the Master's last declaration that on these two hang all the law and all the prophets.

The first commandment is that man is to love God. We immediately find ourselves face to face with a difficulty. Some people are quite honest enough to confess to the difficulty. Can a man love God? To some of you I apologize for the question; it sounds almost absurd! Yet, on the other hand, there are those who quite honestly say, I cannot love God. I think the difficulty is the result partly of misunderstanding of the meaning of love, and partly, and perhaps more immediately, the result of the fact that the men who say it do not know God. To know God is to love Him. One of the old writers has said, "Love consists in approbation of and inclination toward an object that appears to us as good." Whether that covers the whole ground I am not prepared now to discuss, but it does cover the ground of this particular question as to what loving God really is. Loving God consists in approbation of and inclination toward Him as we know Him to be good. Love of God must therefore be the outcome of knowledge of God. I can understand that the man who has no knowledge of God, no understanding of Him, no conception of God other than that which speaks of infinite intelligence and infinite power working together in the universe, will have no love for God—respect, reverence, awe, fear, yes, but not love. No man loves God who discovers Him only through nature. According to Paul, men are not left without witness concerning God, even though they have never had any direct revelation from God; for in the things that are created, said the apostle, man may discover the wisdom and divinity of God, man may discover, that is, the intelligence and the strength of Deity. As has often been pointed out, that truth has been reaffirmed within the last generation by the great physical scientists, who have admitted that there

is to be discovered throughout nature a double-faced intelligence and power in mysterious and wonderful co-operation. But love is never born in the heart of man toward God by that discovery. It is only when we turn from nature, not to neglect its message, not to undervalue the speech that day utters to day and night proclaims to night, but to listen for another voice and to hear what God says to man, not through the mediation of nature, but through the mediation of the Son of His love, that men come to such knowledge of God that love is created in their hearts.

Men are suffering today from mistaken notions of God. I am not speaking of the heathen. I am not even speaking of the great indifferent masses who are outside the churches. There are scores of people who are worshiping God reverently, and yet do not love Him. The reason is to be found in the fact that their conception of God is a false conception. They think of Him as a King, jealous with a jealousy that is entirely human and earthly, capricious in His dealings with the human heart, and stern and holy with the holiness that is the essence of cold morality, forevermore watching men only as the custodian of some eternal principle of righteousness, and waiting to punish the man who breaks the law. I for one could have no love for such a God. I do not believe any man can love such a God.

What, then, is God according to the Biblical revelation? The whole answer is contained in one of the shortest sentences in the Bible: "God is love." When we have read the sentence, there are two things we need to do: first, to observe that the whole Biblical revelation harmonizes with the declaration; and, second, to interpret the declaration by the whole Biblical revelation.

To see how the Biblical revelation harmonizes with the declaration, I begin at the beginning. I open the first page of the first book and I have declarations full of light, full of poetry. When I say they are full of light and poetry I do not mean they are untrue. The story of the first Chapters of Genesis is the story of processes by which a temporal dwelling place was prepared for man. I think there is another unwritten history of this world behind that history of Genesis. Forgive me for repeating that which I have so often said here: we have no story of creation in Genesis except in one sentence, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." All that follows is not the story of creation, but of restoration. I see the orderly process, ever on, and ever on; and in it I see Divine love working and, with infinite care, preparing for the crisis, the advent of man created after the Divine image in the Divine likeness, a being whose central majesty is the awe-inspiring majesty of will. It is a love story, the story of love preparing for the coming of man.

Everything between that and the final apocalypse of the new heaven and the new earth, the new Jerusalem and the establishment of the Divine order, is the story of love set on the accomplishment of purpose, patiently waiting and bearing. It begins in the inquiry, "Adam, where art thou?" I never read that without thinking of what I once heard Dr. Henry Weston, of Crozier, say: That, said he, is not the call of a policeman, it is the wail of a father's broken heart! The story runs through all the history: love bearing all things, enduring all things, hoping all things, a love that never faileth, the only love that fulfils the ideal of our own greatest poet, "Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds." So in my Bible I watch love moving toward its goal until the final anthem is sung, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." The kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ." Then sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and He shall wipe all tears from human eyes. The God of the Bible is the God of Love.

I must also interpret the declaration by Biblical revelation. As I do so, I find that this God is a God of such love that He will make no truce with anything that can in any wise harm those on whom His love is set. The love of God is not weak, sentimental, anaemic; it is mighty, courageous, full of blood. It is love that will make no truce with sin in the individual life, in society, in the race, but forever fights against it in order that humanity may be delivered from the things that spoil and blast. "God is love," and over against that I set another declaration, "Our God is a consuming fire." Is that contradiction? No, it is exposition. He is consuming fire for the destruction of all that destroys, for the blasting of all that blasts, for the blighting of everything that blights. He will restore the years that the cankerworm hath eaten. How? By the destruction of the cankerworm. Judgment is the strange act of God, rendered necessary by the malady with which He has to deal; but from the beginning to the end the love story is the story of love that never flinches or trembles in cutting out the cancer in order that health may be restored. "God is love" is the great message of the Bible from beginning to end.

All the light is focused on the Cross. "God commendeth His love to usward in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." These are old and familiar words, so old and so familiar that, alas, we recite them almost without emotion; they glibly pass our lips and produce so little sense of awe and amazement. But as we ponder them and believe them, love for God is born in the heart. "We love because He first loved us."

If this command to love Him were given to men who knew Him only in the fulness of His power, in the infinitude of His wisdom, then it might be possible that they would say, We bow in reverence and in fear, but we cannot love. But when we add to the testimony of nature the testimony of the Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, then the answer of the soul is inevitably and invariably that of the hymn,

Love so amazing, so Divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

The love of God produces love to God.

How, then, are we to know that God is love? In one way the answer already has been given, yet let us face the difficulty a little more carefully, for there are men who stand in the presence of the Cross, who yet cannot see in it the revelation of God's love. Let us be patient with them, for we find our way into an understanding of the love of God revealed in the Cross, not by declaration, but by a new attitude of soul, which is a venture of faith. God speaks to us through the Son, in His teaching, in His Cross, and in His Resurrection. He calls us, commands us, to follow Him, to believe on Him—that is, not to be convinced of a truth about Him, but to trust Him as an act of faith, to go after Him. When we commence to do so we find the terms of discipleship are of the severest, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.... Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." We make the venture, obey and command, and in obedience we discover the beneficence of the command. By obedience we come into an understanding of the infinite love of the law. Browning never reached a higher height in all his singing than when he said,

I report, as a man may, of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.

Law is found to be the expression of love when it is obeyed. Obedience to the command of Christ produces results in the life that demonstrate the love that inspired the command. That is the argument for the man who cannot see that God is love, or that love is proven by the Cross of Christ. At the beginning, the command to love God may be the command to discover God by obeying Him. I cannot love Him unless I know Him. "The Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him." I have looked, and yet I do not love. I am not persuaded, not sure, I hesitate in fear on the brink. There are great problems in this Christian fact that trouble me intellectually, and I am holding back. The very Cross appals me rather than fills me with a sense of love. How shall I find Him? How shall I know?

By obedience, by testing Him. That is the supreme challenge of Christianity. If any man will go after God by the way of the Cross, that man will inevitably come to know Him in such a way as to compel his love. If a man will prove Him by obedience, and not discover Him as love, then that man will have the right to say he cannot love Him. But that man is not yet born! Many men imagine they are perfectly honest in intellectual difficulty, and they are, up to a point; but the ultimate appeal to the man in intellectual difficulty is: test this doctrine by testing it! No man will begin to obey the law of God spoken in the Son of His love but that he will come at last to know that the God Who speaks is love, and that the sternest things He says are the tenderest, sweetest things of His love. Thy right hand, cut it off, thy right eye, pluck it out; because thy right hand causes thee to stumble, because thy right eye causes thee to sin. He that loseth his life! Ah, that is what I do not want to do. I want to keep my life. I want to realize myself. I crave for the fulfilment of all the forces of my being. If any man would come after Me he must lose his life. A stern word, surely not the language of love! Listen again! "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it," his life. That is a strange paradox but it is the experience of the saints and of all who put their trust in Him. He shall find it, his own life. If I consent to lose it by abandoning it to Him, as King, Lord, Master, I find it, and the life I yielded I possess.

I lay in dust life's glory dead,

And from the ground there blossoms red

Life that shall endless be.

We can know God only by obeying Him, making the venture, taking the first command that He lays on us and obeying it; by so doing we shall discover that the reason of the challenge is love and the way of obedience the way of realization. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." He can be loved only as He is known. He can be known only as He is obeyed.

The second commandment, Jesus said is like the first, and it is the outcome of the first. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." What will inspire such love to my neighbor? Only the love of God. When love of God is removed from self to God then that love will seek the objects of God's love. When I see that my neighbor is as dear to the heart of God as I am, then, if God's love to me has won my love to Him, my love inevitably goes out to my neighbor. An illustration of that principle is found on a human level in that old sweet story of David. When David came into his kingdom he inquired, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Can you find me anyone Jonathan loved? If you find me anyone that Jonathan loved, I must love him. They found Mephibosheth, who was lame in both feet, and

David took him to the royal palace, set him at the royal table, gave him the royal bounty, and loved him, all for the sake of Jonathan. I said it was an illustration on a low level; but it is a true level. When a man has seen God and his heart has gone out in love to God, he will turn and say, Are there any of the offspring of God that I may love for the sake of God? That man will begin to love his neighbor as himself when his love for himself has been transferred to God and has come back in the mystery of the finding of himself in right relationship to God. Then a passion is born in his heart to go out and seek those who are missing the vision, the virtue, and the victory, and bring them back again to the Father's house and to true relationship with Him.

This love of neighbor is no sickly sentimental thing. For that reason I read from Leviticus. Christianity is supposed to be an advance on Hebraism; it is an advance on Hebraism; yet sometimes, when I pause to test the action of Christian people by the laws laid down from the Hebrews, I wonder! Did you notice how very practical that passage in Leviticus was? Thou shalt not glean the corners of thy field, but leave them for the poor. Thou shalt not gather the fruit that falls from thy vineyards and trees, but leave it for the needy. How about your gardens? How about your trees? It is quite impossible, you tell me; one cannot obey that kind of thing in this age. Then God have mercy on the age! Twitchell of Hartford, Connecticut, told me how, when war broke out between Spain and America, he preached on the advantages of war. Charles Dudley Warner sat and listened to him, and when he had done, said to him, "I would like to have moved a resolution, that in view of your sermon Christianity should be postponed to a more convenient season!" He was right if Christ and God are right. Loving your neighbor is not singing hymns about your neighbor, not holding religious sentiments toward your neighbor, not merely hoping that some day your neighbor will go through the pearly gates into heaven. Loving your neighbor is to pour out the life in sacrificial attempt to heal his wounds, rest his weariness, and lift him to the level on which God would have him dwell. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Glance again at these great commandments, and consider them relatively. I want to observe, first, that this inexorable standard of law cannot be lowered without the destruction of the life for which the law was made. If God abandon His requirements then all will be failure. No human life comes to perfection in any other way than by the perfect love of God. No human life ever comes to perfection of possibility that is loveless toward the neighbor. It is an inexorable law. God will brook no division of the man, either in heart or soul or mind; because that part of the heart or soul or mind that fails in love is atrophied, it will perish. The lover of God will love men; and he must, or he breaks the law of God and denies the love of God.

Yet hear again the great commandments and mark how reasonable they are. "With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"; not with thy neighbor's heart or soul or mind. If indeed it be true that your heart is a small thing, that your life is a weak thing, that your mind is a feeble thing, yet God is asking for that small heart, weak life, feeble mind. Only, I pray you, remember this, your heart is not so small as you have imagined, your life is not so weak as men have thought, your mind is not so feeble as you yourself have dreamed. If you will but love with all that you are, you will find enlargement of heart and life and mind in the power of love. Do not sigh through the days because you do not love God as someone else does. He does not ask you to love Him as someone else does. He asks you to love with all your heart. Just as I am, weak, poor, unworthy, I come in answer to the love of God, and begin to love, and that is all He asks.

Again, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is room there for a whole sermon, "as thyself." How do I love myself? Remember that this must be conditioned by the first commandment. We are thinking of that love of self which is true and proper. My love of self in love of God becomes a passionate desire that I may be what God would have me be. That is the true love of self. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," passionately desiring that he may be what God would have him be. Love of self does not make me blind to my shortcomings. Love of my neighbor does not make me blind to his shortcomings. True love of self makes me the enemy of the things that spoil me. True love of my neighbor makes me the enemy of the things that spoil him.

Mark this, the whole heart, mind, soul for God; for thy neighbor "as thyself" seeking that the whole heart, soul, and mind of thy neighbor shall harmonize in perfect response to the love of God, and so shall be fulfilled all the meaning and mystery of thy neighbor's being.

May I not affirm that if we know God the command is easy. God is lovable, because God is love.

O God, of good the unfathomed sea!

Who would not give his heart to Thee?

Who would not love Thee with his might?

O Jesus, Lover of mankind,

Who would not his whole soul and mind,

With all his strength, to Thee unite?

So sang a man who loved his God. It is the question of his astonishment that anyone can do other than love the Lord. That is the question of every man who in obedience to the law of God has discovered the love of God, and in whose heart and soul there springs responsive a new love to God.

Remember the final statement of the Lord. On these two depend all the law and the prophets. Take the word simply as it referred to the ancient economy: the whole expectation of the Mosaic economy is fulfilled by the man who loves God; the prophets, their denunciation of sin, their call to righteousness, are obeyed in answer to the impulse of the love of God. The new fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, is love of God. The old fear of God, which was the beginning of unutterable folly, was slavish fear, fear born of ignorance of Him, fear that made men hurry away, banish His name, refuse to meet Him. The new fear is not fear that He will hurt me, it is fear lest I should hurt Him, fear lest I cause sorrow to His heart, fear lest my sin wound Him again. That is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom, and that is the fear of love.

So God claims and calls for love, and He enforces His claim and argues His call by His own great love. You say to me tonight, I do not love God. Then act as though it were true that He loves you; obey Him, follow Him, and you will discover in the pathway of obedience that He is love. "Seek first His Kingdom," kiss the scepter of the King, and you will find that on the throne is the Father of infinite compassion.

Matthew 22:42. A Profound Question.

Matthew 22:42.

A Profound Question.

What think ye of the Christ?

Matthew 22:42

This is in some ways one of the most interesting chapters in the Gospel according to Matthew. It tells the story of a day of questions, of criticism, of opposition, of unbelief. Of the questions the unifying principle was an attempt to entangle Him in His talk: mean and dastardly questions when the spirit of them is recognized. There were questions political, theological, and religious. The political was asked by a coalition of Pharisees and Herodians, two opposing parties, one of them believing that the Hebrew people ought to pay tribute to Caesar, the other believing that they ought not so to do. The theological question was asked by the Sadducees, and had to do with the resurrection. Finally, the religious question was asked by the Pharisees, and inquired as to which among the commandments was the greatest. Jesus answered these questions one after the other with that surpassing and surprising wisdom which was always characteristic of Him. Then quite suddenly, and I think I may say startlingly, He turned upon His questioners and asked them a question. "What think ye of the Christ?" We must understand this question. He did not ask it just as we may ask it today. We may still take this question and without any violence to its context make use of it, but we must understand how He asked it. Let me remind you that the word "Christ" is but the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Messiah," and apparently to the group of men who stood about Jesus this was not a question concerning Himself. He did not say to them, at least they would not so understand Him, "What do you think of me?" That is not the point of His question. It was a question about their own Scriptures, about their own religion, about their own hope and outlook. It was to all appearance a purely speculative question. He said to them, in effect, "Now, what is your opinion of your Messiah? Whose Son is He?" And in a moment, without any hesitation, and showing their perfect familiarity with their own Scriptures, and that central hope of their religious thinking, they said, "The son of David." Then immediately He said to them, "How then doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I put Thine enemies underneath Thy feet? If David then calleth Him Lord, how is He his son?" They had been bringing problems to Him, this was one for them. It is as though He had said, "You have been questioning Me concerning the payment of tribute. You have brought Me a problem concerning the resurrection. You have attempted to make Me minimize the value of the commandments by overestimating the value of one. Now here is a problem for you out of your own law, about your Messiah. "Whose son is He to be?" "David's," was their reply, and they were perfectly correct so far. "But if He be David's son, how can He be David's Lord?" Yet I should be very sorry to make you feel that Jesus was simply attempting to do with these men what they had been attempting to do with Him. He was not attempting to entrap them. He never played mean tricks with men. He left that wholly and exclusively to His enemies. What, then, is the significance

of His question? Here again, as on former occasions, He intended to show them that they did not understand their own Scriptures, that according to them there were wonders concerning the Messiah which they had never comprehended. One thing these men did not understand about their Messiah was that He was to be, not merely man, but God. Because the Messiah was to be after the flesh born of David's line He was son of David, but because He was to be immediately and by the mystery of unfathomable miracle begotten of God, He was also to be David's Lord.

But I have not selected this text that we may follow it in its first application. We are no longer asking a question that has to do with a hope, with an ideal, with an anticipation, with a prophecy. We still ask the question, but it has to do with an achievement, with a history, with a Person. When He said, "What do you think about the Messiah?" they were looking on; but we, as we take our New Testament and read the question which is still a living question—every question He asked has an abiding import in its deepest meaning—we are not looking on, we are looking back. We ask the question tonight, and to us the word "Christ" is not the title of One for Whom the world is waiting. To us the word "Christ" has become the name of One Who has come, and abides, and still is to come! To these men the word "Christ" was the title of some person never seen though long hoped for. To us the word "Christ" is the name and title of a Person seen and known, and with Whose story we are all perfectly familiar.

My business tonight is to ask you quietly, not so much as a congregation as in your individual and personal capacity, to answer this question. Here, everything depends, as everywhere else, upon what a man thinks. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," so said the Preacher of old. Your attitude toward Jesus Christ and your relationship to Him are alike based upon what you think of Him. You may turn that round if you will and state it thus, your attitude toward Christ results from what you think of Christ, and therefore reveals what you think of Christ. Consequently, the answer to this question is not an answer that can be made by the recitation of a creed. The answer to this question is not an answer that can be made by an affirmation or declaration of the lips. The answer to this question you are giving every day. There is a sense in which you can answer this question conclusively tonight, but you are answering it every day and every hour. If I stand in this pulpit tonight and say to you what I think of Christ, I may do it with perfect sincerity, but I cannot convince you that what I say I think is the thing I think. How will you find out what I think of Christ? You can find out only if you know me in my everyday life, in my everyday activity, in what is my constant relation to Christ. A man's thought of Christ creates a man's attitude toward Christ, therefore I repeat, a man's attitude toward Christ reveals what the man's thought of Christ really is. Herein is the importance of this question. In the asking of it we pass beyond the externalities to the internal things of life. In asking this question we come into the very deepest of us. As I ask this question of my own heart, or let me put it in this way, as I let Christ Himself ask me, "What do you think of me?" it is not a mere question of speculation. It is in the last analysis a question that gets deeper down than the things which are upon the surface, to the very springs and fountains of my being. It does matter supremely for today and tomorrow, and the great forever of God, what I think of Him, because all my relation to Him depends upon that, and because what I am going to be in my own life depends entirely upon what I think of Christ. I stay here because if only I can fix your thought upon the importance of the question the battle is half won and the work is half done. All activity is the result of thought. A conception always underlies a deed. Everything you do in any relationship of life is the direct outcome of some underlying thought, some conception. To put it in

another way, at the back of all activity is reason, behind every choice that a man makes there is an impelling cause, and that impelling cause is a thought, a conception in the particular realm in which the activity is manifest. I watch what you do. I cannot watch what you think, but I can know what you think from what you do. We may be helped to an understanding of this question by a trivial illustration. It is this: I stand upon the great highway and I watch the men and women passing up and down, and I see one man cross over from one side to the other. It is a manifest action, but before he crossed over he thought of crossing, and I know his prior thought by that simple action. It is a trivial illustration as I said, but lift it as high as you will, watch it in all the realms of human activity, from the lowest to the highest the same principle applies. What you think is manifest in what you do.

Christ makes demands upon every man in that inner realm of his thinking. He comes into my inner life and presents Himself. I look at Him and I think something of Him. I cannot tell you what I think, and you cannot read that inner thought, but if you will watch me through the next hour, day, week, month, year, you will know what I think of Him by what you see me do with Him.

Mark this mystery of human personality as it is taken into account in this question of Jesus. The final glory of a human being is that of volition, that of choice. I can choose. I can elect. I can decide. Or, to put it back into the simplest word of all, I can will. This is the dignity of human life.

What lies behind the will impelling it? The emotion. What lies behind the emotion? The intelligence. When I face a fact, whatever that fact may be, I face it first with my mind. I know it, and upon my conception of it in my mind, depends my attitude, my emotional attitude toward it. I like or dislike it; I love or hate it; I admire or reject it. That is emotion. Then I will, and what I will depends upon the attitude of emotion after the intelligence has looked and seen and understood. The thinking is the deepest thing. The emotion is moved by the thinking, the will is impelled by the emotion. What do you think of Christ? If you have answered that question in your deepest heart I will tell you what happens. You will say either, "Because I think this of Him I love Him," or "Because I think this of Him I hate Him." Then the will will act in yielding to Him or refusing Him, in putting a crown upon His brow or sending Him to the cross out of the way. While the business of the messenger of the cross of Christ is that of appealing to your will, behind your will will be your emotional attitude toward Christ, and at the back of that, the deepest foundation of all, will be your thinking concerning Him.

Here, then, is the supreme question of this hour for us. "What think ye of the Christ?" I am going to attempt to form your thinking by bringing to you certain witness concerning Him. It may be very old, and I am sure it is, yet I desire to put this witness before you once again, and ask you very honestly to weigh the evidence, because upon the basis of your thinking your emotion will act, and upon the basis of that movement of the emotion your will ought to act.

Remember this, it is possible for a man to think one thing and to be moved emotionally by that conception, and yet, finally, by act of will to refuse to obey the emotion and intelligence. That is the greatest disaster of human life. That is the tragedy which is happening all around us in such congregations as this. You think of Christ the true thing and your heart goes out in admiration and adoration, and then because of the siren voices which are sounding in your ears, because of some fancied advantage of the moment, you contradict your emotion, and belie your intellect, and refuse Him. All that is your own matter. I cannot help you there, no preacher can. I can take the New

Testament in my hand tonight and ask you at least to postpone for a few moments the volition and bring your emotional nature once again to the light of your reason.

Let me stop a moment. You are not afraid of your emotional nature, are you? This prevalent idea that the emotional nature and the intellectual nature are in opposition is absurd. This idea that a man's intellect has nothing to do with his fears is to be laughed out of court by high intelligences.

Bring your emotional nature, that godliest wonder of you if you did but know it, to the light of your thinking. For two or three minutes I am going to take you back to three opinions about Christ. I bring these opinions to you hoping and praying that they may help you in your thinking of Him. I bring them to you in the deeper hope that by true thinking, emotional nature may be moved again toward approbation, admiration, and adoration. I bring them to you in the final hope that you will be honest enough to exercise your will in answer to such enlightened emotion when your thinking has been trained by the witness of Scripture.

I bring you, then, three testimonies concerning Jesus, the testimony of God, the testimony of a demon, and the testimony of a man—a voice from the upper world, a voice from the under world, and a voice from the world about us. The voice of God breaking the silence, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." The voice of the underworld, "I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." The voice of man, sinner as I am a sinner, "Thou art the Christ."

Think of the setting of these testimonies. The voice of God. Jesus was here emerging from seclusion into publicity. For eighteen years I have no record of His doings or sayings but the briefest. At twelve years of age He passes out of sight with these wonderful words written concerning Him, "He went down with them, and He was subject unto them." I see no more of Him until He is about thirty years of age. No human eye has been watching Him carefully enough to be able to give any record of Him. God had been watching Him during the hidden years. God had been watching, not merely the activity of the man in the carpenter's shop, but watching deeper, as God ever watches deeper, the methods, the motives, and then the work and the words. All these have been in the light of heaven's unsullied standard, and as He stood there, so much one of the multitude that men did not recognize Him as separate from them in any sense—"In the midst of you standeth One whom ye know not"—God broke the silence and declared, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." He sees there is no fault in this Man. There has been no failure in all those hidden years of commonplace life. There has been no flaw in the absolute perfection of His humanity. At last, God has found a Man Who has realized the divine ideal and perfected the divine conception. What do you think of Christ? God thinks Him perfect.

Next I have the testimony of a demon from the underworld. It is a very remarkable testimony. "I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Remember that evil is not indigenous to the human race, it came from without. When next you quote glibly, "To err is human," remember it is not human to err. Erring humanity is outside the original intention and purpose of God, and outside its own fairest capacity. Do not forget, I pray you, that evil came from without, and do not forget that the whole story of the Bible is the story of attack upon humanity by forces external to itself. For the moment, I am not arguing for an original fall involving all the race, though in some senses I profoundly believe that. I take individual cases, and down through the centuries I see man after man tempted and falling, seduced and sinning. But here is a Man standing on the earth about thirty years of age, and an evil spirit looks into His face and speaks through another human voice

and says, "I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God." "Thou art the Man Who having been tempted has never yielded. Thou hast been tempted as other men have at every vulnerable point, but Thou hast resisted." This is the devil's testimony, that this Man has beaten him. Once in the history of the race the underworld of seducing evil has been foiled, beaten, and all unexpectedly, even from the lips of an unclean fallen spirit, comes the confession of the unsullied purity of Jesus. What do you think of Christ? The devils reckon Him holy.

Pass to the last of these three words of testimony. This time it is the voice of a man, a sinning man, a hoping man, a man such as thou art, oh, my brother, consciously mastered by the forces of evil yet still aspiring after the unattainable good. This man might have said as truthfully as his co-Apostle Paul, "To me who would do good, evil is present." This man, like every other man, was a strange mixture, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. That is not a lonely story. There is no man who does not know something of the duality of his consciousness, the beast and the angel, the downward pull and the upward attraction. This man is a man as we are men, and this man is a man who has been looking forward with hope, for we can perfectly understand this confession only as we interpret it from the Hebrew standpoint. In all probability his mother had lulled him to sleep in the days of his infancy with the songs of Zion, and the songs of Zion were the songs of a coming Redeemer. I can quite imagine that she had sung to him Zephaniah's infinite music, "The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty One Who will save: He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." That is the great lullaby of the mother heart of God. As he passed from infancy to boyhood, he had begun to read the Scriptures and then to recite them in the synagogue. He had watched the light which burned amid the darkness of the age in which he lived, the light of the coming Deliverer, Emmanuel, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," titles never perfectly understood but constituting the song of the coming Deliverer. Standing amid the rocky fastnesses of Caesarea Philippi, this man looked into the face of Jesus and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Hope of the centuries, the Deliverer for Whom we have been waiting, the One in Whom there merge the majestic might and the meek mercy of the covenant God of Israel." What do you think of Christ? Looking into His face, one of the men who knew Him most intimately, and had followed Him through those three years of discipleship, made this great confession, upon which everything else was based in the coming years, this great conviction which created all subsequent duty: "Thou art the Christ—the One for Whom men have been sighing and longing and waiting, the Opener of the prison, the Setter at liberty of such as are bound, the One for Whom I wait and for Whom I long." "Thou art the Christ." What do you think of Christ?

You may say to me that the testimony I have deduced is old. You may ask, "How may I depend upon the accuracy of the records from which you have read this testimony?" We are being told today that this is all mythical, that God's silence was never broken by Jordan's banks, that the unutterable, deadly silence of the underworld was never broken by a demon, that this man never said these words with any such rich and spacious meaning as I have indicated. Very well, I am not here tonight to argue with you. At this hour the testimony of God and the testimony of Satan, and of man concerning Christ, is the same, and it has accumulated weight, for nineteen centuries have passed on their way, and there is no century in which one voice has ever been lifted to question the testimony of God and the testimony of the devil. I draw my line there for a moment. A great many have doubted Peter's testimony. The whole Hebrew nation, with the exception of such as

have turned to Jesus, would deny Peter's testimony. The testimony which says He is the Christ has been denied, is being denied. No voice has been daring enough yet to deny the testimony which is said to be the testimony of heaven, the testimony which is said to be the testimony of hell. What is that testimony? It is absolutely the same. The man standing upon the earth said another thing which included this thing, but the voice of heaven and that of hell merge into one great anthem which is a declaration of the sinless perfection of Jesus. No one has denied it. Men are denying today the accuracy of the records, but who is there can deny the sinlessness of the ideal presented. Here are four little fragments called Gospels, forgeries, if you will have it so, untrue if you will have it so; but forgeries and untrue if they be, they have given the world a portrait of an absolute perfection which no man has dared to call in question. You must not ask me to believe, however, that a few unknown men have given us a portrait of a Person Whose sinlessness no century has been able to question, and that their writing was fraudulent or untrue. It is an unthinkable proposition, and we are driven to the conclusion that this is an actual Man, a sinless Person, a perfect Person. The testimony of God as recorded here is the testimony of God at this hour through the common consciousness of all upright and sincere and honest souls. Once again, the testimony of the devil as recorded here is the testimony of the devil today through all debauched and degraded and depraved souls. God's speech to men today is speech through humanity, and on the highest, noblest, purest level attests the perfection of this One. The speech of evil comes to men also through humanity today, and evil is still saying, "Let us alone, Thou Jesus of Nazareth. Do not interfere with us." Why? Because evil recognizes the perfection of this ideal. The one thing evil does not want is that those who bear His name should interfere with it. Evil is saying to the Church of Jesus Christ, "Let us alone," because it recognizes that wherever the Christ Spirit obtains that spirit lays hands on evil and drags it into the light for its destruction in order that man may be delivered.

The testimony of the New Testament is in perfect harmony with the testimony of this hour. What, then, do you think of Christ? His absolute Deity is the conviction of the children of God. That is the foundation upon which they build. I am quite willing, however, to take you at first upon what seems to be a lower level. The incarnation is flesh which man might touch, and handle, and find the infinite Word. The purpose of incarnation is that man should begin on the level possible to him, the level of his own nature, and through that gate pass to the divine. What do you think of Christ?

In conclusion, I press upon you this word. If in your heart, in the deepest of you, in that inner holy of holies of your inner life, you say what God said and what evil said, "He is the perfect One," then, I pray you, what is your emotional attitude toward that perfect One? Now, will you follow me closely. Do you hate the perfection? Then it is because at this hour you are following courses of sin as was the devil, who said "Let us alone." Do you love the perfect One in the deepest of you? Then it is because already the constraint of the Spirit of God is upon you, leading you toward the thing that is high and noble and true. Never mind for a moment, man, woman, brother, sister, never mind whether you have ever confessed Him or not. What do you think of Him now, at this moment, in your deepest heart? Are you saying, "He is the perfect One"? As you say it, is your whole love drawn out to Him in admiration and approbation? Now, I pray you in the name of God, for your own soul's sake, exercise that majestic function of your personality, your will, and answer the moving of your heart and the conviction of your mind.

There is another question. It was asked a few weeks later by a man who was attempting to juggle with time and eternity in order to save both. In the strenuous hours of his battle between obedience and expedience, Pilate asked, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?" That is my final question for you. What do you think of Him? I cannot invade the shrine of your thinking, but now I ask you, What will you do with Him? I plead with you tonight to answer your deepest conviction. For your own soul's sake, and for the sake of other people about you, stand out and let us see where you are. If you believe He is a fraud fight Him in the name of God and of humanity. If you believe this story is a lie, it is so persistent a lie, so persuasive a lie, so powerful a lie that you have no right to sit idly by. But if in your heart you believe this is true, crown Him, man, dare to crown Him. Oh, for five minutes of honesty and courage to place the crown upon His brow! If this is the truth, the truth is so persistent, so persuasive, so powerful, that you ought to help spread it, and you cannot until you yourself have crowned this Christ.

I beseech you, then, tonight, be definite. The claims of this Christ are such that every man ought to be busy fighting Him, or fighting for Him. I love Paul for this reason, he knew there was no middle course. It must either be haling to prison and death the men who professed the heresy, or pressing on forever toward the regions beyond to tell the story of the Christ. There is no middle place for Jesus in heaven, or earth, or hell, or your heart. It must be either the cross or the throne. Which shall it be? I pray God tonight that those of you who know Him to be true may crown Him.

Matthew 26:2. The Son Of Man--Delivered Up.

Matthew 26:2.

The Son Of Man--Delivered Up.

The Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified.

Matthew 26:2

The first thirty verses of this Chapter are characterized by contrast, by conflict, and yet by a strange and arresting co-operation. We are in the vestibule of the Holy Place of the sacrifice of the ages. The air is heavy with the electric sense of approaching storm; yet it seems so still, and clear, that we hear and see acutely, and things commonly veiled are startlingly revealed as we read these wonderful words. Let us attempt, then, reverently to listen and to watch. Our theme is the story of the whole paragraph, the keynote is the text. In these words of our Lord, spoken to His disciples, we have His introductory declaration to everything that was now to follow in the mission of the King. Let us first examine the words, and then the whole scene in their light.

It is well that we should remind ourselves in the first place of the occasion on which our Lord uttered these particular words. Matthew is careful to tell us, "It came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words." The declaration followed immediately on the Olivet prophecy which is recorded for us in Chapters twenty-four and twenty-five of this particular Gospel.

In order that we may come the more readily and the more accurately into the atmosphere necessary for the understanding of these words of Jesus, it may be well to recall that prophecy and its setting.

The loneliness of Jesus at this time was very pronounced. The Olivet prophecies were uttered to His disciples in answer to an inquiry, which inquiry resulted from things He had been saying to the rulers of the people in those last days in which He had definitely and finally rejected the Hebrew nation, for the time being, from the position which they had occupied in the economy of God. When Jesus uttered the prophecy on Olivet He had been rejected by His own nation, and He had rejected them. Solemn words had passed His lips: "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." A sad and awful wail had passed those selfsame lips: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." He was strangely alone. A group of men were gathered round about Him, His own disciples, those whom, having loved, He loved unto the end, and that in spite of their failure to understand Him. But they were unenlightened, were entirely unable to apprehend the profoundest passion of His heart, or the things that He was saying to them. There He sat on Olivet's slope, outside the city of His love, surrounded by a few men utterly unable to come near to Him in the deepest and profoundest things of His spiritual life.

And yet I pray you observe His dignity, His authority, the glory of His outlook, the assurance of His words, the unflinching courage and confidence of every sentence that He uttered. He was looking on, far beyond the immediate surroundings, His glance encompassing the centuries that lay

ahead, and the millenniums. He had been thinking of the ages yet to come in the economy of God for this world; and as He uttered His prophecy we are amazed at the clarity of His vision; but more amazed at His assumption of authority, and His absolute certainty of victory. He speaks of things immediate, and then of things nigh at hand, of the destruction of Jerusalem and strange experiences through which friends and foes alike would pass in the coming days, until, at last, in a passage which, if I may reverently say such a thing of the Lord, was characterized by singular majesty and beauty of diction, He drew a picture of all nations being gathered before Him, and He alone the Arbitrator of their destinies, finding His verdicts, passing His sentences.

Such was the Olivet prophecy. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, He said, Ye know that after two days is the feast of passover, and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified." With set intention, as I verily believe, Matthew thus emphasized the occasion on which these particular words passed the lips of our Lord. As we have seen in recent studies in this Gospel of Matthew—perhaps almost monotonously to some people—a great change passed over the method of Jesus' ministry at Cæsarea Philippi. From the moment in which the great confession was made, He commenced to speak of the Cross; returning to the subject again and yet again, it ran through His teaching, saturating and ever permeating all His thinking.

On Olivet's slopes having uttered His prophecy, suddenly, startlingly, He recalled them to the thing He had been speaking of through all those months, but with a new emphasis, declaring no longer that it is necessary that these things should be, but that the hour had come. "The Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified."

Now let us try to understand what our Lord really meant when He said this. In the Authorized Version the text reads: "Ye know that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." Let me immediately clear the ground by saying that I consider that to be not merely a mistranslation, but a very misguiding mistranslation.

I shall ask you to observe a word and a tense in this statement of Jesus. The word is now rendered, "delivered up." Taken in its simplicity, as the men would undoubtedly take it who heard Him utter it, the word simply means to be given into the hands of a person. It does not in itself suggest either faithfulness or faithlessness. It may describe an act of treachery, but it may describe an act of trust. To deliver up, to deliver over, to surrender, to yield to a certain person, or to a certain set of circumstances, whether in the keeping of faith, or by its violation, whether traitorously, or trustfully, does not appear in the word itself. Therefore we must interpret the word according to its setting, according to the whole movement in the midst of which we find it.

In the next place, let us observe a tense. "The Son of Man is delivered up." Here there is no question. Grammarians will all be in agreement with me when I say that this is the simple statement. There is no difference of opinion, no quarrel about manuscripts. Here we have undoubtedly the accurate word. "The Son of Man is delivered up." Now, as a matter of fact, at the moment when Jesus said this He was perfectly free; as a matter of fact, at the moment—I speak entirely within the limitations of the moment and the human—He could have escaped. He was not arrested. It would have been perfectly easy for Him to do what His disciples had urged Him to do again and yet again; in the quiet silence of the night He might have left Jerusalem. It is perfectly true, as we shall see, that men everywhere were plotting for His arrest, that one of His own number was in the intrigue, but at the moment He was not arrested, He was free.

The difficulty has been recognized by expositors, and I find that one has suggested that He used the present tense for the future, and another that He used the full relative present, as though He had said, "The Son of Man is being delivered up." But you will immediately see that all this is gratuitous. He said, "The Son of Man is delivered up," and I abide by the thing He said, that which was simply and actually true at the moment when He said it. As yet not apprehended, as yet not within the final meshes that were being woven around Him by His enemies, He saw all the future clearly, and He spoke with quiet, calm assurance. Speaking first within the terms of a calendar with which they were familiar, He said, "Ye know that after two days the passover cometh," and then, "The Son of Man is delivered up." That was not the full relative present in the sense of meaning "is being delivered up." That was not the careless affirmation of a speaker who described the future in the terms of the present. That was the statement of One Who spoke in that eternal present which was the tense of His deepest nature and His profoundest life. That was the statement of One Who had already said to His enemies, "Before Abraham was, I am," thus putting into contrast the past tense of the founder of the nation, with the ever-present tense of His own consciousness, and claiming that His own abiding consciousness antedated the past experience of the founder.

And He made use of exactly the same tense when, after the Olivet prophecies, He said to the group of disciples who were with Him, in the shadow of the impending Cross, "The Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified."

And yet it is perfectly evident that our Lord was now drawing their attention to the fact that the actual crucifixion was imminent. That was the accommodation of the eternal present of His own consciousness to the tenses of their consciousness. He spoke to them because the eternal was merging into the temporal; that which was abidingly true in His own consciousness, from the standpoint to which we shall come in a moment, was now about to become patiently, observantly, historically true. In that declaration He indicated to them the fact that the deliverance which was the initiation of their own national history, and of which the passover was but a shadow, was about to be fulfilled. The eternal fact in the Being of God, adumbrated in the passover for the sake of the people that He would make, was now to be wrought out into actual visibility and accomplishment in the history of the world.

This was no mere passing intuition, foretelling something that was about to happen. It was a profound declaration that the thing which is in the divine economy was now to become visible in human history, "The Son of Man is delivered up."

During His life He had spoken of the final hour on more than one occasion in the tenses of human consciousness. And more than once those who understood Him best, especially John, drew attention to the fact that our Lord said to men, "Mine hour is not yet come." John, writing of Him, said, "No man took Him; because His hour was not yet come." At the wedding feast Jesus said to His mother, "Mine hour is not yet come." It is a most superficial exposition which declares He could not work the miracle, for He did work it immediately. There was profound meaning in His answer even when she—dear, sweet soul, highly favored of God, and forever to be held in regard by the sons of men, the Virgin Mother—was desirous of precipitating some manifestation of His power in order to further the accomplishment of His Mission, He said, "Mine hour is not yet come."

From that first utterance and throughout the ministry of Jesus the same declaration is found, but He was ever speaking in the terms of human experience. To Herod He sent this message: "Go, and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected." That was His Word to the man who would fain have ended His ministry for very fear of Him, or for fear of his own sin. In it Jesus declared that the perfecting hour, the ultimate hour, the strangely mysterious hour on the dial of time, in which eternity would express itself in the terms of redemption, was not yet come. It was postponed until, His public ministry ended, the Olivet prophecy uttered, He quietly said to His disciples, "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified." In the terms of human thought, He was on the eve of being delivered up; in the economy of God, He is delivered up.

It was language which revealed the voluntary nature of the sacrifice of the Son of God. It was language expressive of the great volition; it was language that defied all the attempts that His enemies were making to arrest Him! In effect, He Who sat in the heavens, laughed, and had in derision the men who were set against His anointed! And the laughter and derision of God were born of the fact that through the processes of their opposition He was marching to their salvation, and to their ultimate redemption!

There came a day when a man who saw Him, and gave himself to Him, and became His great Apostle to the Gentiles, with his own hand wrote, or to his amanuensis dictated, these words, "Who loved me, and gave Himself up for Me." The word there rendered "gave" is the same Greek word as the word here translated "delivered up." He loved me, and delivered up Himself for me. He was delivered, not by Judas, not by the priests, not by the rulers, not by the Roman procurator, but by the infinite, overwhelming, all-compelling passion of the heart of God.

Thus the little incidents of time and space, and of human calendars and almanacs are lost, and in the vestibule of the Holy Place of the sacrifice of the ages we hear the Master say, "The Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified."

Reverently we now turn back to the whole paragraph, that we may survey the scene or scenes in the light of that declaration. Let us spend one moment in noticing a matter of chronological order in this Chapter. In the first five verses we have a story, which is continued at verse seventeen. Verses six to sixteen constitute an interpolation, something that the evangelist wrote here, not in chronological order but for the purpose of explaining something else that he was about to write. This great declaration of Jesus was made two days before the passover. John in his Gospel, giving an account of this selfsame event in the house of Simon, says it was six days before passover. Consequently, the things recorded from verse six to sixteen happened four days before Jesus made the declaration we have considered.

Now I take up my Testament and look at two little words. In verse six, "When Jesus was in Bethany," and I run on to verse fourteen, and "Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot." Then it is seen that the two incidents are joined together. First, Mary, with her alabaster cruise of ointment, and then Judas, with his intrigue and his plotting. With that chronological order in view I go back to my first five verses and once again I notice two little words. In verse one, "When Jesus had finished all these words"; and in verse three, "Then were gathered together the chief priests." Thus once more I am face to face with two things happening simultaneously. Jesus was talking to His disciples, and He said, "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of

Man is delivered up to be crucified." While He was saying that, at the very hour, Caiaphas and the priests and the rulers were planning to arrest Him, and they said, "Not at the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." In chronological order, the last thing is the feast, the final passover in the old economy, the first passover in the new, the transference by act of Jesus of the ancient passover to the new feast.

Such are the scenes. It will readily be seen that I cannot, and it is not necessary for my present purpose that I should, deal with any one of these in detail. But for a few moments let us by the help of God's Holy Spirit move back into the midst of them. The feast in Bethany, the aroma of the ointment that filled the room, the criticism of Judas, the speculation of the disciples! Then the Olivet discourse in the interval between other matters! Then our Lord uttering these great words, while somewhere priests were plotting to arrest Him! I say let us try to get into the atmosphere of it all!

If we watch, I think that the first matter to impress us—let me put it from the standpoint of personal experience—the first matter that has impressed my soul in the reading of this paragraph is that of the wonderfully strange co-operation that is manifest. God in Himself and through His Son is seen moving toward the Cross, the Son declaring that He is delivered up to be crucified; according to a Pentecostal interpretation, the Son delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. On the other hand, Satan in himself and through his children, through those to whom Jesus had but recently said, "Ye are of your father the devil," who "was a murderer from the beginning," and "a liar, and the father thereof,"—Satan, through his children, moving toward the Cross, determined that it should be erected, plotting for it. Then, back in those earlier days, Mary at Bethany preparing Him for His burial, with the keen intuition of the heart of a woman seeing the shadows on His face more clearly than others saw, desiring to do something that would tell Him she saw and understood, breaking all the bounds of prudence as she poured the spikenard on feet and head, preparing Him, as He said, for His burial. And Judas, going to the priest, saying, What will you give me? plotting for His death.

Now, is not all this in itself strange and arresting? Heaven, and earth, and hell, all at work against each other, toward one end and purpose. The strangest of all conflicts, and yet the most marvelous of all co-operations. God, in the Person of His Son, moving toward the Cross, arranging for it; Satan, expressing himself through his emissaries, moving toward the Cross, arranging for it; Mary, sweet and tender lover of the Lord, anointing Him for burial; Judas, base, a master traitor, sacrificing his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. God and Satan, Mary and Judas, cooperating toward the Cross. It is the wonder of all wonders, one of the most amazing pictures in the New Testament!

Then, when I have observed this strange and wonderful co-operation, I look again, and the conflict is as self-evident as is the co-operation. Beneath all the things which are, after all, on the surface I discover a conflict, a conflict of intention, a conflict of method, and when I come to the human level, a conflict of attitude. On the higher level I see spiritual forces in antagonism. God Himself, Who is a Spirit, and the spirits of evil in conflict of intention.

What is the Divine intention? As God in His Son moves toward the Cross, my inquiry may be answered by the simplest of all statements, but verily there is none better. The divine intention is at all costs to save men. What was the intention of Satan as he moved toward the Cross? It was the intention at all costs to destroy the Saviour. Thus we see two opposing purposes of the universe

concerning humanity, moving to the same goal, but with an entirely different intention. God set upon saving men at all costs, Satan set upon the destruction of the Saviour.

When I come into the realm of that which is more visible and more patent, I have again a striking revelation of conflict of method. Jesus said, "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of Man is delivered up to be crucified." The priests and the elders said Not at the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Notice the conflict of method, in what it reveals of the underlying principles and purposes. Begin with the priests. Not at the feast. Why not? It was the language of temporizing policy: We mean to kill Him, but we must be careful. Not at the feast; there will be an uproar!

There you have a revelation of the whole genius of that which is common in government and authority, the whole genius of that which renders a people distressed, scattered, undone; the whole genius of that against which Jesus Himself had flung Himself with almost relentless fury in His teaching. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." That is the genius of all false government, a policy which temporizes, is affected only by temporal concerns, and temporal interests.

Over against that is the language of Jesus, the voice of God. At the passover. And why at the passover? Because in all His appointments of feasts and fasts, of ceremonies and rituals, in the ancient economy, there had been profound and eternal significance; and now, with the finest delicacy of fulfilment, God kisses His symbol into actuality, and the actual, ultimate, final passover in human history shall be accomplished at the hour of the passover among the people to which it had symbolized things yet to be. On the one hand, the mastery of eternal principle; on the other, subservience to temporal policy.

And once more, and now we are on another level, we are among our own kith and kin; we are simply looking at humanity, no longer at the conflict as between God and Satan, no longer at the conflict as between Jesus, the Shepherd King of true and final authority, and the false rulers of the people; no longer at the conflict as between principle and government, but at a conflict of attitudes between human beings in the presence of the one great Lord and Master and Saviour of humanity. Mary and Judas; lavish expenditure and selfish economy! But you say these things are too small in the light of such vast things! What is an alabaster cruise of ointment in the presence of all these infinite things? What is the opinion of the man who holds the bag about what ought to have been done with the nard in the presence of the infinite things? The small things of all human lives are the sacramental symbols of the great. Nothing is small.

No lily-muffled hum of a summer bee,

But finds some coupling with the spinning stars.

Right in the midst of the vast things of eternity, breaking out through the speech of the Son of God, behold the two human attitudes which stand forevermore in contrast. Lavish expenditure for very love, improvident pouring out in a tribute of adoration of the most costly things! That is Mary. On the other hand, selfish calculating economy! That is Judas. These things are revealed in the vestibule approaching the Holy Place where the sacrifice of the ages is to be offered.

But there is one more contrast. I leave the first paragraph, and the second which chronologically is first, and I come to the passover itself and to the feast. And I ask you in all quietness and solemnity, and I shall use as few words as I know how, to look at the contrast. Behold Judas at the passover and Jesus at the passover.

Incarnate evil sitting as a guest, receiving the hospitality of Jesus, while all the time in possession of the blood money of the Son of God, maintaining hypocrisy to the end by asking, "Is it I, rabbi?" That defies exposition.

Incarnate love, sitting with the betrayer, suddenly breaking out into thanksgiving, in prospect of the suffering which should make possible the saving even of Judas, if Judas will but trust Him. That is the ultimate contrast of the scene.

Let our final thought center on the conflict. God, determined on the Cross in order to save men; Satan, determined on the Cross in order to destroy the Saviour! My question seems almost irreverent—I pause, and yet I must put it. Who won? If Christ rose not, then I am of all men most pitiable. If Christ rose not, God failed, and Satan won. I greet you! He rose, and I cannot end this meditation in the vestibule save as I recognize that there flashes back upon it all the light of the resurrection morning. And by that sign and token I know that God won!

Ah! how those words follow me. Some of my nearest friends will be tired of hearing me repeat them, but I cannot help it:

One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word!

In that conflict it was the Word Who was victorious, and not the old systems. There sin and grace came to grips, and not grace was destroyed, but sin. The victory was with the Son of God.

All this is more than history. "The Son of Man is delivered up," not at this moment, on this day of our calendar, delivered up by sin to death, in order that sin may live; but delivered up by God to death, in order that sin may die, and men may live.

The final question is not whether we are with the priests desiring to slay Him, or with God determined that He shall die. That is not the question at all. That is settled. We have agreed with the priests and sinned; we have consented to His dying by our sin.

The question now is what shall we as sinners do in the presence of the death which He accomplished, and the word "accomplished" can be used only of it, because beyond the death was the resurrection? What shall I do with this death? Shall I trust it, or shall I spurn it? Upon my answer to that question will depend—because I have heard the evangel, because I have stood under the shadow of His Cross—my relation to God through the ages that are to come.

Then be it mine to say, So help me God, so help me God,

I take, Oh, Cross, thy shadow

For my abiding place;

Content to let the world go by,

To know no gain or loss—

My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the Cross.

Matthew 26:36. Gethsemane: The Garden Of Spices.

Matthew 26:36.

Gethsemane: The Garden Of Spices.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto the place called Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:36

In the Hebrew economy, on the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered the Holiest of all three times. First, he passed within the veil, carrying fire in the golden censer and incense in his hands. There he cast the incense on the fire, and the cloud of it overshadowed the Mercy Seat, and prepared for his ministration, which was about to follow. He entered the second time within the veil, bearing with him the blood of his own sin offering, which he sprinkled on his own behalf. Finally, he entered with the blood of a sin offering for all the people.

When in the fulness of time, and in fulfilment of the ancient and divinely appointed ritual, our High Priest came to the great Day of Atonement, He entered the Holiest of all twice in the exercise of His holy office; once bearing with Him the incense and the fire, once with the sin offering for all the people. He had no second entrance such as Aaron had, because He had no sin offering for Himself. He was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners," and so it was on their behalf that He needed to appear.

Venturing thus to borrow the symbolism of the ancient ritual, and to see it being fulfilled in the activities of those final days in the mission of our Lord, it ever seems to me that in Gethsemane's Garden we see Him passing alone within the veil, bearing the fire and the incense, and on Calvary's Cross we see Him entering with the sin offering for all the people.

It was while He hung on the Cross that all ritualism ended and symbolism was forevermore made unnecessary, the last symbol being the destruction of symbol as the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Last Sunday evening we saw Him delivered up by God's determinate counsel, by Satan's malicious hate, by Mary's tender anointing, by Judas' base treachery. It was a revelation of conflicting co-operation moving towards the sacrifice of the ages. This evening, as God in His gracious goodness and by the solemnizing power of His Holy Spirit shall help us, we go a step further. From that outer court of turmoil we pass through the Holy Place to the awful stillness of the Holiest of all. It behooves us here and at once to confess that these things are too high for us, that they are the secret things which belong unto the Lord, and that no attempted exposition of the letter of this Chapter can be a final exposition of all the spiritual activity, of which the letter is but the external symbol. Nevertheless, if the secret things belong unto the Lord, the revealed things are for us, and through them, though we may not wholly apprehend the hidden mysteries, we are brought into touch with them; and so with all reverence of spirit we draw near to Gethsemane and desire to behold, to consider, the High Priest of our confession.

In that ancient ceremony the fire taken from the altar was the symbol of dedication, while the incense of sweet spices beaten very small was the symbol of the graces of character which make one acceptable to God. In that going in of the priest both fire and incense were necessary. The incense must be cast on the fire and consumed, suggesting the fact that the most perfect of humanity must be abandoned to the will of God and find its ultimate use in outpouring itself in order to accomplish the purpose of the Most High. And it ever seems to me when I read the story of Gethsemane that this is exactly what took place in the Garden in the case of our Lord and Master. Here He reached the ultimate hour of His personal dedication.

To change the figure, the infinite music of His life was ever true to the chord of the dominant struck by the psalmist long ere He came: "Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of Me: I delight to do Thy will, O my God." His first recorded words were these, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And then on through all the period of His life, in the natural and beautiful days of childhood, in the growing strength and glory of youth, in the stern years of manhood, in all the difficult pathway of His public teaching, everything was true to that first call. Had we met Him anywhere and asked Him for the deepest reason of the journey He took, or the deed He wrought, or the word He spoke He would ever have answered in the selfsame words, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." In the process of that life of dedication, He came again and again to the place of trial and testing, and yet with undeviating loyalty and magnificent determination His life was dedicated from the first to last to the will of God.

But now in the Garden came the supreme and final test. Here there was presented to Him again that which He had seen from the beginning, the coming of the Cross; and the question arises—not for Him, but for us—will the life so wondrously devoted be complete in devotion in this strange and awful hour?

Ere He passed within the veil to represent sinning men, the High Priest entered Himself in His own right, no longer by an act of symbolism, but by the actuality of a personal experience, carrying the fire and carrying the incense, and on that consuming fire He cast the incense of His own sacrificial and beautiful and perfect life; and the cloud of it overshadowing the Mercy Seat was the prelude of His coming again with blood in behalf of sinning souls.

All this is but figure of speech, all this is but the language of symbolism, but it is only through these things that we can approach such sacred matters. Let us therefore immediately reckon as with ourselves that all the other figures and occurrences on this page of the Gospel are important only as they are connected with the central matter; and let us reverently attempt to observe the graces of our Lord as they were revealed in Gethsemane, the consuming fire, as it was most evidently present; and then that activity, so appalling, so awe-inspiring, by which the graces and beauties of the Christ were brought into contact with the consuming fire, and the dedication of His personal life to the will of His God was brought to consummation and to glory.

First, let us observe the graces of the Lord as they are revealed in the story. And immediately we recognize that it is almost impossible to analyze a fragrance. If only I knew how to read that Chapter as it should be read comment would be almost unnecessary. But I am always conscious of failure when I try to read such a story, because in my reading you think about Peter and about Judas, and they ought to be almost out of sight for the ineffable and supernal glory of the one central figure of the Christ. And yet they are needed for a revelation of His grace. And if for a little

while we may find our way far from our immediate surroundings into that Garden, and somewhere hide ourselves away that we may watch, then we shall see amid the common-places and brutalities of the last hour the glories of Jesus—and I advisedly now use that human name—the graces and the beauties of His character stand out clearly. Then let me speak to you of the things that impress me, prefacing anything I may say by saying this to you. You have seen glories that my eyes have never seen. I can speak only of the things that I see.

As I read the story I am first of all impressed with the majesty of Jesus. I have not carelessly chosen the word "majesty." I earnestly desire that now it may be delivered from all our false and materialistic ideas concerning it. It is derived from the comparative of magnum, "great," and it suggests something beyond mere greatness; it includes within itself the thought of dignity, but not of patronage; of aloofness with which no liberty can be taken in certain senses, but which is always near at hand in the hour of need—Majesty! It suggests what the Psalmist meant when long ago he said, "The Lord reigneth; He is apparelled with majesty"; or what he meant when on another occasion he sang, "The voice of the Lord is full of majesty."

The majesty of Jesus is revealed, first of all, in His knowledge of all the program that lay ahead. He had been in the Upper Room, they had eaten together the ancient Passover, He had instituted the new feast, symbol of the new Covenant; they had joined in singing the great Hallel, and then they had left the Upper Room and walked down across the Kedron toward the shadows of Gethsemane. On the way He told them in language chosen from their own ancient Scriptures exactly what was about to happen, "All ye shall be offended in Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." He had a perfect knowledge of the way along which He was going, He had an absolute confidence of the issue of that through which He was about to pass, notwithstanding the fact that He was also conscious of all the awfulness of the cup, for He said to those men as He told them of their coming scattering because of the smiting of the shepherd, "After I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee."

I see His majesty finally in His demeanor in the presence of His enemies, for the story as Matthew tells it is not complete. We need all the other stories to see all the details, and to what I have read tonight we must especially add that one wonderful touch which comes to us from the pen of John the Seer: our Lord looking at the men who had come into the Garden to arrest Him, and His words, "Whom seek ye?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." And He replied, "I am!" And in a moment they fell backward. It was the flaming glory of the infinite majesty of God, not shining in some spectacular flame, but suddenly focused in the splendor and the dignity of His humanity.

Then I look again, and perhaps more closely, and I am impressed by the revelation of His meekness. And again the word is not lightly used nor lightly chosen. I have little care at the moment for the meaning of our particular word "meek." Rather I am thinking of the word He actually used of Himself when in the midst of His public ministry He said, "I am meek and lowly," that wonderful word which has never been perfectly translated, the word that suggests strength harnessed for service, the meekness that is gentleness. And what is gentleness? It was George Matheson who once said that

"we use false figures when we speak of gentleness. We speak of the gentleness of the brook. The brook has no gentleness, it knows no gentleness. It rushes on its way, and exerts all its force over all the pebbles down the mountain side. If you would know what gentleness is, behold the mighty

ocean lulled to rest, the ripples of which kiss the golden sand and bathe the feet of the little child. What it might do! How it might spread rack and ruin. But its strength is held in check for service."

That is meekness. "Thy gentleness," said an ancient singer, "hath made me great." No, behold, I pray you, the meekness of the Man. It is revealed first in His sifting of His disciples. Judas was excluded; then, halting at the very portal of the Garden, Jesus left eight of them behind, and permitted only three to go a little farther with Him because they were better able to make the effort, until at last, knowing that He was about to enter where they could not follow, He left them, charging them to watch with Him, Himself going alone to face the unutterable sorrow. There is a wonderful revelation here of strength. There are hours of unutterable anguish that come to our hearts which we cannot bear without the presence of a friend; and even though we know the sight of our anguish would break the heart of our friend, we must have that friend. At least I am such. But here was One so full of meekness that He would leave them.

Then observe Him dealing with their failure. Mark the patience of His method with them, no angry word from beginning to end. Even when He did rebuke them for sleeping He said, "The spirit indeed is willing." What recognition of their intention, even when He rebuked their fault!

I am impressed still further with the sympathy of Jesus as it is revealed in this story, and again the word is selected, and so far as I am able, with care. What is sympathy? Bearing with another, feeling with another, entering into the experience of the other, and sharing it. That was perhaps most wonderfully manifest at the last. I think it is often missed by readers of the story. I am quite sure it has been missed by commentators and expositors over and over again. "Then cometh He to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Some expositors have declared that when He said "Sleep on now, and take your rest," He spoke satirically to them because they were asleep. What misunderstanding of the Lord! No, you need more than the colon of the Revised Version to read this story correctly. You need a period, indicating a pause, a halt. Not satirically, but definitely and of infinite patience, and out of the fulness of His sympathy He said to them, as starting from their slumber at His return they looked at Him, "Sleep on now and take your rest." How long a time passed I cannot tell, but it was some period ere He woke them with the words, "Behold, the hour is at hand. Arise, let us be going." Jesus waited for them while they slept, watching over them. He knew all that was waiting for them on the coming day, all that through which they soon must pass of base denial, of flight, of terror; and so He, the supreme Saviour, watched the men who could not watch, sat by them in infinite sympathy as they slept. That sympathy was revealed again in something not recorded by Matthew, how when, in blundering zeal Peter wounded Malchus, with quick sensitiveness our Lord felt all the anguish of the pain, and with a touch, the last act of His divine surgery, healed the ear of Malchus.

And yet all these are but characteristics. There is yet something profounder, deeper, in which all these find their place, His compassion; not His pity merely, not merely the sympathy on which we have been touching, but that profounder, deeper fact, unfathomable as God, His compassion. It is found everywhere, for compassion was the secret of His being in the Garden at all. As we attempted to show in our meditation on His own great word, "The Son of Man is delivered up," no arresting hand of man apprehended Him. Observe how with kindly and gracious irony He spoke to the men at the close of the scene, "Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to

seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not," which means, Ye could not take Me, could not arrest Me, till Mine hour was come. And now do you imagine that with swords and staves you will accomplish it? Nay! "All this is come to pass, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled!" The reason of His being there was not that they had trapped Him, but that His compassion had compelled Him.

And so finally, and it is a thing that must be added—yet there are senses in which it seems almost irreverent to add it, so patent is it—I am impressed with His awful purity and sinlessness. That was the strength of everything else. It was the reason of His majesty, it was the strength of all His meekness, it created the keenness of His sympathy, and it was the inspiration of His compassion. And I will now repeat what I have said before.

Incense! I go back to the ancient economy, for I am also a child, and I must have my pictures and my helps when I stand in the presence of such things as these. I find in the ancient economy that the incense was compounded of sweet spices. What they were none can tell us finally. They are written for us on the pages of our Bible: onycha, stacte, galbanum, frankincense, and salt. It was a wonderful compound. What was this onycha? We do not know, and may at once confess it. All the clue we have is that of the Hebrew word which comes from a root that signifies the lion, the symbol of kingliness and dignity. I would lay no undue emphasis on that, but it is the only clue we have. Stacte was a highly fragrant gum, most certainly a type and symbol among these Eastern people of gentleness, of grace, of beauty. Galbanum was a product produced from a plant by bruising it, and was typical always of sympathy. Frankincense was the type of the priestly office. Salt was the element of purity. Whatever these men of the ancient time saw in their incense, looking back at it through the light of the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see suggestiveness in that incense of sweet spices compounded together, and permeated by the salt that purified. And let us ever remember that in that ancient economy men were forbidden to use this compound for personal gratification. It was sanctified, it was holy to the Lord.

I behold in that Garden One Whose garments smell of myrrh and cassia and aloes out of king's palaces, One Whose character is full of all gracious fragrance. It is Himself Who is the glory of the scene, the supreme beauty, the altogether lovely One, the well-beloved of the Father, always well pleasing to Him.

And now we turn to the symbolism of the fire. It was the symbol of the purpose of God, of the will of God; and the purpose of God and the will of God are the outcome of the nature of God. How shall I tell the story of the nature of God invisible and infinite? I will tell it thus. "God is love!" "Our God is a consuming fire!" These are not two facts but one, two statements of one essential truth. Mingling in the fire are the qualities of holiness and righteousness, and merging in the fire are the qualities of compassion and of mercy. Holiness and righteousness and mercy and compassion, all proceed out of the infinite mystery of His nature. Now these essential facts of the Deity of God reveal to us the secret of everything in this Man of His right hand; they discover the reason of the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, in answer to which He trod the sorrowful pathway to the Cross, and finally reached the Cross itself.

Mark His references to the fact. The first is discovered in His quotation of the ancient prophecy, "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." The actual words occur in that final burden of Zechariah's prophecy: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that

is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." Whatever we may think that meant, Jesus quoted it and applied it to Himself, and gave the fact of that writing as the reason impelling Him on that onward pathway. So also, when at last He awoke the sleeping disciples, mark the word He uttered, "The hour is come." At your leisure take your Gospels, and see how that figure of speech ran through His conversation, and observe how constantly on the pathway to the Cross He said, "Mine hour is not yet come." At last He said, "The hour is come."

He recognized He was in co-operation with God in the fulfilment of eternal purpose. The majesty of the will of God was on His soul. In that last word of the story, when He said if He besought His Father He would send Him twelve legions of angels, I pray you think of the angels He refused, and then inquire why did He not ask for them. The answer is found in His own words, "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The recognition of the fact that He was in co-operation with God, not working against Him—God was not working against His Son, and His Son was not working against God—was always with Him. The zeal of God's house consumed Him. The fire was the will of God.

And so we reach, for a few brief moments tarrying in the inner place, that paragraph of inward anguish thrilling with power, on which, it seems to me that the cloud of the incense ever rests, so that the final word can never be said concerning it. You will notice in the story that three times over He cast His incense on the fire. He took all of Himself, and abandoned it in devotion to the will of His God. Mark the prelude to His first activity. He said to His disciples, "My soul," My life, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." My life, My soul, all that I am. The things that we have been trying to look at! All the graces of Christ to which I have made reference were for joy and not for sorrow; they were the things that make for joy, they were the things of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Yet He said, This life of Mine, into which no sorrow ought to come by reason of what it is in itself, is exceeding sorrowful, for all the things that are things of joy are contradicted. My authority is set at nought, my majesty is mocked, my meekness is refused, my sympathy is answered with scourging and with spitting; all the frankincense of my profound compassion is being trodden underfoot, and my purity is hurt and offended by the awful pollutions through the midst of which I pass. And He was called to that experience, called to endure it.

And now behold Him within the veil in the presence of God, alone with God; the sense of the coming sorrow surging through and through Him: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." This is but a revelation of the keen sense of the impending sorrows. But now behold: the priest casts the incense on the fire! "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt"; if this be Thy will, I consent to the bruising of My life, that the things which should make for all joy should experience all sorrow. So the incense was cast on the fire.

Passing back, He found the sleeping disciples. And I pray you mark the infinite beauty of His recognition of their willingness to keep awake. "The spirit indeed is willing." Then He passed again in the Presence. And now the wording is slightly changed, and I see not merely the sense of the coming sorrows, but the sense of their inevitability. If it be not possible that this cup shall pass—then the incense of all His perfect life was flung upon the fire—"not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Again glancing toward the disciples sleeping there, in infinite pity He allowed them to sleep on without disturbing them, and once more returning into the Presence He said the same words.

We do not read this story aright if we tarry over the words that indicate the appalling sense of coming sorrow. They did but serve as prelude to the final, utter, absolute devotion of Himself to the will of God.

As our High Priest is seen standing in the Holy Place and casting the fragrant incense of His life on the consuming fire, behold a cloud covers the Mercy Seat!

So I glance back once more at the book of Leviticus, and I read, "I will appear in the cloud upon the Mercy Seat which is upon the ark; that ye die not." A few verses further on I read that this incense was to be brought and burned on the fire in order that the cloud of the incense might cover the Mercy Seat on the testimony that the offering priest might not die.

Whatever that may have meant for Aaron in those early days, and for subsequent High Priests, I turn to the letter to the Hebrews, and I read, "Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him Who was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear." He was heard, He was answered, He was saved from death. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He stood for a moment so overwhelmed by sorrows in His humanity that it seemed as if they must kill Him. He had said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down, and I will take it again." In order to have a second entrance to the Holy Place with atoning blood there must be a dying in act, not by the ordinary pathway of humanity, but by the authority, and for the purpose of a great compassion. Thus in the hour of His praying our Lord was delivered from death that threatened Him, which was the mere death of crushing sorrow. So He offered the incense, devoted Himself to the ultimate in the economy of the purpose of God, and was heard in that He cried. He did not die in the Garden, but moved from there to the Cross itself.

By that triumph, says the writer of the letter, He became the author of eternal salvation. And presently passing in again to the Holy Place, He prevailed, and men are made nigh.

I pray you, believe me, this is not the final word, these are only some of the things of the glory of that Garden scene. May He, in His compassion, Who was patient with sleeping disciples, and full of majesty and of meekness in that unutterable hour, cleanse the words and thoughts of our attempted exposition, and may He bring us nearer and nearer yet to the heart of His sorrow.

Matthew 27:22. The Verdict.

Matthew 27:22.

The Verdict.

What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?

Matthew 27:22

This question occurs in the story of the appearance of Jesus before the Roman Governor Pilate. If we read the story superficially, we shall declare that Jesus was arraigned before Pilate. If we read the story carefully, determining to see its true inwardness, to discover its profoundest meanings, we shall say that Pilate was arraigned before Jesus. In the facts which were merely local and incidental and historical, Jesus was a prisoner at the bar of Pilate, waiting for verdict and sentence. In all the values which were essential and spiritual and age-abiding, Pilate the Roman Governor stood at the bar of Jesus waiting for verdict and sentence.

The Governor asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" as though the disposal of Jesus were in his hands. By the answering of that question, Pilate was deciding what it would be necessary, in the fulness of time and in the perfecting of the Divine economy, for Jesus to do with him. I do not mean by that to affirm that Pilate was lost because of his action upon that occasion. It is perfectly certain, that if Pilate never repented of his vacillation, never repented of that moment in which he seared his conscience to save his position, then his destiny was sealed. But who shall dare to affirm that this was so? It may be that in after years, when he had lost the position he had purchased at the price of disloyalty to conscience, the haunting memory of the face and regal mien of the Man Who troubled him that day, may have followed him until in penitence he turned to Him in submission; and if he did, then he found His grace sufficient to meet his need.

From this moment, I have nothing more to do with that old scene or with the local setting of my text, save for purpose of illustration. I am interested in the abiding principles, in the spiritual values, in the immediate and persistent application of this old-time story.

This is the final question of the Gospel according to Matthew, which is the Gospel of Jesus as King. He is presented to us here in the purple robes of His sovereign royalty. He is presented to us in the early chapters, first, in His relation to our own world; while Jesus was of our human nature He did not enter upon our human life by the will or act of humanity, but by the mysterious and direct intervention of God: second, in relation to the world above; after the Kingliness of work well done the wreath of Divine attestation was set upon His brow, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased"; and the holy chrism, the anointing of the Spirit fell upon Him, fitting Him for specific Kingly work; finally, in relation to the under-world of evil; passing into the wilderness as King He met the enemy of the race and mastered him at every onslaught.

There follows the story of the Kingly Propaganda. First, the great Manifesto which we speak of as the Sermon on the Mount. Then the toil amid all the limitation of human life; the King is supreme in all spheres; master of material things; victorious in the presence of mental disorder as He flung the devils out and restored men to their right mind; triumphant in the moral realm, as He forgave sins and gave men power to sin no more. The King is next seen in conflict with the false rulers of the people, the shepherds who fed themselves instead of the people, the shepherds who sought their own safety instead of that of the people; defeating them, and rising superior to them on every occasion. At Caesarea Philippi He challenged His disciples, and Peter made his confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." From that moment He began to talk about His cross, and with calm and Kingly dignity He trod the Via Dolorosa that culminated in the tragedy of Calvary. The dead body of the King was laid by tender and loving hands in the grave.

On the first day of a new week the message came, the King is alive, and finally His authoritative voice is heard saying, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age."

In that rapid survey of the gospel, the King is again presented. In the midst of the tragedy at the end, just before the flaming glory of the ultimate victory of resurrection, this question was asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" To answer that question I call you in the name of God, in the name of the King, in the name of your humanity. In the presence of the farflung splendours of the unseen world, and the vast spaciousness of human life in the economy of God, I bring you this question and I ask you to make it your own and to answer it ere the day have passed, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

My business at this hour is to appeal for a verdict. I would fain bring you, my comrades in this human life, my fellow travelers to all the mystery and wonder of the life that lies beyond, face to face with the King and I would ask your verdict, "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

In order that we may be helped, in order that we may be aided in our hour of decision, I propose to ask a series of questions, all of them leading up to, and culminating in the question of Pilate.

The first question I would suggest is this. What can I do with Jesus? I reply to that immediately. I can crown Him or crucify Him, and I can do none other than one of these two. Every one of us must give a vote for His crowning or for His crucifixion. There is no middle course because His claims are supreme, and His claims are superlative. He is either all He claims to be and all His followers have claimed for Him, or He is the most stupendous fraud that has ever been foisted upon human credulity. Have you ever really considered the words Jesus uttered as He stood in the midst of the promiscuous multitudes of men and women of all sorts and conditions; as He stood in the midst of men and women, with hearts wrung with sorrow, with spirits dejected by hope deferred; in the midst of men and women in the grip of sin and vice; in the midst of the physical pain and weariness and the dread tiredness of the multitudes? He said "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If that were a lie, it were the most cruel of lies. If it were the truth, it is the truth that we ought to live and die for, and proclaim to men, for this is what the world supremely needs. The Man Who can stand in the midst of human pain and agony

and turmoil and temptation and say, "If you will come to Me I will give you rest," ought to be crucified if His claim is untrue or He ought to be crowned if it be true! What will you do with Him? What can you do with Him? Do not take the distant look alone, think of the claim He is making in London today. It is that He is able to take hold of the worst man and the worst woman, and so to touch them with forgiveness and with healing and with life that He will give them rest and make them the best man and the best woman. He is claiming today that He can lay His hand upon the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, upon men and women flung out upon the scrap-heap by the cruel grind of human laws, and that He can make of them such men and women that presently He will present them faultless before God, so that God shall not be ashamed of them, so that they shall not fail to command the respect of God. This is a superlative claim, and the Man Who makes a claim like this is a fraud, or so help me God He is my King. I want to be rid of the voice that makes claim like that if it is mockery; or I want that it shall be multiplied until every weary and brokenhearted man and woman has heard it, if it be true. I must crown Him or crucify Him. One of the most consistent and beautiful figures upon the page of the New Testament is that of Paul. Oh yes, he wrote one day that he was the chief of sinners, but he wrote that when he was standing in the presence of Christ. When a man stands in the presence of Christ he always feels he is the greatest sinner in the world. If you will compare Paul with other men you cannot but admire him. Before he knew Jesus, he was splendidly true, magnificently consistent, tremendously earnest. Mark the difference. Before he knew Jesus, he made havoc of the Church of God. Why? Because he believed that Jesus was an impostor, that He never rose from the dead, that all that His disciples were claiming for Him was untrue; and out of the pure honesty of his heart he was determined to stamp out His name. But there came a moment of illumination, a moment when a new light broke upon him, a moment when the conviction came that the Jesus Whom he thought dead was alive. What then? With an honesty that I would God other men shared, with a splendid intensity that was wholly admirable, he began to labour and suffer toward the hour when that Jesus should be the crowned Lord of all. What can I do with Him? I must crown Him or crucify Him.

Let me ask a second question. What does it matter what I do with Him? What difference does it make whether I crown Him or crucify Him? I will answer the question in the sense in which it is asked. There are a great many men; men I know in my business house, men I meet on the market, on the street, who have not crowned Him, but they seem to be doing very well. There are a great many people, thousands of people who are rejecting Him, but they seem to be doing very well. I put it so because that thing is said to me scores of times in one year in dealing with men about spiritual things. So I ask the question, "What does it matter?"

It makes all the difference first of all, to your character. It makes all the difference in the second place, to your influence. It makes all the difference finally, to your destiny. Character, influence, destiny.

These are the things men will not think of, but they are the supreme things. A man will think of his bank book, of his house, of his diet, of his education, of his amusement. None of these things are wrong, but they are secondary, by comparison they are unimportant. They are not the final things. I do not mean to say that Christ is not interested in these things, for I know He is interested in what a man eats, what he wears, where he lives; only His way of dealing with what a man eats, what he wears, and where he lives, is that of dealing with the man himself, and when He begins to deal with a man, He deals first with character.

Understand this, your character will depend, and does depend upon your attitude toward Christ. You cannot reject the Christ of this Gospel of Matthew without suffering deterioration of character. You cannot honestly crown Him without entering upon an ennobled life. Here is a thing I need not labour. There are men and women scattered throughout this house tonight, who if this were the time and place, would rise to testify to the fact that crowning Jesus changed their outlook and conceptions and therefore reacted upon them, so that they are not what they were. Crown Jesus and character becomes characterized by purity and love, and when you have uttered those two words you have said everything. When John looked at Jesus he said he saw Grace and Truth, love and life, compassion and holiness. That is the character that is produced. Not in a moment does it come to fulness of fruitage; oh no, some of us know how long the struggle is, how much He has to bear with, how patiently He has to wait when we turn from the pure to the impure, when we turn from love to the things that contradict it; but that is the pattern of character when Jesus is King, a stern endeavour after rightness and a strong moving toward compassion and tenderness toward other men. Reject this Christ of God, and gradually the standard of your morality is lowered; gradually you depart from the high ideals and accept the lower estimates of things; gradually you descend even from the respectable which you now worship to the vulgarity you now hate. Do you think any man lying drunk in the gutter tonight ever meant to lie there? Of course he did not. He has descended. Do you suppose any man in the grip of some hellish, devilish, dirty habit meant so to be gripped? He at first felt the shame of it, but gradually the shame passed, until today there are men who can sin without a blush. Character deteriorated, ruined, is always the outcome of refusing Christ.

Not character alone, but that which is the outcome of character, influence, is determined by relationship to Christ.

Crown Him, obey Him and—I quote from His Manifesto so that there shall be no speculation on my part—then what? "Ye are the salt of the earth;" the influence you exert is an influence that prevents the spread of corruption, and gives the man struggling in weakness his chance. "Ye are the light of the world," you shall live in the office, in the business house, in professional life, wherever you are, and your life shall be a life that helps men toward God and truth. Refuse to crown Him and your influence is the opposite. Instead of salt which prevents corruption, you will corrupt society. God help me, I am always afraid of generalities when I am after a verdict. Let me take one man, a young man in this house tonight. What will you do with Jesus? Crown Him and your character is ennobled, and I care not where you work or where you live, you will help men to noble things. Refuse to crown Him and your character will degenerate and the very stories you tell will help to damn men. Your influence depends upon what you do with Jesus.

Your destiny depends upon what you do with Jesus, for this life is not all. This life is but the place of probation. Life lies beyond, higher, deeper, profounder; and when presently, I shall cross the border-line, that crossing of the border-line will not change my character, will not change the essential facts of my personality. There is destiny. What lies beyond? Who dare say. Who dare invade the stillness and silence of the secrets of eternity? Not I. But I dare affirm that as a man shall choose in these days of opportunity so shall he abide in the days that lie beyond. I am not preaching to men who have never had an opportunity, or I might have another emphasis upon that message. If I were preaching to people who had never been brought face to face with Jesus Christ, and had never heard this evangel, I might have something else to say. I am preaching to

men and women who know the name, and know the story, have seen the uplifted Christ, have witnessed the transformation of other lives. What you do with Christ settles not character and influence only, but destiny. It does matter.

Let us ask another question. Who can decide for me? The answer is swift and immediate. No one can decide for you. You must decide. The friends of Jesus cannot decide that you shall crown Him. Blessed be God, the foes of Jesus cannot compel you to crucify Him. Pilate washed his hands in water, and said, I am innocent. Pilate, it will never do! It is a base and hideous mockery. Listen, Pilate, you cannot wash blood out in water! Pilate, you stand at the bar of your own conscience. You are arguing between expedience and obedience, whether you shall do the straight thing though the heavens fall, or by some trick save your own position as Roman Procurator. You are trying to shift the blame upon those priests. God knows they are to blame, those evil inspirers of an evil deed. You are trying to put the blame upon the mob, crying for His crucifixion. You cannot do it, Pilate! You have asked a question more profound than you know, "What then shall I do?" When presently thou hast handed Him over to His cross, and thou hast written the superscription to mock the priests, and dost say "What I have written I have written," then thou sayest more than thou knowest. Thou hast chosen, thou hast written, and the clamour of His foes will not excuse thine action. The persuasion of His friends cannot finally decide thy choice. So it is in this hour. I have sometimes said, If I could, I would come and compel a man to Christ. Thank God I cannot. Every man stands in the awful awe-inspiring, tremendous dignity of his own power to choose, and no man can invade it. The friends of Christ tonight would fain persuade you, we are prepared to go so far as Paul when he said, "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." But, you must decide. Every man chooses for himself. Do not forget that fact when the foes of Christ are trying to prevent you by their laughter and persecution, by their suggestion that you take the glamour and glitter of the things that perish. You must decide. This is a great congregation, but it is composed of lonely men and lonely women who within the next fifteen minutes will have decided each for himself, for herself, to crucify or crown Christ.

There is another question. When must I answer this? The answer to this is as quick and immediate as to the last. Now. Yesterday, I need not argue. Yesterday does not matter. Yesterday by your life, by your thinking, by your speaking, by your doing, you drove the nails and crucified Christ—for oh, men and women, remember that not the Jewish priests and Roman soldiers crucified Christ, but my sin and your sin. That is the deep mystery of the cross. By the sin of yesterday you crucified Him, so that there can be no further decision about yesterday. Tomorrow—you remember the saying of your childhood, more philosophic than you have thought recently—tomorrow never comes. There is no tomorrow for the activity of the soul. No man decides tomorrow. The soul is so close to God that its one hour of the clock is His now. You decide now and cannot escape it. When presently, the service over, you leave this building and walk through the streets amid the city's babel and noise, you go having given your vote for the crucifixion or the crowning of Christ. It is an immediate transaction.

One other question. What will be the result in the long issues? I have spoken of the near things of character and influence, and of destiny which may be a far thing but which begins here and now. In the long issues, what will be the result? Let me try to answer that question. There is a day coming when this same King shall appear again. He is coming into His Kingdom, blessed be God.

That is the comfort of all such as work. That is the battle song that nerves us in the hour of turmoil and strife. He is coming into His Kingdom. It is not an idle song we sing, it is the profoundest thing in our souls: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run."

If the New Testament be true, He is to appear again. He has appeared, He has had His first advent, epiphany, appearing, which was an Advent of infinite grace. It was an Advent of awful loneliness, and pain and buffering, of prison and death; but He is coming again. There will be a second Advent as surely as there was the first Advent. There will be another epiphany, another manifestation, but how changed. The Son of man shall come in His own glory and the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him. There is an hour coming when the world shall see again the King. Then this question will be reversed. The question is that awful, yet glad hour—and whether awful or glad depends entirely upon our present relationship to Him—will not be What shall I do with Jesus? but What will Jesus do with me?

He came, and they crowned Him with thorns; but He is coming with the diadems of the universe upon His brow. He came, and they put in His hand a reed, in mockery; but He is coming with the sceptre of the universe in His strong right hand; He came, and they lifted Him to die on the cross; but He is coming seated upon the throne of empire and dominion. When He comes again, He will do with men what men have done with Him when they had their opportunity to choose. If I have rejected Him, He will reject me, and that not capriciously, but by reason of the very necessity of the case. He will be compelled, in the day of the final establishment of His government in the world and through the universe, to reject those who have rejected Him, for to retain them would be to ruin the new creation and blight and blast the established Kingdom.

Now finally, back again to Pilate's question. We have only attempted to emphasize it and insist upon its importance, and persuade you to personal decision by all the questions we have suggested. This is the last. What shall I do?

Would to God that the preacher could be entirely silent, or would to God that his voice might be heard simply as the voice of heaven. Each one is quite alone with God. I cannot see, neither can I know what takes place at this moment between your soul and God, and your neighbour cannot see or know. Thank God for the sacredness of our loneliness with God. I pray you be conscious of that. In that place of loneliness with God, ask Pilate's question, and answer it. "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"

What shall I do? Oh soul of mine, as though thou hadst never faced Christ before, as though thou hadst never come to this bar of judgment, now soul of mine, What wilt thou do with Christ? Everything depends upon the will. There is intellectual persuasion toward His crowning. He has made the emotional appeal to my heart. The call of my conscience bids me crown Him at all costs. Shall I do it? That is the question.

Courage my soul, dare to do it. And as though never before, in the presence of heaven and eternity, I lay down all the arms of my rebellion and crown Him Lord; He shall be King of my life.

It is hardly worth Thy taking oh King! It is bruised, battered; but oh, take it, and if Thou canst make a garden out of this desert, then do so; if Thou canst make any use of what there is of me, take me oh Christ, and make me in order to use me.

Is that what you say? God help you to make this real. Do not be deceived. In two or three minutes the service will be over, and going out of the building and along the streets you will go having voted for His death and crucifixion, or will have found the verdict that compels you to crown Him. Which?

God grant there may be hundreds of us who tonight shall crown Him to the glory of His name, for the saving of our own lives, in order that we may be soldiers of the King, servants of the King, workers together with God, for His name's sake.

Matthew 27:45. The Darkness Of Golgotha.

Matthew 27:45.

The Darkness Of Golgotha.

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

Matthew 27:45

That is a verse which we are in danger of reading hurriedly. We treat it too often as though it were merely the record of something incidental.

As a matter of fact, it is the central verse in the story of the Cross. Indeed, the Cross itself is not mentioned, no word is spoken of it or of the Christ; they are alike hidden, and yet the period was one of three hours' duration, the very central hours of the experience of the Saviour of men. Christ and the Cross are alike hidden within that verse, and that fact is most suggestive because in those hours transactions were accomplished which through all eternity defy the apprehension and explanation of finite minds.

It is not to be passed over lightly that all the Synoptists record the fact of that darkness. Three hours of darkness and of silence! All the ribald clamor was over, the material opposition utterly exhausted, the turmoil ended. Man had done his last and his worst. Beyond that period of the three hours' silence even human actions were expressive of pity. Nothing has impressed my own heart, or amazed me more in reading this story anew, and attempting to meditate upon it in view of this service, than what I shall venture to describe as the wonderful psychological conditions of those hours beyond the hours of silence. It is as though that appalling silence and that overwhelming darkness had changed the entire attitude of man to the Saviour. The very vinegar they offered Him to drink was offered Him in pity. What they said about Elijah was expressive of their desire to sympathize. The centurion's testimony was that of a man whose heart was strangely moved toward the august and dignified Saviour. When presently they found Him dead, and therefore did not break His bones, the spear thrust was one of kindness, lest perchance He might still suffer, in spite of the fact that He appeared to be dead. Multitudes dispersed from the scene at Golgotha smiting their breasts, overwhelmed with a sense of awe, and strangely moved by some new pity. And there is no picture in all the New Testament more full of pathos and of power than that of the women standing silent and amazed through all those hours of His suffering, and still standing there beyond them.

Then also the cries which passed the lips of Jesus beyond the darkness were all of them significant of accomplishment. "My God! My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?"—for that was the tense; a slight change from the tense of the actual Psalm, a question asked by One Who was emerging from the experience to which He referred. And then as John is most careful to record for us, "Knowing that all things were now finished, He said, I thirst." Beyond that came the words of the great proclamation, "It is finished." And at last the words of the final committal, full of dignity,

were spoken: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Everything was changed beyond the hours of silence and of darkness.

Much has been written about these hours of darkness, much which is not warranted by any careful spiritual attention to the story itself. You will call to mind how, at great length many years ago, it was argued that the darkness was that of the sun's eclipse. But that is entirely impossible, for Passover was always held at full moon, when there could be no eclipse of the sun. The darkness has been described as nature's sympathy with the suffering of the Lord, but that is a pagan conception of nature, a conception of nature as having some consciousness apart from God and out of harmony with His work. It has been said that the darkness was brought about by an act of God, and was expressive of His sympathy with His Son. I immediately admit that that is an appealing idea, and has some element of truth in it, in that we may discover the overruling of His government; but to declare that that darkness was caused by God because of His sympathy with His Son is to deny the cry of Jesus which immediately followed the darkness and referred to it. The darkness was to Him a period when He experienced whatever He may have meant by the words, "Thou didst forsake Me."

If I have succeeded in these words spoken in reverent spirit, in suggesting to you the difficulty of those central three hours, then our hearts are prepared for going forward.

I submit to you thoughtfully that no interpretation of that darkness is to be trusted save that of the Lord Who experienced it. Has He flung any light on the darkness which will enable us to apprehend the meaning of the darkness? Did any word escape His lips that will help us to explain those silent hours? I think the answer is to be found in these narratives, and to that teaching of the Lord we appeal in order that we may consider the meaning of the darkness, and the passing of the darkness, and thereafter attempt reverently to look back at the transaction in the darkness.

First, then, as to the meaning of the darkness. What was this darkness? How was it caused? What did it really mean? That this question is of importance is proved by that to which I have already drawn your attention, the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke alike record it, and that with care, as having taken place at this very time. The reference is made by each one of them in detail. It was something to be noted, something to be remembered, something which made its impression alike on the evangelist who saw the King, and the evangelist who saw the Servant, and the evangelist who saw the Perfect Man. We cannot pass it over as though it were merely incidental, and consequently we shall attempt to discover its meaning in the light of what our Lord Himself said ere He passed into the darkness.

Luke records for us a fact not mentioned by either of the other evangelists, that in Gethsemane Jesus said to the man who came to arrest Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." That was a most suggestive word, spoken as I have reminded you, in Gethsemane ere He passed from the garden to and through those trial scenes which we have not read this evening, but with which you are familiar. Last Sunday evening we attempted in reverence to behold the High Priest casting the incense on the fire in those hallowed experiences of Gethsemane. When that was over, just as He was leaving the garden Jesus spoke to the men about Him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." This is your hour! More than once during these Sunday evenings in which we have been meditating in the neighborhood of the Cross it has been necessary to refer to that phrase or conception, and I go back to it again, not to tarry at length with it, but to ask you

most carefully to ponder it. At the commencement of our Lord's public ministry He referred to an hour which was not yet, to an hour which was postponed, and during the course of His ministry you will find that the evangelists more than once allude to the same hour, and to that hour, whatever it might have been, as to a postponed hour. Men attempted to arrest Him, but they could not because His hour was not yet come. Men desired to encompass His death, and wrought with all their strength, all their wit so to do; but they were unable, because His hour had not yet come. And not always by the use of that particular phrase, but over and over again our Lord was looking forward toward some consummating, culminating hour which no man could hurry, and which no man could postpone, but which He did perpetually postpone until in the economy of God its set time should have come.

"We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work," was one of the profoundest sayings of Jesus in illuminating His own immediate ministry, having larger values, I will readily admit, but often we miss the profoundest value because we fail to observe the first intention. There was an immediate application of that word, which the Revised Version helps us to appreciate by a change of number in the personal pronoun. "We"—He was speaking of Himself and His disciples—"We must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh," a time of darkness and desolation, "when no man can work," when you must stand aside from co-operation and fellowship with Me. That was the consummating hour to which He looked, the night of darkness which at last would come, in which no man could work, but God alone must work.

Now, in the light of that all too rapid examination of a very definite movement manifest in the ministry of our Lord, we come to Gethsemane. They were about to lay hands on Him, and to lead Him away to Caiaphas and to Pilate and to Herod, and again to Pilate and to death. Then He said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The night, the hour postponed had arrived, and this was its character. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. We have no picture of the Son of God during those hours, no record of a word passing His lips. It was the period of the infinite silence, the period of the overwhelming darkness.

What, then, is this that Jesus said concerning the darkness? It was the hour of evil, it was the hour under the dominion of the powers of darkness. In those three hours we see the Saviour in the midst of all that which resulted from the action of evil. Not without remarkable suggestiveness did the great apostle speak in a letter written long afterwards of Satan as "prince of the power of the air"; and not without suggestiveness did he speak of him as presiding over the age as ruler of the darkness. Not without significance did John, the beloved apostle, when opening his Gospel and writing concerning Jesus say that in Him was life, and the life was the light of men; that the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not, comprehended it not. Neither the word "apprehended," nor the word "comprehended" means "understood" in this connection. The declaration is not that the darkness did not understand the light, but that the darkness did not extinguish the light. The apostle's declaration at the commencement of the Gospel is that the light was always shining, and however deep and dense the darkness, it never succeeded in entirely extinguishing the light. The darkness apprehended it not, did not put it out. In that very negative declaration of the apostle you are brought face to face with the positive purpose of evil, with the purpose of Satan. What was Satan's supreme desire? To extinguish the light. "There," said John of Jesus, "was the true light... which lighteth every man, coming into the world." Satan's purpose

was to extinguish that light.

From the very beginning of the shining of that light, focused in history by the Incarnation, the one supreme purpose of the enemy was to apprehend it, to comprehend it, to extinguish it, to put it out. And in these three hours of darkness we are face to face with the time when all the force of evil was brought to bear on the soul of the Son of God, and all the unutterable intent and purpose of evil wrapped Him about in a darkness that is beyond our comprehension.

In that moment there was material darkness. It was the material symbol of the empire of sin. If the questioning of the heart shall become so material as to inquire—and I grant you it almost necessarily must—whether Satan did in some way actually produce the material darkness, I shall have to reply I cannot tell, but I believe he did. I believe that by some action of those spiritual antagonisms, the world of principalities and powers, of which the early Christians were far more conscious than we are, and therefore more ready to fight with, under the captaincy and leadership of the prince of the power of the air, there was wrought out in material experience a symbol of the spiritual intention of hell.

I suggest for some quiet hour the study and examination of Biblical symbolisms, and especially the use of this figure in Biblical literature, the figure of darkness. For the purpose of illustration I confine myself entirely to this Gospel of Matthew. Listen to these phrases, and immediately you will see how darkness is indeed a symbol of spiritual evil. "The people which sat in darkness." "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!" "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness."

Wherever the word occurs in this Gospel of Matthew, indeed wherever it occurs in the New Testament, or its equivalent in the Old, it is the symbol of spiritual evil in its issue and in its ultimate. Darkness is the twin sister of death. Death and darkness express the ultimate in evil. And in this hour, when the Lord Himself was passing to death, there was darkness; and that material darkness which impressed the evangelists and the multitudes, and changed their attitude of mind toward Him, was but the outward and visible sign of the more mysterious and unfathomable spiritual darkness into the midst of which He had passed. Through the channel of His earthly life all spiritual things were having material manifestation. The Incarnation itself was but the working out into human observation of the truth concerning God. And now, in the hour of the dying of the Son of God, in that infinite, awful mystery, spiritual evil had its material manifestation in the darkness that settled over all the land. The darkness was of Satan; it was coincident with the ultimate in the suffering of the Son of God.

And now, ere we ask the most difficult of all questions concerning the transaction of the darkness, in preparation for that inquiry, let us look once more at that at which we have already glanced, the passing of the darkness. In order that we may see, that we may understand, let us listen again to the four words that passed the lips of the Lord beyond the ninth hour when the darkness was passing away, and the light of material day was again breaking through on the green hill and on the Cross and on all those Judaeian lands. Notice reverently, then, the four cries that escaped His lips, and divide them, as they most certainly are divided, into two groups, the first two and the second two.

The first cry was the expression of a backward thought. "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" It was the call of Jesus of Nazareth as He emerged from the darkness, and from all that happened therein, of which no single word is actually written. It was in itself a revelation, like a flash of light piercing the darkness. "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?"

In the next word we have the expression of His immediate experience, of that of which in His humanity He became then supremely conscious, "I thirst."

Almost immediately following it we have again an expression of His immediate experience, that of which in the essential mystery of His Being He was conscious, "It is finished."

The final word described a forward glance. As the first word beyond the darkness expressed the backward thought, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" the last word expressed a forward confidence, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

We have listened to these words simply in order that we may try to be near Him as the darkness passed, and with all reverence, by listening to Him, appreciate something of the thinking of His own mind. A backward thought, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?" and immediate experience within human limitations, "I thirst"; then spiritual accomplishment, "It is finished"; and then the future, the glorious future, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Then He died, not of a broken heart, not of human brutality, not of murder by human hands; but of His own volition He yielded up the Ghost, and His Spirit, commended to God, passed to God. The death that saves was not that physical dissolution, but the infinite spiritual mystery of the three hours and the darkness, which being passed, He Himself did say, "It is finished."

In all that remained of the story beyond the hours of darkness we have no record of any word uttered by the foes of Jesus. They were not present, or they seem not to have been, during that time. Indeed, it is something to be meditated with thankfulness of heart that no rude hand ever touched the body of the dead Christ, that after the darkness, and beyond the death, and beyond the dismissal of the spirit, they were loving disciple hands that took Him from the Cross and wrapped Him round, and buried Him, giving Him the temporary resting place of a garden tomb. In death He was wonderfully preserved from all dishonor. The foes of Jesus seem to have withdrawn. Satan seems to have been absent.

Where was Satan? There is no answer in the records of the evangelists, and so I pass on to apostolic writings, and I find this written concerning Christ: "Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." In the deep darkness, and in the midst of the silence, He triumphed over the forces of evil, the principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly by the Cross, putting off from Himself all that assaulted Him in, and by, and through the darkness.

As the darkness passed, we glance once again at that at which we have already looked, the attitude of the people. They were arrested, they were touched with pity; there came illumination to them concerning the dying and the dead One, and a great fear possessed them.

So, finally, we come to the most impossible subject of all, that of the transaction within the darkness. We admit that this can have no final exposition. We admit immediately that any even partial thing that may be said is incomplete. Every aspect of the infinite whole is larger than we can

know. Every theory is of value, but all theories fail. This is not the place, nor would it be within the highest purpose of our worship, to attempt to prove that statement; but at least I may be permitted to say that, so far as I know, I have been reading through five and twenty years with ever growing gratitude great books on the Cross, and from each one I have gained something and every one I have at last laid down, saying as I did so, Yes, yes! All that, but more; something not reached, something not spoken!

God cannot finally be expressed in finite terms. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." It cannot be explained; it is the perpetual marvel. God must pity any man who thinks he understands this Cross completely. God have mercy on any child of God if the day comes in which he has not to sing, "Love so amazing, so divine."

When the amazement dies out, it is not that the Cross has been analyzed, but that the gazer upon it has become blind.

Yet we may gain some light from the words of the Lord as He emerged from the darkness, and the darkness itself was suggestive. We remember the word we have already read from Matthew. "The people which sat in darkness." Into that darkness the Son of God experimentally passed. "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That darkness had passed into His heart, when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness." The Son of God passed into that outer darkness.

That does not answer the inquiry as to what happened. I have no answer for that. Only this I know, that in that hour of darkness He passed into the place of the ultimate wrestling of evil in actual experience. There is light as I hear the final word, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," for the word is a word which declares that whatever the transaction was, it was accomplished; that whatever the dying indicated, it was done.

But let us go a little further back, before the darkness, and listen to the chief priests who joined in the hellish clamor that beat on the suffering soul of the dying Saviour. Among other things, they said this, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." That brings me nearer than anything else. Those were wonderful hours of the transmutation of basest things to high and noble things. That was the last taunt of His enemies; it has become the most illuminative word about the Cross.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot." So they laughed at Him. But hear it again, as a truth sublime and awful: because He saved others, He cannot save Himself. In order to save others He will not save Himself. Said the rabble, and said the rabbis joining in the unholy chorus, "Let Him come down from the Cross." He did not come down from the Cross, He went up from the Cross. The great Priest Who already had burned the incense in the holiest place bore the symbolic mystery of His own shed blood into the holy place, but ere He could do so, He passed into the darkness and abode in the silence three hours—a human measurement in order that we may somehow understand—and in those three hours He could not save Himself, and that because His heart was set upon saving others.

But why, why, why could He not save Himself? My question descends to the level of common, everyday human experience and capacity at its highest and its best. He might have saved Himself.

He might never have gone to Gethsemane's Garden. He might even in Gethsemane's Garden have asked for twelve legions of angels, as He Himself did say. He might with one glance of His shining glory have swept the rabble from about the Cross and descended to the deliverance of Himself. If He had spoken in terms of power He might have saved Himself. Why, then, was it that He could not save Himself?

Because He is God, and because God is love, and love is never satisfied with the destruction of a sinner, but with the saving of a sinner. Love never finds its rest with holiness and righteousness vindicated by the annihilation of the things that oppose. Love will find its rest only when those who have been swept from righteousness and holiness are restored thereto and are remade in the image of the Father, God. That is why.

Yes, but once more. If that be true, then on the ground of the mystery of the compulsion of the ineffable love of God in Christ could love find no other way? Love could find no other way because sin knows no ending save by that way. The conscience of men demands that, the experience of men demands that. I base the twofold affirmation on the testimonies of the centuries and the millenniums. I base the affirmation on what I know within my own soul of sin.

Someone may say to me, "Cannot God forgive out of pure love?" I shall answer, "If He can, I cannot." If he could forgive me for the wrongs of which I am conscious, and that have left behind them their stain and pollution—if He could forgive me by simply saying, Never mind them, then I cannot so forgive myself. My conscience cries for a cleansing that is more than a sentiment of pity. Somehow, somewhere, in order that I may have forgiveness, there must be tragedy, something mightier than the devilish sin.

I do not know what happened in the darkness, but this I know, that as I have come to the Cross and received the suggestions of its material unveiling, I have found my heart, my spirit, my life brought into a realm of healing spices, to the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. And there is no other way and there is no other gospel of forgiveness.

In the darkness He saved not Himself, but He saved me. He declined to move toward His own deliverance in order that He might loose me from my sin. Out of the darkness has come a light. The word spoken to Cyrus long ago has been fulfilled in the spiritual glory to the Son of God, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness." And because fulfilled to the Son of God by the Father Who loved Him, and wrought with Him through the mystery of His forsaking, the word has been fulfilled also to the sons of God who are born not of blood, nor of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. He gives us the treasures of darkness.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land, and from the darkness have come the treasures of pardon, and peace, of power, and of purity.

Mark 3:4. The Sanctions Of Ordinances.

Mark 3:4.

The Sanctions Of Ordinances.

Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill?

Mark 3:4

The story of the healing of the man with the withered hand is part of a larger whole. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story, and each places it in relation to the cornfield dispute about the Sabbath. Matthew and Mark read as though both events took place on the same Sabbath; Luke, however, distinctly says that the healing of the man with the withered hand was on another Sabbath. The difficulty in the mind of the enemies of Jesus, both in the cornfield and in the synagogue, was that of His apparent violation of the Sabbath. Moreover, there can be no escape from the conviction that this attitude on the part of Christ which caused their criticism and aroused their hostility, was definite and intended. In all the incidental wonders which He wrought He was moving quite definitely along the line of an illuminative and corrective mission. Whereas there can be no doubt that every incidental putting forth of His power was an expression of the compassion of His heart for needy men, the way in which he selected the hours and the occasions proves the larger purpose of His will. Not only did he heal this man on the Sabbath day, He also cast out an unclean spirit; probably on two separate occasions He healed Peter's wife's mother of a fever, He loosed the woman who had been bound in infirmity for many years, He healed the man with the dropsy, He gave sight to the man born blind, and He healed the man who had lain in the grip of infirmity for eight-and-thirty years, as He found Him in the porches of the Bethesda pool, all on the Sabbath. These workings of wonders on the Sabbath day were all wrought in the atmosphere of conflict concerning the Sabbath. We find not merely the story of the deed recorded and the declaration made that it took place on the Sabbath; we also find, side by side with these statements, the account of how He challenged them or they challenged Him. I repeat that He definitely violated the Sabbath according to their conceptions of the Sabbath.

The meaning of this maintained and definite attitude on the part of our Lord is revealed very clearly in these two stories: the story of the disciples in the cornfields on the Sabbath plucking the ears of corn and Christ answering the criticism of the Pharisees, and the story of how, on coming into this synagogue, He entered into discussion with them and then healed the man with the withered hand.

I propose asking you to fasten your attention with me on this story of the healing of the man with the withered hand, not so much in order that we may observe its wonderful teaching concerning the method of Jesus with individual cases, but in order that we may consider this attitude of Jesus, and endeavor to understand His meaning, and apply the values to ourselves.

First, I am going to trespass on your patience as I attempt very rapidly to reconstruct the story from the three accounts that we have; I read them of set purpose. I maintain that here as elsewhere in the gospels these stories are not contradictory but complementary. Each man told the story from his own standpoint quite simply, not necessarily giving all the details. The careful comparison of the three will enable us to see what happened, and so prepare us for the study of this particular word of Christ.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell of His entry into the synagogue, and of the fact that there, in the synagogue, was the man with the withered hand.

Mark and Luke tell us that when He went in, the Pharisees watched to see whether He would heal, that they might accuse Him. Yet in their watching they paid Him an unconscious compliment: they expected that He would heal. They already knew enough of Him to know that the one man of all the crowd of worshipers most likely to appeal to Him was the most needy man in the crowd, the man with the withered hand.

Matthew alone tells us that they not only watched Him, but challenged Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?"

Mark and Luke declare that then Jesus first called the man to stand out, called Him from the place that he occupied in the synagogue, and that the man came forward, and standing in the midst where he might be observed, became the center of observation.

Matthew tells us—and I believe it was at this point that it happened—that when the man stood forth in the midst, Jesus asked two preliminary questions, "What man shall there be of you that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?"

Mark and Luke tell us that He answered their question by asking a question. They had said, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" He asked "Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill?"

Matthew alone tells us that He added to that this word, "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath day."

Continuing to follow the course of events, we find that Mark and Luke declare that He "looked round about on them." Mark alone interprets the look in the words, "being grieved at the hardening of their heart."

The three evangelists then declare that Jesus addressed Himself to the man in the terms of an impossible command, "Stretch forth thy hand." Immediately the man obeyed and was healed, Matthew adding that beautiful touch of comparison, that the hand "was restored whole, as the other."

Luke tells us of the madness of His enemies, and of the fact that they communed as to what course to pursue.

Matthew and Mark declare that they went out and took counsel to destroy Him.

From that narrative let us now take three central words. First, their question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" Second, His argument, "Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do

harm? to save a life, or to kill?" Finally, His answer, "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath day." Once again, narrowing our outlook, our text is the argument of Jesus in that atmosphere.

If as the result of that grouping of the records, we see that crowd of hostile souls, that man with the withered hand standing in the midst, and that lonely and imperial figure of the Lord; if we understand that the mental mood of the rulers was that of questioning his attitude toward the Sabbath, and if we see Him violating the Sabbath according to their view, we shall be a little nearer the heart of the theme.

I now leave their question and His final answer, and confine myself to His argument, "Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill?" Listening to that argument there are three things I desire to impress on your attention. Therein I discover, first, a remarkable revelation of our responsibility in the presence of all human need. Second, in that argument I discover an equally remarkable revelation of the true value of ordinances, especially Divine ordinances, the Sabbath being the illustration. Finally, in that argument, I find the ultimate test of religion.

First, then, as to the revelation of responsibility in the presence of human need. Let us go back to the synagogue. Taking the case of the man as typical, we see him disabled, incompetent, and suffering. All students of the New Testament, and of the method of the Master's ministry, are familiar with the constant merging of matters material and spiritual in His actions. The physical was always both sign and symbol of spiritual condition. We see in this man with the withered hand, a type of humanity disabled, incompetent, suffering. We shall miss the whole value of our study unless we fasten our eyes resolutely upon that man in this way. We need not travel back to the synagogue, he is in this house; we meet him every day in office, store, shop, professional walk. The children of the King, the disciples of Christ, the servants of God, are constantly face to face with the man with the withered hand, the withered heart, the withered soul, spiritually disabled, spiritually incompetent, spiritually suffering; and over and over again spiritual disability, incompetence, suffering, reveal themselves in physical disability, incompetence, suffering. All human need was focused, suggested, symbolized, by the man in the synagogue whose right hand was withered. What, then, is our responsibility in the presence of that man?

I pray you listen to that which to me is the most arresting, startling, marvelous thing in my text. Said Jesus, with that man standing there: "Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do harm? to save a life or to kill?" Mark most carefully the startling alternative that Christ suggested: "To do good, or to do harm? To save a life, or to kill?" That is the most disturbing of revelations to the complacent negativism which so often passes today for vital Christianity. There is the man with the withered hand, the incompetent man, on the highway, or in the synagogue; if you see him, you either do him good or do him harm, you either stretch out a hand to save him, or you help to kill him.

The average Christian man, to say nothing of the man of the world, is in revolt against this alternative of Christ. He says: I am doing nothing to help, but I am not harming. I have not stretched out a hand to save the man, but I have done nothing to kill him. That is not Christ's outlook. It may be that refined paganism imagines it can be neutral in the presence of human incompetence, but Christ says not to help is to harm, to fail to stretch out the hand of love is to have complicity with the forces that destroy. That is the heart of the argument. It is the revelation of

Christ's attitude toward humanity, of God's attitude in the presence of human incompetence and sorrow. God is such that in the presence of human sorrow He must either help or harm, and harm He cannot; He must either save or kill, and kill He cannot; and therefore we have Calvary, the Cross of His blood, the breaking of His heart, the sacrifice by which He lifts crushed, bruised, broken humanity and remakes it. Let no man name the Christian name and claim relationship to the Christian fact who in the presence of the incompetent man passes by and because he has not added another blow imagines he has fulfilled his Christian duty. To do harm or to do good, to save or to kill, are the graphic, drastic, startling alternatives of Jesus.

Of course, all this must be interpreted by the measure of our ability to do good or to save life. In the strict economy of Divine justice we shall be judged by that measure. I do not say that unless I can save a man I kill him. I do say that when I stand in the presence of need, unless I put forth what power I have to help toward salvation, then in the measure of the help withheld I harm and hinder. To leave the man stranded on the highway when my hand stretched out to him would have helped him but one yard toward home and health and God is to be guilty of his further sinning and further failing. This is the startling alternative of the text, revealing in a most remarkable way our responsibility in the presence of human need. If the man with the withered hand lives with us, lives in our neighborhood, and if we who bear the Christian name and wear the Christian sign pass him, and merely look and pass on, upon us lies part of the guilt of his ultimate undoing. It is that conception of responsibility which was the inspiration of Christ's perpetual violation of the false view of the Sabbath, and we naturally turn therefore to our second consideration.

We have in this text, then, second, the revelation of the true value of ordinances. Take the sabbath as the type, for that was the matter at issue in this story. I go back for one moment to the story preceding this, for in that story our Lord uttered words concerning these men which are vital to our consideration. When the Pharisees criticized His disciples for plucking the ears of corn, among other things Jesus said to them, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Those familiar with the Greek New Testament will remember that in that particular phrase we have the Greek preposition *dia*, which I think we have somewhat loosely translated by our preposition *for*: "the sabbath was made for man." *Dia* used with the accusative always has one significance, therefore I make no apology for reading the text in another way, "The sabbath was brought into being as the result of man and not man as the result of the sabbath"; or perhaps I might take another slightly different method of translation and read the text thus, "The sabbath was brought into being on account of man, and not man on account of the sabbath." That is the fundamental word.

There are certain things of interest in this statement to which I refer only in passing. You will notice that our Lord said, The Sabbath was made for man, not just for the Jew. Much controversy today about the Sabbath is due to the fact that we look on it as a Hebrew institution. According to the Bible, the Sabbath is older than the Hebrew institution. The Sabbath was made for man, it was made as the result of man; man first, the Sabbath second, not the Sabbath first and man consequently.

Here we are at the root of the whole question as to the place and value of ordinance. If, indeed, the Sabbath was made on account of man, as a result of man, for man in that sense, it must never be desecrated by being made an instrument of harm to men, by being made a reason for helping

to kill a man. There is the incompetent, disabled, suffering man! What is my duty to him? To help him, to heal him, to save him. But it is the Sabbath! Is he therefore for twelve or four-and-twenty hours to suffer his agony? That is the blasphemy of all blasphemies. The Sabbath was called into being on account of man, and not man on account of the Sabbath. If I may attempt to gather up what seems to me to be the intense and remarkable light of this word of Jesus and express it in a brief way, I would do it thus: the sanctity of the Sabbath must not destroy its sanctions.

What are the sanctions of the Sabbath? The well-being of man. If you take the Sabbath and make it so sacred and separate that you allow a man to continue to bear his burden alone without attempting to help him, you are making the sanctity of the day destroy the sanctions on which it rests.

So with every ordinance. I need not say human ordinances, for I have little care concerning them. I would break them all with pleasure. I care nothing for human ordinances. I am speaking of higher things, I am speaking of Divine ordinances. There are not very many, according to the New Testament; but there are some. There is the ordinance of preaching; I do not hesitate to call it an ordinance. There are the ordinances of prayer, and of worship; there are the ordinances of Christian baptism, and of the supper of the Lord. Over all these New Testament ordinances, so finely independent of the trivialities of ritualism and so instinct with abounding life and spirituality, high and sacred as they are, we must write this dictum of Jesus: These were called into being on account of man and not man on account of them.

What is the meaning of preaching? Preaching is not an institution to which man shall be compelled to attend in order to live; preaching is an institution for the proclamation of the living word of God that men may live and thrive and grow thereby. It is made for man, not man for it.

What is the institution of prayer? Why is the Church called on to be a priesthood? What is the meaning of intercession? It is not something ordained, which man must use in order that it may continue. Prayer is ordained for man, for his healing, for his helping, that he may come nearer God. For these purposes the ordinance of prayer has been established.

For what end is worship ordained? Now we are getting back very near to our story, to the synagogue, the temple, and so very near to this hour, and this building. What is the place of worship for? Worship is ordained for man and not man for it. The ultimate purpose of our worship and our gathering together for worship is the healing and helping of humanity by bringing humanity into living, vital, relationship with God. God is not demanding that man shall conform simply in order to fulfil an institution that He has created. He made the institution that men in it and through it may find their way to Him. So also with baptism and the supper of the Lord. All ordinances are made for man, and if we are making any Christian ordinance an excuse for leaving some man half-dead on the highway while we observe it, we are blaspheming the sanctions of the ordinance, and so are sinning against God.

Take the Sabbath again as test. In the economy of God the Sabbath is the true test of our understanding of the Sabbath. God's Sabbath is the day for rest and worship. But there in the synagogue is a man with a withered hand. What am I going to do with that man because it is the hour of rest and worship? Let him suffer? Therein is proof that I do not understand the Sabbath. In the presence of that man it is my duty to break the Sabbath, give up my rest, turn from the holy

shrine of worship to the holier shrine of service to help him. By so doing I keep Sabbath according to the Divine purpose.

I go further and declare that the Sabbath is the test of our conception of God. Let us return to the cornfield once more, to listen to something that Jesus then said to these men on the question of the sabbath. The words are recorded in Matthew, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." In that word Christ declared that the very method they adopted for defense of the Sabbath was demonstration of their ignorance of God. They did not understand mercy. If you had understood God and the passion of His heart, said Jesus, in effect, you would not have blamed the guiltless.

In the light of this great word of Jesus it becomes our bounden duty to test all our ordinances and arrangements. The test of the church is the man with the withered hand. If to the church no such man comes it is for one reason and one only, that Christ is not there. To the church Christo-centric, gathered about the living Lord, the man with the withered hand will surely come. If he be not in the midst, it is because Christ is not there. Let it be known that the loving, tender, strong, mighty, saving Christ is in the midst, and the incompetent, disabled, palsied, spiritually defeated will come. They become the test of the church. If the ordinances and organizations are so perfect that there is no time for them, or if to deal with them would violate the regularity of the sanctuary, then the sanctuary is a sepulcher and of no use to God or man. That is the supreme test of the church's life and the church's work, and of all ordinances.

So I come finally to notice that this text offers the final test of religion. We fix our attention no longer on the man with the withered hand, but on the rulers. Look on these rulers, only let us look at them as Jesus saw them. There is nothing more remarkable in these stories than the emphasis laid on the fact that He looked at them before He healed the man. I draw your attention to the fact that Mark interpreted the look in the words "being grieved at the hardening of their hearts." So remarkable is that declaration, so full of awful light, that one almost trembles to make any attempt at exposition. He looked at them with anger. Do not minimize the word, I pray you. Let us have done with all this soft sentimentality that imagines that Christ was incapable of anger. The word "anger" here suggests the sudden stretching out of the hand in a passion that is active and moves toward punishment.

But just as I am arrested by the flaming fire that flashes from the eyes of the looking Christ, fire that is evidently the fire of actual anger with these rulers, Mark leads me behind the anger in the mind of Christ and writes for me the strange and startling word, "being grieved." The Greek word there is a striking word, and this is the only place in the New Testament where it occurs. We find it again and again in Classical Greek, but nowhere else in the New Testament. Expositors and scholars have come to the conclusion that the only word by which you can convey its meaning is our word condolence. What is condolence? Just grief with. Condolence is in its truest sense that which I feel with you when you are in the midst of grief. The mystery deepens. He was grieved with whom? They were not grieved. They had no sense of shame. He was in sympathy with all that must inevitably come in the moment of their awaking to the unutterable folly and failure of their own attitudes. Grief with them was His fathoming of their sin to its deadly depth and its unutterable darkness. It was the Cross of Calvary, the passion of God manifesting itself in the midst of human failure.

Now observe the reason of that anger and that grief. Because of the hardening of their heart, not because of the hardness of their heart as the Authorized Version renders it, but, far more accurately, because of the hardening of their heart. It was not merely grief over a condition, it was grief over a process. The word "hardening" there is a word that describes a process, the process by which the extremities of a fractured bone are united by a callus. Not the hardness, but the hardening. They were hardening their own heart. If we see these men set in this light we see that they were allowing a false religious conviction to dry up the springs of emotion in the presence of the man with the withered hand; they were allowing prejudice in favor of a false conviction to stifle the conviction that He came to bring them, the conviction of what their attitude ought to be in the presence of all human need. That is the picture of the rulers.

How far are we guilty of their sin? We are verily guilty if for us the Sabbath stifles compassion, if we are so eager to fulfil the obligations of worship that we have no time to stretch out a hand to help the man who needs our help. If we feel that it is more important that we should pray than that we suffer to serve and save, then verily are we guilty. We are guilty of awful sin when worship fails to inspire service. If in coming to this house we have observed the duty of a day, and entered into the realm of rest, and there shall abide with us on the morrow no driving, inspiring impulse to rescue the perishing and care for the dying, then this hour of worship is the most disastrous instrument for hardening the human heart, deadening its emotion, destroying its spirituality. When slavery to the letter denies the spirit, when loyalty to the sanctity undermines the sanctions, then are we guilty of the very sin of these rulers.

In the measure in which we are guilty, Christ's attitude toward us is the same as was His attitude toward these rulers. He is grieved, He is angry, He is already on the threshold, leaving the synagogue; and we can recall Him only as we consent to violate professional regularity in the interest of the compassion of the Kingdom of God.

I pray that this great truth, burning, scorching, arresting the soul, may flame before us in the midst of all our worship. Not to minister, even to our own highest spiritual need, does this building exist; or, if it do, then verily it is a sepulcher; but for the sake of the man with the withered hand, for the sake of the man with the withered heart, for the sake of the man with the withered soul, paralyzed, incompetent, undone, that we may help, heal, remake; and to that end and that end alone Christ abides in the midst.

Mark 3:5. Ability For Disability.

Mark 3:5.

Ability For Disability.

Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored.

Mark 3:5

The theme in the sermon is Christ's ability in the presence of inability. Every miracle which Jesus wrought was a teaching, and that because the life of our Lord was unified. His was not a life separated into compartments independent of each other. Upon one occasion He said, "I am the truth," a very significant and remarkable statement made by no other teacher: not "I teach the truth," or "I declare the truth," or "I believe the truth," or even "I hold the truth"; but "I am the truth." In the life of Jesus, in His teaching, in His thinking, in His doing, there were none of the divisions which we are so apt to make. We divide between the secular and the sacred, but you cannot find any such division in the teaching of Jesus. To Him all life was sacred. Everything called by us secular when He touched it was revealed to be sacred. He did not divide His life or His thinking into business, recreation and rest. His whole life was effort homed in the will of God—essential truth. Therefore, whatever He touched, He touched from the same central conviction, and whatever He did, He did under the impulse of the same age-abiding principles. If He dealt with a man on the physical side of His being, He acted in exactly the same way as He would when dealing with a man on the mental or spiritual side. He lived and taught in the power of the fact of spiritual law in the natural world. I do not say, "natural law in the spiritual world"—that is an inversion of order—but "spiritual law in the natural world." All natural things were touched by Him from high altitudes of spiritual perception and spiritual power, and, consequently, whenever I take up the story of His dealing with a man on the physical side of his nature I see flaming through it His method in dealing with men in spiritual need, and therefore all the stories of Christ's dealing with physical disability have been used, and rightly, as illustrations of His method with spiritual need. In that way I take this old and familiar story tonight.

My message is to one particular condition of mind or, I might say, to one particular class of persons. I want to speak tonight to those who are fearful and afraid of committing themselves wholly to Christ because of their profound consciousness of some disability within their own life, and there are hundreds of such. I want to speak to the people who, if one should have to deal with them personally about spiritual things, would say, "Yes," to every declaration concerning the glory of Christ, to every affirmation of His perfect example and His gracious tenderness, and yet when urged to yield themselves to Him would utter some word telling of heartbreaking consciousness, of personal disability, and, consequently, of fear. My message is to the fearful. I do not mean at this moment that particular class of people who are afraid to follow Christ with the fear of cowardice. There are such.

It is with another kind and quality of fear that I desire to deal, the fear of the man who says, "Yes, I would like to be a Christian, but I am afraid that I would fail." It is a fear wholly wholesome and to be respected. I say that, not to encourage the fear, for, as God may help me, I want tonight to show you that there is no reason for it, although I respect it. The young man who looks me in the face and says, "I would like to be a Christian, but I am afraid I would dishonor His name in the business house where I am," I respect. "Happy is the man that feareth alway," said the preacher long ago; and he was right. It is the man of caution and of fear, conscious of his own disability, who, if we may but lead him into the true and simple relationship to Jesus Christ, which this little story reveals, will be true to Him, loyal to Him, and will stand against all the storms of opposition. That man is worth helping, worth saving. I want to help him if I can.

Let us try to see this thing as it happened, that we may deduce the spiritual values which lie hidden beneath it. The scene is the synagogue, and, as so often in the life of Jesus, His enemies unconsciously complimented Him. "He entered into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered. And they watched Him." Why did they watch Him? "Whether He would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse Him." I am not now interested in the ultimate purpose of these men, the mean and dastardly watching that they might catch Him and accuse Him. Mark this fact, Jesus came into the synagogue, and there was a man who most likely had been there again and again through weeks and months, perhaps years, at all the Sabbath services—a man whose right hand was withered, and immediately the enemies of Christ linked Him with the most needy man in the crowd. It is wonderful what an accurate sense of Jesus Christ His enemies had. They did not at all expect that He would be interested in the chief seat of the synagogue; but they did expect He would be interested in the one man there who was in direst need—the man whose hand was withered. They linked Him in their thinking with need, and they were perfectly right. Of all the men in the synagogue that this Christ of ours would seek out and attempt to help, that was the one man. If the story is a parable, let us apply it as we go. The one man He wants in this house tonight is the man who is in the direst, sorest need. I do not know where he sits or what his name is, but, my brother, if you are in the grip of some dastardly habit that is paralyzing you, you are the man He is after. He is not half so interested in me just now as He is in you. Blessed be His name—His hand is on me, His ordaining hand, or I dare not speak for Him. But I hear Him saying, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that 'which was lost.'" We cannot sift this great congregation. Thank God, we cannot! It is not our work. Hear this, my brother, hidden away in the crowd, as you say that your neighbor does not know how evil you are in your heart, how tight a hold habit has upon you—the Master sees you, and you are the man He is after. They linked Him with need. That is the first thing that flashes out of this story.

He knew their thoughts, and was angry with their attempt to entrap Him and the hardening of heart which was manifest, but He did not allow their criticism and opposition to interfere with His blessing. I hear Him saying, "Stand forth," and when the man stands in the midst He challenges them as to their attitude. Then I hear Him say to the man, "Stretch forth thy hand," and as I watch in wonder and amazement, "he stretched it forth," and as I look to see the result, "his hand was restored." Three things, then, demand our close attention. First, the command of Jesus, "Stretch forth thy hand." Secondly, obedience of the man, "He stretched it forth." Thirdly, the result, "His hand was restored."

Now hear the command, and I want to ask you to do something which is a little difficult. Imaginatively, will you come into this synagogue with me? Let us forget this building and the people who are about us and transport ourselves in imagination overseas and back through centuries. We are in the synagogue watching. Here is the man with the hand withered. I need not attempt to enter into any explanation. I will take the word as it stands, "withered," devoid of power. Paralyzed, if you will; palsied, if you will; but "withered," nerveless, devoid of feeling, unable to work. That is the picture. As you are looking at the man with the withered hand, I want you to keep looking at him; the one thing you must not do is look at the One who speaks to him. I want you, if you will, to turn your back upon Jesus Christ in contemplating this scene. We are back in the synagogue among all the people who were there, without all the accumulated testimony of the centuries to the power of Jesus Christ which is our heritage and inheritance. There is the man with the withered hand. The one thing he cannot do is to use that hand. It is powerless, nerveless, "withered." As I look at him with my back to Christ, I hear Christ say, "Stretch forth thy hand," and in a moment my mind is in revolt against Christ. I say to Him, "What do You mean by telling this man to stretch forth his hand? It is the one thing he cannot do. Are You mocking his impotence? Are You asking him in the presence of these people to attempt the thing which, if he could do, he would have done long ago? This is the man's disability. Why ask him to do the thing he cannot do?" I say to Christ as He stands there, "This thing is impossible, and therefore it is unreasonable."

I cannot say that save as I keep my eye fixed upon the man with the withered hand. Change your viewpoint. Once again let your imagination have play. Stand with me in the synagogue, and, being perfectly familiar with the disability of the man with the withered hand, for you have known him for years, look into the face of the One Who said, "Stretch forth thy hand." There is always a quality in these stories not present in the cold letter on the page. You must always bring into your thinking the fact of the Person of Christ. This is not imagination. It is proved by all the context and all that happened. If you will follow me, let me try to lead you in an attempt to do, not what the critics did, but what the man did. Put yourself in the place of the man for a moment, and look back straight into the eyes of the One Who has said, "Stretch forth thy hand." I dare venture to affirm that if you can do it, if you can imagine the man doing it, if you will forget the spiritual application and see merely the story, you will at once see what I am trying to bring you to. On that day I think I know the things which passed, flash after flash, through this man's mind. The first thing was this, "He says, 'Stretch forth thy hand.' I cannot do it." Then he looked straight back into those eyes, and I think he said in his heart, "He would not tell me to do it if He did not mean something that I cannot comprehend. I cannot do it, but I will do it because He says it. I shall will to do it." I think it is very likely that doubt lurked at the back of his mind while his will prompted obedience, but the will did prompt obedience. That is the important truth. Looking into the face of Jesus, that face which carried its own argument perpetually as all the stories reveal if you read them carefully, the man said in his heart, "I cannot, but I will." It is a strange contradiction, but that is what he said that day in his heart. The moment he said, "I will," to the command of Christ, he began to find the forces that he had lacked pulsating through the nerves that had made no response, and all strength was his, and he stretched out his hand.

Surely the picture carries its own teaching. First of all, it teaches me that when Jesus begins to touch any man's disability his perpetual method is that of bringing the man face to face with the one impossible thing in his life. He does not undertake a case, and undertaking it say, "Now we will

not notice the evil thing, we will begin outside it." He goes right to the heart of the paralysis, as it is manifest in the case of the man He is dealing with. I do not know what Christ is saying to you particularly, specifically; but I do know this, He is bringing you face to face with the one thing which has mastered you and kept you away from Him for so long. He does not stay to admire the hand you can use. That is not His business. He draws your attention and concentrates your thought immediately upon the power that is paralyzed.

You say to me, "In this great scheme of salvation is it not true that the whole man is paralyzed?" It may be so, but this is also true, that every man coming to Christ comes at first in his supreme weakness, in one point of supreme difficulty. If I may put the thing from another standpoint, men are kept away from Christ by some one thing, some pride of the eye, or some lust of the flesh, some habit of the life, some desire of the carnal nature, some one thing. If it were possible for all the mists to melt about us tonight, and we who have never yielded to Christ could be seen in the clear light of the absolute truth, it would be found that in every case there is one thing hindering. When Jesus said to the young ruler, "One thing thou lackest," He was not dealing with one case only, but with a case which stands forevermore as the type of those who need Him and yet refuse Him. His method is always that of bringing men face to face with the master paralysis of the life. "Stretch forth thy hand." The one thing you cannot do, do! The one thing you are unable to do at this moment, do that!

So far, all this appears to be not calculated to help, but to affright, the soul. Yet we must begin where Christ begins. Is it some habit which masters you? Christ says, "Abandon it now and forever." Is it some one power that is paralyzed in your life? Christ says, "Use it." You tell me your difficulty is right in the center of your being, with your will. You have no will power. Christ says, "Exercise your will and abandon yourself to Me by an act of will." Is your hand withered? Stretch it out. That is His perpetual method.

Now notice the obedience. "He stretched it forth." Let us try to see how this happened. I think there are three of the simplest things to be noticed. First of all, there was a deep conviction in the heart of the man that his hand was withered. In the second place, there was created in his mind, somehow, a profound conviction that Christ was not there to mock him, that Christ was there in some way to draw attention to his disability in order to turn it into ability. In the third place, by confession of faith, the man attempted the thing commanded, in obedience to the One commanding, and in the moment when he made that confession of faith by an act of will, he made contact with all the infinite resources of Christ, and there came, like a new dynamic, healing, helping life, and he did the thing he could not do. Again the picture is a parable.

There is no man here who will stretch out his hand in obedience to Christ save upon the basis of a profound conviction of need. If you do not know the withering of your power, if you have never yet felt the grip of habit upon you, if you are still unconscious of paralysis, I do not think I can persuade you to this Christ, at least, not by this address. It is to the man who knows his need that this story appeals. You must begin where this man began.

You have begun there; you are so far toward Christ. You know your need. I am quite willing to drop out of account all the rest of the congregation if I can talk to one man hidden away. You know your need. You say, "One power paralyzed? Why, all my high essential powers are paralyzed. In the grip of one habit? I am in the grip of more than I care to name. Incompetent in one power? My

whole life is paralyzed." You know your need. Now I pray you look into the face of Christ and think well of what He has proved Himself equal to do in all the centuries that have passed, and remember this, that what He has been doing He still is doing, and what He is doing for others He waits to do for you. In your heart is a great confidence in His ability to save certain men. Honestly and logically apply that confidence to your own need first. Say, if you will, that you cannot think how He can help you, but remember that He Who has helped scores of cases, hundreds, thousands of cases such as yours, is surely not limited in your lonely case among all the sons of need that the centuries have produced. May there come back to you confidence in His ability.

But neither conviction of need nor confidence in Christ's ability will bring healing. Healing can come only when a man, convinced of need, sure of His ability, obeys His command, and by an act of will surrenders to Him. Obedience determined upon by act of will, then contact is made with Him in His power, and the hand willed to be stretched forth because He commands it becomes the hand made whole as the other.

What was the last thing in the story? The result: "his hand was restored." Matthew tells us that his hand "was restored whole as the other." Here was a change from disease to health, from weakness to power, from uselessness to usefulness. All was wrought in the moment when in obedience to Christ, he did the impossible thing and found the power to do it communicated in the act of his surrender.

Here again the picture is a parable. In the moment in which a man, by obedience to Jesus Christ, abandons himself to Him, and then wills to do the thing he has never been able to do, in that moment, because Christ commands it, he makes contact with Christ's power, and there comes into his life a change more wonderful, more marvelous, spiritually, than was the change wrought in the hand of this man physically, and yet the same in essence. In the moment of your surrender and your obedience you will be changed from spiritual disease to spiritual health, from spiritual disability to spiritual ability, from spiritual uselessness to spiritual usefulness, for in all the withered powers there lie dormant possibilities which can be quickened only by the touch of the life and resources of Christ. Christ's life and resources can touch these powers only as man's will yields to Christ's will and he begins to use the activity of obedience. The moment that surrender is made, power is communicated, and the whole spiritual life is changed. That is the Gospel. It is not an explanation of all the mystery of the process or of the mystery of the communication of life, but that is practically exactly what Christ does for men. How many people there are here tonight who are conscious of spiritual disability, seeing the vision occasionally, but never able to realize it; feeling a passionate desire for communion, for purity, for holiness and spiritual power, yet always mastered by evil things! Before you leave this building tonight Jesus Christ can change your death into life, your disease into health, your blindness into vision, your incompetence into competence, your disability into ability, your "I cannot" into your "I can."

Unless Jesus Christ can do that, He cannot help me, and He cannot help hundreds and thousands of men. What Jesus Christ is waiting to do, and is able to do, and has been doing for men through all the ages, is not to present an ideal to them which they are to imitate, but to communicate life which enables them to realize the ideal they have seen. What Jesus has done is not to give men directions how to use the withered hand, but to communicate power to the withered hand that they may be able to use it under the impulse of indwelling life.

Is there anything else here? It is not written, but I think we may follow the story. What happened to the man afterward? What happened to his withered hand afterward, the hand no longer withered but whole, restored like the other? How can he maintain that hand in strength? I think I see him going away from Jesus that day saying, "Well, this is wonderful. See here, this withered hand is healed. I have not been able to lift anything, and now I can lift things easily. I have not positively felt life in it, and now it thrills with life." Then I can imagine him saying to himself, "I have obtained a great blessing today. I must take care of it." Then I can imagine that he takes that hand—healed, restored, made whole as the other—and carefully wraps it in bandages to preserve it, and places it somewhere in his bosom to take care of it, and keeps it there lest it should be harmed again. You see the folly of the whole supposition. You see the tragedy of the folly if you carry it out far enough. Let a man do that, and the hand will wither again, for life is maintained in strength by use. When Christ gives a man back his power it is not that the man may guard it, but that he may use it. That man will retain the life in its fullness by using it, by taking hold of weights and lifting them; if he is a mechanic, by taking up his tools, by going back to work. That is the meaning of the healing of the withered hand. Man is not to take care of his withered hand by bandaging it, but to preserve it in strength by using it for the thing for which it was first created.

That which we have ventured to add to the picture is also a parable. You say, "There was a time when I saw His face. There was a moment when I came back with my withered powers to the Christ, and in obedience to Him I commenced to use them, and He gave me back those powers; but I have lost them. My hand is withered again. Instead of power there is paralysis, which seems more deadly than of old." How have you lost your power? There may be many ways with which I am not dealing. One way of losing power is that of perpetually attempting to take care of it instead of using it. There are hundreds of people who lose their spiritual power by the very attempt they make to conserve it. I am not at all sure that the churches are not in danger of being filled with weak, nerveless, anemic men and women because they are so forever anxious to deepen their own spiritual life. I am not sure that the perpetual restless hurrying to and fro in the attempt to conserve personal spirituality is not a prolific source of spiritual paralysis. In the physical realm you have known some people who are forevermore carrying round a thermometer and taking their temperature. They have always got their hand on their pulse, and are wondering whether they are quite so well as they used to be. You know these are the people who are never in robust health. If you can make them break their thermometer and get their hand off their pulse and turn out and work, they will be better. What is true in the physical is true also in the spiritual. I want to warn you with all my heart against perpetual spiritual introspection. As Christ gives you new power use it in the world's wide field for Him. Think more of the need of the man who is down than of your own personal need. Think more of the enterprises of your Lord than of your own strength or weakness. Look less in, and more out, and up into the face of Jesus, and take every power He gave you when you trusted Him, and get out on to the field in ceaseless, hard toil for Him and His Kingdom. Then your spiritual life is likely to be deepened and strengthened and broadened, and instead of anemic and sentimental religion, we shall have full-blooded, robust, strenuous Christianity, which will lift the world and help and bless it. Do not put your restored hand into a sling. Use it. That is the meaning of this story.

In conclusion, I go back from that added word, that carrying out of the picture, a little beyond the actual happenings in the synagogue, and bring you to the central thought, for I want to help the

man who is afraid. Are you afraid because you know your own weakness? Your fear is wholesome. But now, I beseech you, for one moment take your eyes off your own weakness and fix them upon Christ. If you will do that, then hear Him say, "Stretch forth thy hand," and know this, when He tells a man to do the impossible thing, He does it knowing that He has in His gift all that is needed to help the man do it. The moment you obey He makes over to you the resources of His power.

I may fine down this whole message and bring it to this final word. Take your eyes off your own disability and fix them upon His ability. Doing that, obey Him, and by obeying Him make contact with His power, and you will feel the thrill and force of it and know its result in restoration of lost and paralyzed powers. Do not think of this as a sermon, but as a message to you. There are some here tonight who crossed this threshold with a reverent and absolutely sincere desire to sit in the quiet of the sanctuary and hear some message from on high, yet you know that in your life is the thing that spoils. You hate it as much as any other man hates it—and more; but you feel that it is your master, that it is useless trying. So it is, in your own strength! If you have got as far as that, you are not far from the Kingdom of God. But now, I beseech you, from your weakness look to Jesus' power; from your inability turn to all that He is able to do, and begin again, not to try in your own strength, but to trust and to obey. Though you make no sign of your surrender, if you will do so, in the moment of crisis that waits for you just over the threshold of the sanctuary at the close of the first day of the week, in the moment of crisis that waits for you tonight, you will find His strength made perfect in weakness, and the thing you could not do you will be able to do through Him Who strengtheneth you.

Mark 3:21. The Madness Of Jesus.

Mark 3:21.

The Madness Of Jesus.

And when His friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself.

Mark 3:21

The first matters that arrest our attention are that this was said by the friends of Jesus, and that it was intended to be a friendly saying. These friends of Jesus meant exactly what we sometimes mean when we say of some person in certain circumstances and for certain reasons, "Well, the kindest thing you can say of him is that he is insane!" It was the mother and the brethren of Jesus who thus went out to lay hold on Him and bring Him home, because they had come to the deliberate conclusion that He was beside Himself. Thus it was those who knew Him most intimately, as men and women know each other in this world by the light of ordinary observation, who said this thing. They had lived with Him through all those wonderful years as He advanced from babyhood to boyhood, and from boyhood to young manhood, and had wrought as a carpenter in the little workshop in Nazareth; and I venture to suggest that their criticism was in itself an assumption of His previous sanity. This was something new which caused them to say: "... He is beside Himself"; and so they went after Him to bring Him home. When our Lord commenced His public ministry, these people accompanied Him in that first year in which He traveled up and down between Galilee and Jerusalem and exercised His ministry for the most part in Judaea. When at the death of John the Baptist, He set His face toward the Tetrarchy over which Herod reigned, His brethren journeyed with Him. They were with Him in Capernaum and saw His first sign, that of the turning of the water into wine. There is no proof anywhere in the New Testament that they had any hostility to Him personally. I think it is proven that they were a long time before they became His disciples, and in the account of that very journey to Capernaum to which I have made reference, the evangelist is careful to tell us that He went with His disciples, His mother, and His brethren, thus separating the groups; but there is no evidence of hostility to Him. Later on in His ministry, His brethren endeavored to hurry Him to Jerusalem for manifestation and claim of Messianic authority, but even then there is no proof that there was any real hostility to Him in their hearts. So far as these records reveal, for a year prior to this event, they had not been with Him very much, if at all. As a matter of fact we have no record of their having been in close association with Him from the time of the sign at Cana. Now, the reports of His more recent doings had reached them, and this was the decision to which they had come as they heard about Him; they said, "... He is beside Himself"; and prompted by love for Him and friendship for Him, they traveled, as I think, from Nazareth to Capernaum, to bring Him home. In the Gospel of Mark the sequence is quite plain. He tells us in my text of the fact of this attitude toward Him, then goes back to give an account of what the Lord was doing in the house in Capernaum, and presently resumes the narrative and says that His mother and His brethren arrived seeking Him and sent Him a message;

and the people told Him, "... Behold, Thy mother and brethren without seek for Thee." They had come because they thought He was beside Himself and in great love for Him to try to persuade Him to go home and rest. It was then that He said, "Who is My mother, and My brethren," and looking at the little group of disciples added, "... whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." So much for the setting of the criticism.

I am going to ask you to follow me along two lines of consideration. First, let us consider the reasonableness of their suggestion, that He was beside Himself, and second, let us consider the reasonableness of what they counted His madness.

We must endeavor to put ourselves into their place and hear what they heard, in order to know what they meant when they said, "... He is beside Himself." Let us remind ourselves, therefore, of some recent events. When He left Judaea and set His face resolutely to Galilee, He first went to Nazareth, traveling from Judaea toward Capernaum, which henceforth was to be, for a period at any rate, His headquarters. In Nazareth He went into the synagogue, and I think we are justified in imagining that they were present that day, that they saw Him, and knew what He did. There in the little synagogue in Nazareth so familiar to Him, in which He had been brought up and which it had been His custom to attend, He read from the roll of the prophet Isaiah the Messianic prediction and then deliberately declared that that Messianic prediction was fulfilled that day in their experience because He was there in their midst. Then He taught them and in such fashion that they wondered at the grace of His words. Then, suddenly, the tones of His teaching changed, and He said to them: "You will say to Me,

Physician, heal Thyself; do here in Nazareth the things that we have heard Thou hast done in Capernaum." In answer to that supposed criticism He said: "... No prophet is acceptable in his own country." Then he began a discourse characterized by rebuke with the result that the attitude of the men of the synagogue changed toward Him. They passed from admiration to anger and took Him to the brow of the hill deliberately determining to murder Him. He passed quietly through them unharmed and left Nazareth.

Then there came news to them that one day in a house in Capernaum He had done a strange new thing. He had positively claimed the right to forgive sins. He had said to a sick man whom they had brought to Him, "... thy sins are forgiven"; and the rulers had objected: "Why doth this man thus speak?... he blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but one, even God?" Then the news reached them of His rupture with the rulers. That had occurred, and doubtless they knew it, in Jerusalem in some measure, but now it was repeated in this Galilean district. This rupture was due to two or three things. He seemed to be setting Himself to violate the Sabbath. He never violated the true sanctions of the Sabbath but those false sanctions that were destroying the true sanctions. Then He was neglecting ordinances; neglecting in company with His disciples the fast-days that were appointed; He was not fasting; and most appalling of all, He was consorting with sinners. All this was resulting in rupture with the rulers.

Then they heard that He had now, for some strange purpose which they could not understand, taken twelve of His disciples and appointed them to some close relationship with Himself; they were to leave all ordinary work, and they were now always to be with Him, and presently, He said He was going to send them out to preach and to do what He was doing, cast out demons. They heard all these things.

Look over the whole ground again from another standpoint, and mark the unusual elements in the things He was doing and saying. His teaching was characterized by the strangest sort of other-worldliness. He was always talking as though the other world were the supreme world, of the spiritual life as the supreme life. He had given the great Manifesto and men were talking about it, but He had said such strange things. In that Manifesto there were visions and pictures of a great social order; but then in the Manifesto He had talked about praying for things and getting things by praying for them. A most curious thing about the present hour is that thousands of men are glorifying the Manifesto of Jesus, as it describes a social order, who, nevertheless, ignore it when it speaks about obtaining things by prayer, about knocking at the gates of God.

Then they heard the stories about Him and were amazed at His lack of diplomacy. He was no diplomatist or He never would have broken with the rulers. If He really is the Messiah come to establish the Divine Kingdom, what is the meaning of this lack of diplomacy? Look at Him again, and see the strange disinterestedness of everything He did. What was he getting out of it all? Nothing! He was not even conserving His work, apparently. Then there was the fact of His ceaseless activity and His restlessness; He was never long at one place. Within the last two months, eminent Christian scholars—I will not deny their Christianity though for the life of me I cannot understand it—have been discussing this very question, the sanity of Jesus; and they are basing their discussion upon these very things. They say, "See how restless Christ was, crossing the sea and coming back again; one day filled with joy, the next day filled with sadness." Positively men are saying again in this day what these friends of the olden days were saying of Him, He was beside Himself! It is a suggestive fact and an interesting one, and it helps us to understand them. Then they heard of His carelessness about Himself. He had no time to eat, He was always giving Himself to others. They said, "... He is beside Himself."

The phrase itself is a very suggestive one. The English phrase suggests personal eccentricity. "Beside himself" suggests a person standing by the side of himself; that the man who ought to be at a given place is not there; he is beside himself, by the side of himself. That little English phrase carries exactly the sense of the Greek word meaning a person standing outside himself. The paradox is illuminative and suggestive. It describes a man eccentric instead of concentric; a man not quite responsible; the central inspirations of conduct are out of place somehow; there is something wrong with Him; He is beside Himself.

Now let me ask a question. Do we wonder at their conclusion? Much as I object in some ways to the form of my next question, I am going to employ it: If He came to England in bodily form, and did in England exactly what He did in Judaea, what would you say about Him? I do not ask you to answer, because I know; that is, unless you have the vision He had, unless you have been admitted to His deep secret. If you are living according to the spirit of this age, if you are mastered by the maxims of the hour and are swept by the wisdom of the day, you would say of Him, and you would think in the saying of it you were speaking in the most kindly way possible, He is beside Himself, He has lost His balance, He is eccentric, He is fanatical.

Let us now take our second line of inquiry. In contradistinction to everything I have suggested to you, I want to declare first of all the reasonableness of the life and ministry of Jesus. I shall ask you to observe first of all the worldliness of Jesus. I have spoken of His other-worldliness, now think of His worldliness. Remember His worldliness was manifested in such ways that the men of that age

said of Him, "A gluttonous man and a winebibber; the friend of publicans and sinners!" No one will imagine that I am saying that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber; that was but the superlative way in which hostility spoke of the fact that He was not an ascetic, that He lived an ordinary human life, that He entered into home interests, that He was preeminently worldly; of course, not in our modern theological sense. He loved this world, its flowers, its birds, its children, its mountains, its desert places; He was so worldly, so near to the heart of nature, that He was not afraid of loneliness. He was a Man Who walked amongst men, one of their own number, and so free from anything that marked Him as spiritually aloof, that sinning men and women crowded after Him; and they never crowd after Pharisees, even today. It is the human touch that arrests the human race.

In the second place, I ask you to observe that His methods were characterized by unceasing beneficence. He went about doing good. Everything He did was good in that sense. His activity was that of ceaseless benevolence and beneficence; the doing of good, not merely the wishing of good. Wherever He went He was doing good, helping someone always. All His signs were signs which brought blessing to men. I have made reference already to John's question, "... Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" Carefully consider His answer: "... Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." Let me not spoil that by adding anything to it.

I ask you to look at Him once more and to observe not only His worldliness and the beneficence of His activity, but His dignity, His quietness, His unobtrusiveness. He did not strive, nor cry aloud, nor lift up His voice in the streets. The crowds knew Him from north, south, east, and west, but not because He was clamant, and noisy, and ostentatious. They were drawn by the things He was doing, the quiet things. If you journey with Him imaginately through the fields, and the walled-in towns, and the country towns, and the great cities, you are impressed with the quiet self-possession of this Man; there seems to be no touch of insanity about Him.

Look again, and let us try to see what He saw. Let us inquire, and we may do it at this distance quite reverently, what were His inspirations, what lay behind all His methods. Whether these strange, wonderful things of familiarity with the world, of perpetually doing good to others, of quiet dignity; or those strange things of disinterestedness, or unceasing and restless movement to and fro make Him seem sane or insane. What lay behind them all? I declare to you that the inspiration of all the life of Jesus was threefold. First, His knowledge of God and the real meaning of the Kingdom of God; second, His knowledge of man and of the real meaning of human failure; third, His knowledge of Himself and of the real meaning of His mission in the world.

His knowledge of God and of His Kingdom. His knowledge of God as truth and grace, as the God of infinite holiness and light and the God of infinite compassion and love. His knowledge of the Kingdom of God. He saw through everything to the Divine purpose and the Divine possibility. He saw the Kingdom of God, the empire over which God reigned and ruled and in which all were submitted to Him, and He knew that it would be a Kingdom of righteousness, of peace and of joy, a Kingdom in which there should be no place for oppression nor cry of distress. Wherever He went He saw that Kingdom of God for He saw the God Whose Kingdom He so passionately desired.

That meant that He saw clearly man and his failure. He saw man in his essential relationship to God and in his capacity for God, and, therefore, in his unutterable ruin. There is nothing more remarkable in these stories than the fact that this is what Jesus saw. He saw humanity as no other man of His time or of all time has seen it, save only those who share His life and have His vision. Matthew admits us at one point to the secret. I quote again the old familiar words, "... Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them...." Why? "... because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." No one else was moved with compassion. Why not? Because no one saw their ruin for no one else saw their possibility. Wherever He looked He saw men and saw them ideally, in their true relationship to His Father, saw them in the breadth and beneficence of the Divine Kingdom, and saw that they were not there and knew what they were missing. Instead of righteousness, He beheld iniquity; instead of peace, He found strife; instead of joy, He saw misery. The inspiration of all the doing of Jesus was His contentment with the perfection of the Kingdom of God and His consequent discontent with everything in the midst of which He found Himself.

Then superadded to that clear vision, that double vision, there was that constant consciousness that mastered Him, to which incidentally He made reference again and again. Every evangelist records the fact, and John becomes rhythmically, monotonously, insistent upon recording the fact that He spoke of Himself as sent by God. He was the Son of God, but He was sent by God into the world for the accomplishment of a mission which He Himself did in varying phrases clearly declare: "... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"; "... the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Time and again such speech passed His lips revealing His own inner consciousness. Thus, in a world characterized by failure, He proceeded to His work and resolutely refused to adopt the methods of human wisdom and human strength and human cleverness which had resulted in all the chaos in the midst of which He moved; He walked the ways of men, Himself one Man perfectly responsive to that Kingdom of God which He saw; and He lived perpetually obeying its behests and carrying out its commands and doing the will of God.

Do we wonder at His other-worldliness when we think of Him as holding perpetual communion with His Father, seeing through all the mists the established Kingdom? Do we wonder at His worldliness as we recognize that this earth with all its misery was still Divinely beautiful to Him, so that, as He Himself did say, God clothes the grass of the field, and garbs the lily with more delicate beauty than that in which Solomon in all his glory was arrayed? A sparrow falls and sickens and dies, and has as Comrade in its dying, God. When that man bending to his toil, overwhelmed with it, bearing the burden and heat of the day, wipes from his brow the sweat and dust of toil, and with it some hair of his head, God has numbered that hair! Nothing was little or away from God. Do you wonder at His other-worldliness, that all His speech took on the accents of the eternities, and that His brow was ever so high lifted as to catch the flaming glories of the spiritual? Do you wonder at His love of the world, that all its trees and flowers and birds and children were near and dear to Him? In this world He knew nothing of divorce between the material and the spiritual. For Him every common bush was ablaze with God, and He saw men sitting round plucking blackberries! Do you wonder at His worldliness or at His other-worldliness? Do you wonder at His freedom from

diplomacy when diplomacy simply meant arrangements between men who had forgotten God and did not know Him? Do you wonder that once when in the midst of lamentation and complaining at the unreasonableness of His own age, He thundered against the persistent rebellion of the cities in which He had done His work, His lamentation and thunder suddenly merging in the worship of God and His words, "... I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes..."? Do you wonder at His disinterestedness? Are you amazed at the ceaselessness of His activity, its restlessness, and His carelessness of Himself?

He was concentric. He was the only Man of the vast multitudes of His day Who was not beside Himself. It was they who were beside themselves; they who, because no longer related to the center, God, were no longer in true relationship as within themselves. That is why He said to them in differing phrases, yet again and again the same thing, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it." He was the lonely concentric; all the rest were eccentric. He was the one Man not beside Himself, and therefore by the standards of all men who were beside themselves, beside Himself. In an eccentric world, a concentric man will ever seem eccentric.

It did not end with Jesus. I most reverently say it did not begin with Him. I read you a strange Psalm. It is one of the finest pieces of satire and irony in Hebrew poetry. Mark the movement of the psalmist as he laughs at the wisdom of the world, amassing wealth and passing to Sheol, and then exults in the wisdom of the simple-hearted, that rest in the wisdom and love of God. I repeat that to an eccentric world, the concentric man ever appears eccentric. It was so before Jesus came. It was so after He came. There was a day when Paul was talking to two kings and a queen, and one of the kings burst in upon the discourse saying, "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning doth turn thee to madness." Who was mad; Paul or Festus? The Pope of Rome said that Luther ought to be in bedlam. The men of his own church said Xavier was mad. All England laughed at the unutterable folly of John Wesley. Many people thought William Booth was not quite sane! It has run through all the centuries. Men concentric, who have seen God and a vision of His Kingdom and have been mastered by the passion for that Kingdom, are ever considered beside themselves.

So I would commend to all this passion of Jesus, this worthy passion. To be thought eccentric with Him, to be thought fanatical in matters of religion, is a high compliment as angels watch and listen.

It is a worthy passion this, for it includes all others that are truly noble; all passion of protest against that which is wrong and oppressive, lies within this passion of our Lord for the Kingdom. All passion of endeavor that constructs and builds and toils and suffers, and has no time to eat, is en-folded within this passion of Jesus for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

It will always bring this charge of madness upon those who share it. The world is still self-centered, and in its eyes God-centered men are still the eccentrics of the world. When Paul reached Thessalonica, he had not been there very long before the men of Thessalonica said of him and of his friends, "... These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." It is exactly the same idea. Let me suggest a sermon on the text; "... These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." I will give you the divisions. First, the world is down-side up; second, and therefore, the men who are turning it upside down are turning it right side up; but third, and

consequently, the men who are living in the world will think they are turning it upside down. That is the whole business.

Hear me as I say, I hope not censoriously, what the church of God supremely lacks today is this kind of passion. It is not the passion of madness, of frenzy; it is the burning passion that enables the church of God to cooperate with God when the wisdom of the world laughs at it. That is the true passion. We are not quite sure today that these methods of Jesus are the best methods. Are we not a little in danger of being over-busy in conferring about the adaptation of religious thought to the modern mind and the adaptation of religious organizations to modern conditions? I am somewhat tired of modern things, and that because the things of the Christ are ancient and modern. Christ told His disciples that they were to bring forth out of their treasure-house things new and old, and in proportion as we walk with Him we shall be compelled to the foolish things of the world wherewith God confounds their wise things.

That little bit of work you did this afternoon does seem rather old-fashioned and out of date; that class of children that fidgeted all the while is just a little behind the times, is it not? A thousand times No! That is building for eternity and hastening the coming of the Kingdom of God. That call you made that no one knows about save you and the sick one, the flowers you took, the word of cheer, the tender approach to a soul that asked how it was between that soul and God; all that is Christly work.

I am not undervaluing other methods. God will send some of His workers into the House of Commons, and the more the better. God will send some of His workers on to Parish Councils and Town Councils, and we need them all. But let us not undervalue the foolish, simple, wandering, restless methods; the method that does things as they come and never draws up a program. That is the whole story of the life and ministry of Jesus. He did things as He went, as He passed by, as He went out, as He was by the sea. In the midst of preaching somebody disturbed Him, and He halted His preaching and went after Jairus; and on the way with Jairus a woman touched Him, and He left Jairus on one side to attend to the woman and then went on again. He did the next thing that came, because to those eyes the Kingdom was ever present. That touch of the hand, that glance of the eye, and that tone of the voice, all spoke of it and brought its power nearer. He was content to wait, as He still is waiting, till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. That will never be done by the clash of arms, or by human cleverness; but by Christ and His comrades, of whom, until the last victory is won, the world will say they are beside themselves. So if we know the wisdom that is from above, we shall sing with Wesley:

Fools and madmen let us be,

Yet is our sure trust in Thee.

Mark 3:28-29. Unpardonable Sin.

Mark 3:28-29.

Unpardonable Sin.

Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.

Mark 3:28-29

It is impossible to overestimate the solemnity of these words of our tender and compassionate Redeemer, yet they have always been considered difficult of interpretation, and strange, I had almost said wild, theories have been based upon them. I personally believe that much of the difficulty of interpretation is due to lack of the childlike heart, and a simple method in approaching them.

I think I speak for all Christian workers—and by Christian workers I mean all preachers of the gospel, or teachers, or individual workers who know what it is to come into personal dealing with men and women about spiritual things—when I say that at some time or another someone has come to you and told you that they fear they have committed the unpardonable sin.

After some years of such work, and after having met with very many such cases, I have come to this deliberate conclusion, that when a person is obsessed by the idea that he or she has committed this sin, such obsession is the result of Satan's attempt to harass a saint, rather than his effort to destroy a sinner. If that may seem a somewhat strange thing to say, I want quite simply to attempt to make clear what I mean by it. I speak now entirely from experience, and experience may not be trusted as infallible foundation for dogmatic statement. Speaking entirely from experience, I declare that I have never yet found a man or woman, hard and rebellious and determined in sin, possessed by that particular fear. It is always the fear of the sensitive soul, always the fear of some trembling child of God. I do not say that it is always the case, but I do say that I have never met an exception. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that Satan never destroys men by making them believe that, but he does harass the saints by attempting to make them believe that.

A method I have invariably followed for many years in dealing with those who come to me and say that they have, or that they fear they have committed the sin against the Spirit which has no forgiveness, is that of asking them this question: If you have committed this sin, will you be good enough to tell me what it is? I have never yet found a person possessed of the fear that they have committed it who could tell me what it is.

Notwithstanding all this, the words are full of solemnity. Jesus uttered no idle words. No words that fell from His lips are more full of startling arrest than these. No words are more calculated, or ought to be more calculated, to make men pause and listen and think, and search their own hearts:

"Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." Immediately, let me mention one matter, so that I need not pause to refer to it again. The change in the versions is all-important. In the Authorized Version it reads, "Is in danger of eternal damnation" or condemnation. Here is one of the cases where there is absolutely no doubt that the text was incorrect. The translation resulted from the fact that the King James translators followed the translation of Tyndall, which translation was based upon the text of Erasmus, and there is no question that at this point it was at fault. Now that other texts are at our disposal, it has been found that Jesus said a far more solemn thing, a far more searching thing than that man blaspheming the Spirit is in danger of eternal judgment, punishment, or condemnation. He declared that such a person is, not in danger of, not even guilty of, in our sense of the word guilty, but to be more literal and in this case far more accurate, he that committeth this sin is in the grip of an eternal sin. Such is the strong and startling word of our Lord.

I detain you yet another moment by way of introduction as I ask you to remember that this most solemn thing was said in immediate relation to perhaps one of the most gracious things that ever fell from His lips, and that is why I read the twenty-eighth verse as well as the twenty-ninth. Hear again the twenty-eighth verse, "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." Not all their sins may be forgiven, but shall be forgiven. It is one of the greatest words He ever uttered about forgiveness, a word in which He virtually declares that the value of His Cross covered the whole race, and that the redemption He provided was for all men; that sins, not may be, but shall be forgiven; except that sin which He here described as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

We shall better understand the meaning of our Lord if we interpret His words in the light of the whole Bible. Therefore I want in very brief words to cover a large area in the next few minutes, as I remind you of what the Bible teaches concerning the Holy Spirit of God and His mission in human history. Having considered that it will be pertinent for us to inquire reverently, "what is the sin against the Holy Spirit." From these two lines of consideration we may draw lessons of practical application which shall be by the help of God for our own profit in this evening hour.

What does the Bible teach about the Holy Spirit? No one can be at all acquainted with this Library without knowing that the Spirit of God is referred to from the beginning to the end; yet that there is a distinct difference between the teaching of the New and the teaching of the Old Testament. They are not contradictory. They are complementary; yet if I had no New Testament, the doctrine of the Spirit's activity would be other than it is. Go back in memory to your Old Testament, and passing over it in rapid survey, think of what you find in it concerning the Spirit. His work is referred to in the first chapter of your Bible, the Spirit brooding over chaos, the agent through whom the will of God was wrought out so that cosmos came out of chaos, light from darkness, order out of disorder. I pass along over the pages and I find ever and anon, some individual at a crisis who, for a special purpose is spoken of as acting in cooperation with the Spirit. The Spirit was with Joseph and he was able to explain dreams. The Spirit fell upon Bezaleel, and he was able to be a cunning worker in gold for the beautifying of the house of God. The Spirit laid solemn imprisonment upon Balaam, and he was compelled to utter blessing when he desired to mutter cursing. The Spirit clothed Himself with Gideon, and Gideon became the deliverer of his people from Midianitish oppression. The Spirit fell upon Saul, and even he for a time was among the prophet. The Spirit spoke through the prophets, gave them visions and voices, and made them the messengers of Jehovah. You will

notice, moreover, through all the Old Testament, that the Spirit was forever associated, according to the thinking of these men, with Jehovah Himself, working with Him in wonderful fellowship. I may quite reverently borrow the language of the letter to the Hebrews concerning the method of revelation in the past, to describe the method of the Spirit in the Old Testament as "at sundry times and in divers manners." The Spirit fell upon men, equipped them, passed away from them. As I look back over the history which the Old Testament reveals, I see the Spirit of God interpreting the will of God to men when they specially needed it, equipping men for their work in crisis. No system of teaching is given concerning His work, but He is often referred to; so I find through my Old Testament the presence of the Spirit in the history of men.

I come to the New Testament and immediately find that I am in a new age. One Man is presented to my view, born of the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit; one Man Who passes before my view from Bethlehem to Calvary, all the while in living cooperation, fellowship, partnership, and harmony with the Spirit of God. During the last days of the life of that Man, I listen as He teaches the group of His disciples truth concerning the Spirit of God, to which men had never listened before. He told them distinctly what the mission of the Spirit should be, when presently, as the result of His own work, that Spirit should be given to men. He made a distinction which I want you to note, the Spirit would no longer visit them fitfully, but He would abide with them forever. He would no longer come to them for special revelation of the will of God, but He would remain to tell them the secrets of God in the commonplaces of life as well as at crises. He would no longer anoint them merely for some hour of crisis, some day of battle, some delicate piece of workmanship, but He would be with them all the days and all the hours, and in all places, in all the activities of life.

Jesus declared that the Spirit should be sent from the Father through Himself, as the result of His own work. He declared that the work of the Spirit should be that of making Him, Christ, living and real in the experience of men. His work was to be Christocentric in the profoundest sense of that word. To the disciples of Jesus, He was to reveal Jesus when He was absent in bodily presence, bringing to their minds all the things He had said, leading them into all the truth concerning the Christ. He was to be the advocate of the absent Christ in the lives of His disciples, and so their Comforter, strengthening them, disannulling the orphanage which they would experience when they lost the vision of His face and the sense of His human nearness.

He also declared that the Spirit would have a special mission in the world beyond His mission to the Church: "He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged."

We, therefore, have not to consider the ministry of the Spirit prior to the coming of Christ. We have to consider the ministry of the Spirit subsequent to that coming, in its new aspects, new relationships, new meanings, and new purposes, all of which result from the mission of the Christ.

Therefore, let it be understood that the work of the Spirit in the world is not to make Himself the consciousness of the Church, but to make Christ the consciousness of the Church. The work of the Spirit in the world is not to present Himself, or offer Himself to the world. The work of the Spirit in the world is to present Christ, to offer Christ to the world.

The Church of God all over the world is confronting a very subtle peril, that of putting the Spirit of God in a place of prominence that is entirely unwarranted by New Testament teaching. The movement associated with the phrase, the gift of tongues, at the present time has upon it the hallmark of hell. Let there be no mistake about this. The terror of it to my heart is that some of the sweetest saints of God, the very elect, are being deceived, because they lack this fundamental intelligence of what the mission of the Spirit really is. If the emphasis of any movement is on the Spirit and on gifts that prove the presence of the Spirit, know this, that according to the teaching of the Christ, that movement is out of harmony with the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to reveal Christ. The Spirit is the hidden Worker making the Christ Himself the supreme and overwhelming consciousness of believing hearts, the one and only Saviour of men who need salvation.

What then is the sin against the Holy Spirit? The answer to that inquiry can only be given as we thus understand the ministry of the Spirit. That is why I have taken so long in attempting briefly, yet nevertheless carefully, to declare what the work of the Spirit is. The sin against the Spirit is that of persistent, willful rejection of His testimony concerning Christ. There are other passages in the New Testament which have created as much anxiety, as much doubt in the hearts of some Christian people, as has this great and wonderful word of Jesus. They are all passages that refer to the sin which has no forgiveness. You will find two of them in the letter to the Hebrews, one in the sixth chapter, verses four to six, "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then apostatized," "fell away" I have upon the page, but I use the anglicized form of the Greek word because it helps us to understand the meaning of falling away, "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance: seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." It is quite evident that the sin for which there can be no repentance and for which there can be no forgiveness is that of rejection of the Son of God, as revealed and interpreted by the Spirit in that dispensation which had not dawned when Jesus uttered the warning, and which did not dawn until the day of Pentecost. If you turn on in this same letter to the tenth chapter you find another warning full of solemnity, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy," mark the sin, "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." I know there are other difficulties of interpretation and of exposition surrounding these two passages in Hebrews, with which I am not now proposing to deal. I have only read them that I may bring you face to face with the central thought they contain about the sin for which there can be no repentance and no forgiveness. What is the sin? The crucifixion of the Son of God afresh. The trampling under foot of the blood of the covenant, the counting of it as an unholy thing. How then do men commit that sin? By doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace." To state the case as from the other side. What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? The sin of deliberately refusing to accept His testimony. The sin of deliberately rejecting Christ in that hour in which Christ is presented to the conscience and will by the ministry of the Spirit, so that the conscience is sure of Christ, and the will is constrained toward Christ. Conscious and willful rejection of the Spirit's revelation of

Christ is the only sin for which there never can be forgiveness.

Let me put this in another form. Had these men to whom Jesus spoke committed the sin? Certainly not. They were in the neighbourhood of sin. They had been undoubtedly convinced, in the presence of His work, of superhuman power, and they had charged it upon an unclean spirit. They were not guilty of the unpardonable sin. They had not committed blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, but He warned them. If you will suffer your sense of history to help you for a moment, you will see how presently the hour came in which He departed from the world, having left behind Him the circumstances of straitening and limitation. When the Spirit came to the disciples they knew Christ better than they had ever known Him when He had been amongst them in bodily form. On the day of Pentecost when the Spirit fell, sinners in Jerusalem came to a consciousness of the meaning of the mission of Christ which they had never gained while Christ Himself stood in bodily presence amongst them and preached. He warned these men, saying in effect, you may blaspheme My name, speak against the Son of God, and all your sin of that kind shall be forgiven, but there is a new ministry to commence, a new unveiling of My presence and power to be given to you, the Spirit is coming to convict, mark the word, "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." If you disobey that testimony, if you refuse to yield when the Spirit interprets the meaning of My mission, then there can be no forgiveness, because in that hour you reject the Saviour and forgiveness for all sin. The sin against the Holy Spirit then is that of final and willful rejection of the Lord Christ as He is presented to the heart of man by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That sin is committed only when the Spirit is finally withdrawn from human life, and the Spirit of God is never withdrawn from human life until the choice has been made distinctly and irrevocably in full possession of all light. Never until that solemn and awful hour is the Spirit withdrawn, and never until that hour can man have committed the unpardonable sin.

Follow me patiently, one step further. That sin cannot be committed during probation. It is not a sin of an hour. It is not a sin of a moment. It is not a sin of an act. It is a sin of attitude, definitely, persistently taken, until the choice has become destiny. When does that hour come? It cannot come while men are still in the midst of light, in the midst of the operation of the Spirit. It never comes until man crosses the boundary between this life and the life which lies beyond. This is not the day of vengeance. It is the day of grace. I may have refused, disobeyed over and over again, time after time, but the Spirit does not leave me, it does not abandon me. I am here to make this affirmation to you with all confidence, basing it upon the whole revelation of the Bible, the Spirit never abandons a man while this life lasts. God has set a limit to probation. At that hour when man passes out of the present into the larger life that lies beyond, he crosses the boundary line.

Have you ever heard the Scripture of the Old Testament quoted, "My Spirit shall not always strive," in order to declare that it is possible for a man with whom the Spirit has been striving for ten, twenty, thirty years, to be abandoned, so that he may live another ten years, lost. I declare that there is no warrant in Scripture for any such affirmation. Take that word, "My Spirit shall not always strive." It was a word of the old economy, as the Bible teaches us. It was a word used in the days when Noah preached righteousness before the flood came. When did the Spirit cease to strive with the men of Noah's day? Never until God shut Noah in, and shut them out, and the day of judgment immediately supervened. While he remained a preacher of righteousness, the Spirit was

still striving with men. Lifting the ancient figure into our own age, remember this: God's Spirit never ceases to woo men until the hour comes when crossing over the line they enter upon the destiny they have created for themselves by their own choosing. If there has been no obedience to light, no response to the Spirit, then there is no forgiveness. It is the one and only sin for which there can be no forgiveness. All other sins shall be forgiven except that of refusing forgiveness by refusing the Saviour; the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, refusing His ministry, shutting the heart against His appeal, declining to answer the wooing tenderness of His ministry, or the warning severity thereof. If a man shall so choose and so rebel then the sin becomes age-abiding, it becomes eternal sin and there can be no forgiveness.

Yet hear me once again. Every time in which you refuse the Spirit's ministry you are sinning toward that sin. The final hour will never come while this life lasts. Where is that dividing line? Who shall mark it out for himself? Who shall know but that the Spirit so often refused will not be compelled to end His ministry ere the light of morning breaks because the day of opportunity shall have passed, as you shall have stepped from this room of time into the spacious halls of eternity and the spiritual world. The solemnity of the word needs to be upon our hearts. It may be that in very deed I am close to the border line, and so He who said, and said in virtue of His passion, in virtue of His cross and shame and dying, that all sins shall be forgiven, also said that if a man will not receive forgiveness by the ministry of the Spirit then there is no forgiveness, neither can there be, for the sin becomes age-abiding.

I read to you the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. You remember when Christ passed into the synagogue and read the great words that indicated His own Mission, He read partly from that sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. Have you noticed where He ceased reading? "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and He closed the book and handed it back to the reader in the synagogue. If you will turn to the book of Isaiah you will find that our punctuation puts a comma where He stopped, and the next sentence is this, "and the day of vengeance of our God." But He did not read that, because He had not come then for the day of vengeance. He had come to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Over nineteen hundred years have run their course, and the comma is still there, but it is only a comma. He will come again with flaming feet for "the day of vengeance of our God." Did you notice the next phrase in Isaiah? "To comfort all that mourn." That is not a mistake. Do not imagine that the prophet has lost his way in rhetoric. It is scientific. It is systematic revelation on the highest line. "The acceptable year of the Lord"! We are in it yet, men, women and children! Beyond it the day of vengeance, of judgment, the day of the Lord, of fire and sword, thank God, upon all oppressors, and upon all wickedness. Beyond that again is the comforting of the mourning, and the establishment of the Kingdom.

Why do I refer to all this in this particular connection? Because the principle is one that I want you to discover at this point. Jesus in this evening hour, in this sanctuary, to every man, woman and child, is fulfilling His ministry by the Spirit in proclaiming liberty to the captives and opening the prison doors to such as are bound, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. There is only a comma there, and beyond it the day of vengeance of our God. Where does the comma end in your experience? When you pass out of the acceptable year. When you pass out of the gracious

time, which the writer of the letter to the Hebrews describes by an ordinary word and which he dignifies with a capital letter, "Today." Ere morning breaks, some of us may have crossed the line. If to the end we have refused the ministry of the Spirit, have declined to let Him break chains and open prison doors and set us free, then mark the word of Jesus, we are in the grip of eternal sin. There is no forgiveness. We pass out into the darkling void where we have lost the vision of God and the possibility of fellowship, and have become the companions of our own sins, dwellers with lust, that is, hungry, having no bread. The day of vengeance of our God has broken for no man or woman in this house.

Troubled heart, has the enemy been saying to you that you have committed the unpardonable sin? Nail that lie down in the presence of the Saviour. The fact that you are here; that your feet found their way here, even though you are filled with anxiety; the fact of the tender pain of conscience lest you may not be right with God; these are supreme evidences of the ministry of the Spirit wooing you toward the Saviour, attempting to persuade you to allow Him to loosen the bonds, unbar the doors, break the chains, and set you free. It is the acceptable year of the Lord.

Yet I could not be true to this text if I did not let my final word be its warning note. Forgiveness for all sin and blasphemy, but if I will not have forgiveness, then I commit the unpardonable sin, the sin of refusing the Christ Whom the Spirit presents. No one has committed it. Many may commit it ere a day or a week has passed. No one need commit it. Harden not your hearts while it is called Today, but answer the ministry of the Spirit Who is not making Himself the supreme consciousness of your thinking, but presents to you the Christ. Yield yourself to the Christ presented by the Spirit, and the Spirit will enter your life bringing with Him the value of Christ's death, the virtues of Christ's life, the victory of Christ's indwelling, and you will find your way into fellowship with God for life and for service.

May we feel the constraint of the Christ through the Spirit, and feeling it, yield to it, and be delivered from the sin that lays its eternal grip upon us so that there can be no forgiveness.

Mark 6:3; 6:14; John 6:15; Mark 6:49. Four Mistakes About Christ.

Mark 6:3; 6:14; John 6:15; Mark 6:49.

Four Mistakes About Christ.

Is not this the Carpenter...?

Mark 6:3

John the Baptizer is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him.

Mark 6:14

Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force, to make Him King, withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone.

John 6:15

... they, when they saw Him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out.

Mark 6:49

We are often troubled about Christ, that so many different views of Him are held, and yet that is almost the inevitable sequence of the wonder of His Person. The fierce conflicts that have raged around the Christ—as to Who He is, whence He came, what is the real meaning of His mission—all are due to the finite nature of the mind of man in its attempt to grasp the infinite wonder and glory of the Person of the Lord Christ.

We have read these chapters in order that we may see that exactly the same things were true in the time when He was in the world. He was manifested among men, Himself a man, but a perpetual enigma to men. In this one brief chapter, brief by comparison with the whole fact of His ministry, Jesus is described as a carpenter, as a prophet, as a king, and as a phantom. These opinions were all wrong and they were all right. In every one of them there was an element of truth; but in each case, only one truth being recognized and discovered, false deductions were made. The mistake in each case was due to the limiting of Christ which resulted from an attempt to express all the truth concerning Him in the language of one particular manifestation of His presence and His power.

Let us then consider first the opinions that were given here; second, the mistakes that were made here; in order, third, to discover the lessons that are suggested here.

We need not tarry very long in examining the opinions. The story is familiar to all of us. Yet let us take time to recall the surroundings in each particular case. In the first, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary,..." we have the opinion of His kinsfolk, the opinion of the people who in all likelihood were most perfectly acquainted with Him within the narrow circle of His human life. Eighteen years of that life had been spent in Nazareth. There He had grown up in the sight of the

men and women of that little township just off the great highways, but yet so near to them that the men and women living there were in all probability familiar with the things happening in Jerusalem and the towns adjacent, for these highways between Jerusalem and other great centers lay at the foot of the hill. Nazareth was a small township, so small that we are led to imagine from the actual wording of the criticism, that Jesus of Nazareth was the one carpenter; "Is not this the carpenter...." They knew Him perfectly well. He had grown up in their midst. They had seen the natural and beautiful boy advance to young manhood, until He came to be about thirty years of age. Now, after a brief absence, He had gone back, as a Teacher. It was not at all strange that this young man should begin to speak. The strange fact was the method and the marvel of His teaching. The picture is very striking. In that little synagogue, the men who knew Him best, looking, listening, and amazed, until, interrupting His speech, as the story suggests, they said, "Whence hath this Man these things?" What is the power that lies behind this strange manifestation of wisdom and these strange and wondrous works of which we hear in Nazareth? Then they began to account for Him, "Is not this the carpenter...?" And observe how particular they were to place Him, how particular to show that they knew all about Him, "The son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us?..." If we would know the tone and temper in which the question was asked, we must include the next sentence, "And they were offended in Him." They stumbled over Him, because they could not understand Him.

In that criticism they declared a truth that we are always thankful they did declare, that Jesus was a carpenter. They knew Him, as a man who wrought with His hands for the support of His own earthly life, through the larger part thereof. "Is not this the carpenter...?" they were quite right, and they were sadly wrong.

Let us pass to the next scene. The fame of Him was spreading through all the country round about, increased by the mission of His apostles. They had been sent out, and we are told that they cast out devils and anointed many sick with oil and healed them. The fame of Jesus was thus spreading, and it reached the court of Herod, and Herod immediately said, "John the Baptizer is risen from the dead...." Herod had not seen Him. Herod never did see Him until the final hour, and then he never heard His voice. Christ declined to speak to him. But he heard the story of His power. These words of Herod reveal the impression made by the story of the work of Christ on a man who was immoral. To satisfy the vengeful nature of a wanton, Herod had beheaded John. An evil man can behead a prophet of God, but he cannot bury him. The prophet will follow him and will be with him in the night. If there is blood on your hand, you can say with Lady Macbeth, "Out, damned spot," but you cannot cleanse that hand. Herod heard of a prophet, heard of wonders wrought, and all the superstition in his guilty nature mingling with the moral cowardice of the man, he said, "John the Baptizer is risen from the dead...." The first opinion was due to the unfairness of the jealous. The second was due to the cowardice of the immoral.

Then we come to the story of that wonderful feeding of the five thousand, a kingly act in the true and full sense of the word kingly. It is said here of Christ, a thing so often repeated of Him, that He saw the multitudes, and He was moved with compassion for them. Why? Because they were as sheep without a shepherd, and it would be quite as accurate to say, a nation without a king; for God's kings are all shepherds. The true qualification for kingship in the economy of God, as the Bible reveals from beginning to end, is the shepherd qualification. They were as sheep without a shepherd, and "He taught them many things"; and then He fed them. There had been no

movement towards His crowning while He taught them, but the moment He fed them they wanted to crown Him. They said, "this is the King we have been looking for"; and they would fain take Him by force and make Him a King. Mark only gives us the picture of Jesus suddenly dismissing His disciples and returning to the mountain, but John tells us the reason; "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him King, withdrew again." They desired to make Him a King upon the basis of His ability to satisfy their material hunger. They reasoned, He is a King, He is kingly, He can feed, and so they would crown Him. That view was that of the desire of the selfish.

We come to the last scene, the most difficult to deal with in some ways. We will look at it in its simplicity and naturalness. He retired to the mountain to pray, and the disciples, in obedience to His command, pointed the prow of their boat to the other side. The wind was contrary, and they were distressed in rowing. Then He went after them from the height to meet them by appointment on the other side of the sea. He walked across the waters, with no intention whatever of coming to them in the boat. He would have passed them by, which distinctly means that it was His purpose, that it was His intention to pass them. They saw this figure moving over the waters, and they cried out for fear and said, "It is an apparition, a phantom." This was the dread of the perplexed.

He is a carpenter. That opinion was due to the unfairness of the jealous. He is a prophet. That dread was the outcome of the cowardice of the immoral. He is a king. That view was based upon the desire of the selfish. It is an apparition. That was language resulting from the dread of perplexed hearts.

Let us turn, in the second place, from this brief glance at the circumstances and the opinions, to consider the mistakes. But just let it be recognized that there were elements of truth in all these opinions. When these men of Nazareth said, "He is one of us," they said a true thing. He is One of us. They were perfectly correct as to His relationship to Mary and as to the relationship borne to Him by the men and women they knew. He was one of them, so much one of them that they had never dreamed that there was anything beyond immediate kinship in His nature. I think that we might take out of the old prophetic writings one word and inscribe it in imagination over the door of the shop in which Jesus had wrought and used the tools of His craft for eighteen years; "There was the hiding of His power." There was no halo round His brow, no peculiar flash in His eye that suggested Deity, nothing in His appearance to make these men think for one single moment that He was other than a peasant. He was One of us. It was perfectly true. There was nothing in His appearance to make men imagine that He was anything other than they were.

When King Herod said, "John... is risen from the dead," there was an element of truth, not in that supposition of John's resurrection, but in the thing that made Herod quake, the consciousness that there was still a voice bringing him face to face with moral standards. John had made Herod tremble in olden days when he had listened to him. Herod had been almost persuaded to righteousness by John. There is one little phrase that indicates this. Herod "heard him gladly." Herod was now merely the wreck of a man, wholly sensual. John was dead and buried, but a voice was sounding. Herod had not escaped the law, he had not escaped that prophetic note that makes men tremble. He was perfectly right in thinking of Jesus as a prophet, stern indeed, enunciating the severest of all ethics.

The people who desired to make Him King were perfectly right. He is King, and He is King upon the basis of His shepherd character; and as King He will provide for all the necessities of those over whom He reigns if they do but obey His teaching. That, however, is the order. He taught them and then fed them. He is the one King Who really provides for the material needs of men, Who will feed them and feed them perfectly.

I watch the disciples as looking at the strange figure moving over the waters through the darkness of the night they say, "It is an apparition!" Here was something coming toward them that they could not fully apprehend, something upon which they could not put their measurement. They forgot the tossing waves and howling wind, the material and present difficulties, in the presence of this new and mystic difficulty, the difficulty of a personality that they could not apprehend, could not measure, could not weigh. There was an element of truth in what they said. Christ is still an enigma. We cannot say the final thing concerning Him. He still moves over the rough waters, surprising and startling men; and men see Him as He passes, but not clearly, and catching some mystic going of the Christ, they are still filled with perplexity.

Wherein, then, lay the mistake in each case? In the limitation of their views placed upon the Christ Himself. If we could gather these four opinions and express them in one statement, I think we might be near the whole truth about the Christ. I put that carefully, because I am not sure that it is correct. Yet, think of it for a moment. What were the things that these men discovered? His nearness, His severity, His authority, and the infinite mystery of His being. That surely is the Christ; near, "One of us"; severe, so that no sinner could escape Him, though He robe Himself in purple and hide Himself in the court. King so that He will enunciate His moral ethic, and to the people who obey it, He will be the Provider of all their material need; and yet, an infinite Mystery, baffling the attempt of the centuries to place Him, breaking the mould of every philosophy that attempts to include Him, forevermore appearing in some new guise, some new wonder, some new marvel of His power. Just as the disciples think that they have understood Him and seen the ultimate of His wonder, He dismisses them across the water, and hies Him to the mountain, and then startles them by walking over the water that baffles them. The element of the mysterious in the fact of the Christ perpetually breaks upon the consciousness, and men come to recognize that they cannot say the final thing concerning Him. Near, One of us, a carpenter; severe, so that immorality is always dragged into light. King, with an ethic the severest that men have ever dreamed of, and a power the most generous that humanity can ever hope for. Yet ever beyond us, a mystery, an apparition.

In either of these cases, the recognition of all would have prevented the false conclusion. If they could have mingled with that conception that He is One of us, the very thing the disciples said, "He is a phantom," and known that beyond the manifest was the mystery of His being, then they would have listened to His teaching and not have been offended. Or if the disciples, when they saw Him only as a phantom and hardly knew Him, could have remembered the One Who in love bade them pass from the sea to the mountain, they would have been delivered from all false fear. If Herod could have known the nearness of this Man to him in all the sympathy of His heart, in all the authority of His kingship, and in all the infinite mystery of His being, then he would have left the court and found his way to this King of kings, not merely to submit to Him but to receive from Him all He could bestow. The mistake was in limiting the Christ. A recognition of the whole truth would have prevented the false conclusion in each case.

What then are the lessons suggested by these things said concerning the Christ in this sixth chapter of Mark? The first is that the opinion a man has of Christ invariably reveals the man. The men who attempted to place Him as a carpenter did so because they were jealous and were not prepared to be honest enough in the presence of the wonders they confessed of word and work to find out the deeper secret. The fear that shook the heart of Herod like a tempest in the night at the rumor of Jesus was the result of his own impurity. The desire to make Him a King as a wholesale food-provider was based upon personal selfishness and the materialization of life. The fear of the phantom in the case of the men who were in the pathway of obedience, with their prow pointed to the shore He had indicated, was the outcome of their own doubt and their own questioning. Every criticism of Christ is a revelation, not of Christ, but of the men who make the criticism. Whenever a man shall attempt to place the Christ and leave Him as One of us, it is a revelation of the fact that he has lost a sense of the spiritual. Whenever a man is afraid of the Christ, and dare not name His name, and endeavors to escape the message of His prophecy and kingship, it is because in that man's heart there is something of impurity; the only man that dreads the Christ is the impure man. When a man shall eliminate from the teaching of the Scripture and the church, all supernatural elements and attempt to make Christ merely the leader of a party that shall feed men on this earth, it is because in that man's heart there is enshrined a selfishness which is wholly and utterly of the dust. When we who name His Name are afraid of Him, the fear is the outcome of our own doubting and our own questioning, and our lack of courage. All criticism of Christ is a revelation of the attitude of those who criticize.

This chapter is a wonderfully living chapter. All these things are still being said about the Christ. We are still being told that He is One of us. Men are still attempting to place Him on the human plane. We are still being told that it is John risen from the dead, an ethical Teacher, with a severer note, and a fuller program, but nothing other. We are still being told that Christ's chief mission is to feed hungry men and women with material bread. We are still being told that Christ is an unreal personality, an apparition, a phantom. Such mistakes arise from imperfect knowledge of the Christ in every case. There is always the element of truth and always the neglect of the whole truth. The truth? Yes, nothing but the truth; but not the whole truth. He is One of us; He is an ethical Teacher; He does care about hungry men and will provide for their need; He is an infinite mystery. But He is not merely One of us, He is more than all, and the very universality of His appeal to humanity is a revelation of His wholeness and His greatness. We can find no other teacher, no other leader that appeals to humanity as such. We cannot take any great leader of whom we may think away from the place in which he lived and see him perfectly fitting and at home in another locality. It is unthinkable to imagine that Oliver Cromwell could have delivered France. He belonged here, and you cannot put him anywhere else. It would be an utterly vain piece of imagination to bring Abraham Lincoln and put him into this country. He belonged to the New Land, and God put him there, and he did his work there, but he was local. But this Man—man of my manhood, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, human of my humanity—you may put down wherever humanity is and men will gather round Him and find in Him their head tribesman, their chief of clan, their great ideal. The universality of His humanity is demonstration of the fact that He is something more, infinitely more than merely one of us. Ethical teacher, He assuredly was, but infinitely more. And if not infinitely more, then nothing to me—I freely say it to you. I speak as a witness; if Jesus has done nothing for me than give me an ethical system, then that appals me, that reveals my paralysis and leaves me helpless. But He is more, oh troubled sinner. Thank God if you have

come so far as to tremble in the presence of the Christ. He is more than an ethical Teacher, He is a Saviour. He is One Who, if Herod will but have it so, will purify Herod's polluted soul. He is One Who, if you will but have it so, will break the power of canceled sin. Infinitely more than an ethical Teacher, One Who communicates to men the new forces that will remake them and enable them to fulfil the ideals of His teaching. A food Provider? Surely yes, but first a Teacher, and we have no right to claim that the Christ shall fulfil His function of supplying material need save in the order of His own revelation. He must be the crowned King, and He must be crowned, not upon the basis that He will care for the body, but upon the basis that He includes in the grasp of His purpose, eternity, and the spiritual things. Not temporal in His power ultimately, but eternal and therefore temporal. He will not remake the social conditions of today by dealing with the decaying material at His hand. He will remake the social conditions by bringing to bear upon them the regenerating forces of God. Unless men submit at that point, they have no claim upon the fulfilment of the function of His kingship for the feeding of men. The multitudes will make Him King by popular acclaim, and He will escape to the mountains. But for the little group, and the growing number, and the ultimate assembly of souls who crown Him Lord in the spiritual and central and fundamental realm, for them He will build the city and bring in the ultimate triumph of righteousness.

But is He an apparition? Let me answer thus. Every day I live and think and preach, I am more conscious that I cannot say the last word about this Christ. I would be very sorry to attempt to tell anyone exactly what my Christology is. Only this I know, that whenever I come into the presence of this human life, so real, so definite, so warm, so tender, so actual, I have to bow and confess, My Lord and my God. Charles Wesley, you remember, put the whole thing into a daring phrase, "God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly man." Let us not be afraid at the mystery, but touch the manifest. Let us no longer stand away at infinite distance from the Christ, afraid of the things that cannot be encompassed in human thought or expressed in human speech; but let us get near to the Jesus of these Gospels as He appears before us, eyes wet with tears, face often beaming with the smile of a great gladness, touching familiarly and healing in His touch, putting His arms about the children, his heart full of infinite compassion; let us get near to Him and know this, that the One Who moves across the storm-tossed waters with the appearance of an apparition is the One Who will look at us and say, "Be not afraid, it is I."

The last word is this. These mistakes about Jesus limit Him in His power. Observe what is said about the men at Nazareth. "... He could there do no mighty work...." Why not? "... because of their unbelief." If we make Him only the Carpenter of Nazareth, He can do no more for us than the Carpenter of Nazareth. We put our limitation upon Him, and He is limited by our limited conception. He had no word for Herod, never spoke to Him; one of the most appalling and awful revelations of the New Testament. Herod never met Him until Pilate sent Him to him; and when He came, He uttered never a word. He refused to be crowned because He was limited by their conception. He could not exercise the power of His Kingship upon that desire. Finally, He could not pass the disciples by. We are inclined to say that is full of comfort! It is not. Study the story carefully. He would have passed them by and better for them that He should. Had He passed them by, what then? Then, they would have learned by weathering the storm in His power, some lesson of His power. He is always passing us by. You know the old story of the woman who saw three women at prayer. She dreamed that the Lord passed by, and to the first He came and bent over her with tender caress; to the next He spoke but a word; but the last He passed almost roughly.

The dreaming woman thought, "How tenderly the Lord loves the first; the second is not so dear to His heart; and with the third He is evidently angry." Then the Lord, in her dream, came to her, and said "Oh woman of the world, how wrongly hast thou judged? That first woman needs all of My care and tenderness to keep her following at all; that second woman is of stronger faith, and I therefore am hastening her preparation for yet higher service; but the last one I can absolutely depend upon; and by the very processes by which I deny her My voice, I am preparing her for the highest service of all."

He would have passed them! We are not ready for Him to do so! Then in great pity He will stop and come on board. But, ah me! if I could only let Him have all His way. We limit Him in His power when we limit our conceptions of Him. Let us never forget this. Let me give you the whole philosophy by quotation. D. L. Moody said, in this country many years ago, in his own homely, straight, and magnificent way: "Christ is just as great as your faith makes Him."

Then, what shall we do? We will attempt to know Him better. Paul's last great letters thrill with one desire for all his children in the faith; that they might know; and the measure of our knowledge of Him will be the measure in which we are able to put our trust in Him. We come to the fuller knowledge by following the light of the knowledge we have. As we walk in that and obey it, He will appear fairer and fairer, greater and greater, until He fills the whole horizon; and when He does that, then faith in that great Saviour will result in great victories wrought by Him for us and through us to the glory of His name.

Mark 8:34. The Shock Which The Spell Of Jesus Brings To The Soul.

Mark 8:34.

The Shock Which The Spell Of Jesus Brings To The Soul.

And He called unto Him the multitude with His disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Mark 8:34

Our text for the morning consists of the four words at the heart of that saying of Jesus, "Let him deny himself." That presupposes our previous meditation on the assumption of the first words of the text: "If any man will, or would, or should desire, to come after Me," namely, our meditation on the attractiveness of our Lord. That attractiveness is as powerful today as ever. Whenever men really come face to face with Him they feel the spell of His Person and character. In these central words, then, we have our Lord's statement of the condition on which those desiring to follow Him may do so: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself."

I want to remark, in the first place, that these words of our Lord express the sense of the soul concerning itself in His presence. When our Lord said these words in His time on earth, when He still says them, He but voices what the soul itself feels.

The sense of the glory and beauty of His character is inevitably also that of the meanness and deformity of self. Really to get near to this Christ of the Gospels is to be conscious of the most staggering, shattering shock that has ever been experienced. Of course, we may hear a great deal about Jesus and never have this sense of shock. It may be that we are made familiar with facts concerning Him from our childhood, and yet it may be a long while before we arrive at this sense. I am referring to the sense of the soul when it really meets Him, apprehends anything of the glory of His Person. Really to know this Man Jesus, to see Him as One Who has the secret of life, and is living a full life while lacking all the things on which men ordinarily depend, to listen to Him, and to be assured that He is speaking the word of truth by the appeal that what He says makes to our deepest souls, to come face to face with Him, and to pass under that matchless influence of the keen, quick sympathy of His heart, is to come to the sense of His perfection; and then invariably that sense reacts on the soul as a revelation of its own imperfection and failure. I see Him, I listen to Him, I follow Him, I become more and more acquainted with Him, and as I do so I am more and more convinced of the beauty and the glory of His character and of his Person, and I start after Him, desiring to be like Him. In that very hour of starting I am halted, because I become conscious of my own unlike-ness and of my inability to be what He is. He lived, and I have not the secret of living. He knew, and I lack certainty about anything. He cared, and so gathered to Himself all human souls in the comradeship of a great fellowship, and I find myself excluded from it, and the poverty of my isolation surges on my soul. I behold Him, and I say already to myself, Yea, verily, this is glory, this is beauty, this is life, this is perfection! But I am not that, I cannot be that. Therefore am I filled with fear, and the fear is generated by the apprehension of the glory and the

beauty of Christ.

Now, this is exactly what Christ says. He recognizes that fear. If you desire to come after Me, you must recognize that you are not what I am. Would you be, you must deny self. All the ideals of the past, the purposes of the past, and the passions of the past are to be denied. You are to be at the end of everything if you are coming after Me.

Let us observe very carefully that these words reveal in a flash the difference between the Lord and all others. He was supremely the One Who denied Himself. That is the whole story of His human life. Therefore He says to men, If you will come after Me, you must do what I have done. You must deny yourself. That is the story of Jesus. He was the most self-emptying soul that ever trod the earth, and therefore the most self-possessed. Of other men, the story of life is that of being self-centered, and therefore self-destroyed.

This very spell which Jesus casts on men, then, is a revelation of the malady which affects humanity, and it is a proclamation of the only way by which that malady may be cured. The spell of Jesus is the dawning sense of sickness in the soul, and the word of Jesus is the indication of the way of cure. Let us think, then, along these two lines, the human malady, and its cure, dealing first with the malady.

What is the matter with humanity? The hour in which we live makes the question very vital, very pertinent. The hour is characterized by a vastness altogether too great to be apprehended. I need not stay to argue that. Is not that the difficulty in all our thinking? Is not that the difficulty that statesmen have to confront today? I shall carry you with me, however, when I say that we may sum up the story in a very blunt and brutal word by declaring that humanity today is tossed with a raging and destructive fever. What is the nature of the malady? How are we to diagnose this sickness which, at the moment, has its expression in blood, brutality, and death?

The individual is always microcosmic. If we can understand the human soul, we understand humanity. Our Lord here addresses Himself to the human soul, to one man. If any man, seeing the glory and the beauty of the ideal, feels moving within him some desire to realize it, let that man deny himself. The malady in its vastness is thus diagnosed in a human soul. Yet for a few moments let us take the general outlook as we press this question.

I begin with some negative considerations. Man's intellect is not at fault. Man's emotional nature is not at fault. Man's will power is not at fault. Never in the history of the world were these things more manifestly strong and mighty than they are today. Never have we seen the manifestation of the strength of intellect, the strength of emotion, and the strength of will, as we are seeing it today. These are all essential faculties of human personality, and the essential faculties of humanity as God created it; and today they are all mighty in their operations, and yet we are in this terrible fever.

I say that man's intellect is not at fault. His scientific achievements prove this. Never was the intellect of man so successful along every line as it is today. Man's capacity for visualizing a better order was never keener than it is today. Is there anything more interesting, more arresting, to the thoughtful soul today than this fact, that wherever we turn, whatever newspaper, or magazine, or new book we read, we find that men are seeing through the darkness to a new order? As to what it is to be, there are different opinions; as to how it is to be brought about, there are varied and

conflicting opinions; but man is everywhere talking about the new order. Man is visualizing for himself some order of life from which this dire and disastrous fever shall be shut out. The intellect of man was never more active, never stronger.

Man's emotional nature is not at fault. Man still loves unto death; and, thank God, man still hates with the fierceness of the wrath of God everything that is unholy and unlovely. The emotional nature of humanity today is being stirred and is manifesting its power as it never has before.

Man's will power is not at fault, and that is being proved in both camps of this great strife. Whether will power, and the will to power, are the same things I am not now discussing; or, at least, I may say, in passing, they are by no means the same thing. I am not now speaking of the will to power, but of the power of will. The war did not end before Christmas, 1914, and it is not over yet! The will power of our enemy is still strong, and our own is mighty. Moreover, that will power will not be broken by material defeat, however unpalatable a truth that may be. That is one of the truths we have to face. If we look back through the history of mankind we shall find that it is the defeated nation that is often victorious in the long issue. One of the greatest perils that threatens a nation is the peril that is born in the hours of its victory. Unless the victory be consecrated to useful and holy purpose, the very victory generates the evil thing that undermines the life of a nation.

If, then, these things are still stronger, what is the matter with humanity? The malady lies deeper. The malady is something the effect of which, whatever the something may be, is to make all the God-given and Godlike powers of intellect, emotion, and will, forces of destruction instead of forces of construction. Now, there is some reason for it. What is the matter with humanity?

Now I return to the text and I say that here we have a perfect diagnosis of the disease. Let us get back to one soul, and not to the soul of the one man to whom Christ spoke, but to the soul of Christ Himself. The very charm of His personality, the very spell He has cast on me, demands that I should understand the profound secret of that life that lived, that knew, that cared, the life that lures me by its beauty. What is the secret of life? When I have discovered that, I have discovered the nature of man's malady.

In the light of that revelation we discover that no man can control himself, and therefore humanity cannot govern itself. All its blunders, all its raging fevers, all the unutterable and unfathomable agony of this hour, all these things are the result of humanity's attempts to govern itself, to manage its own affairs—or bluntly, yet truthfully, let us say it, the result of humanity's attempts to do without God. Look again at the glory of the Man we have been considering. The secret of His greatness was that He denied Himself. I quote from the great passage in Philippians, beginning resolutely right in the middle of it rather than at its commencement: "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient." What humanity needs is to understand that the word "obedient" is a very different word from what humanity really has imagined it to be. We had better return to the individual soul again. The human soul has to understand that the word "obedient" is the greatest and most beautiful word that can be used to describe its attitude. Obedient! How we fight against it! How we struggle against it! Account for it as you will, and I am now at the business of accounting for it, from childhood upward it is the one word we have hated most. Obedient! Yet this is the one great word that reveals the secret of the perfection of Jesus. Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient. I go a little further back in the same passage and I read concerning Him that He was in the form of God, but did not consider that

equality with God was a prize to be snatched at and held for Himself, and that therefore He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. He was the servant of God. All the story of His life as Man is the story of obedience to the one central perfect will, the will of God. Multiply that Man by the new race of newborn souls—I am now speaking in the realm of the ideal—and what have you? A race of souls obedient, mastered, a race of souls who have learned this as the supreme and fundamental thing, that no man can control himself, that he is too big to manage himself, that he was not constructed to run by his own design, his own willing and his own planning, that he must be under the control of the God from Whom he came. Humanity cannot govern itself. The attempt at self-control is the root of the malady. Intellect is there, but it lacks the true light. Emotion is there, but it has not the true inspiration. Will is there, but it is not mastered by the true principle.

In a recent article in *The Nation*, headed "Minerva at the Cross Roads," a very remarkable article in many ways, the writer describes the present condition of humanity, and speaks of the passion for power prevalent throughout the whole world. Among other things, he writes:

Power over man, over nature, over land and sea and sky; power we seek everywhere in size and speed and treasure, power over everything but ourselves.

I have nothing to do now with the context of the article. That was the writer's diagnosis of the situation. I have quoted the passage for one reason: says this writer, "power over everything but ourselves." That is true, but it is not our fault, it is our nature. That is the exact point that we are trying to see. Humanity cannot have power over itself. Humanity can master the land and the sea; humanity can have power in size and speed and treasure, but it cannot have power over itself. Humanity is not capable of governing itself. This is the lesson that humanity has yet to learn. Whether it will learn it from this war or not, I will not predict. Whether it will even learn it until He shall come, the flaming of Whose advent feet will usher in the final revelation of God's will for men, I will not now pause to argue. When Jesus said that day at Caesarea Philippi to that multitude, mainly of Jewish men, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself," He was uttering no mere superficial words that affected only the passing hour. The final character of them has not yet dawned on humanity, for humanity has been running on its way, trying to manage for itself by its cleverness, by its policies, by its armaments, which it cannot do. The ultimate issue of such attempts is this appalling and wicked waste of human life and the welter of the present war. Humanity cannot manage itself. My God! Are we going to learn it or not? That is where repentance must begin if ever hope is to be possible. The doctrine of self-control is a doctrine of unfathomable nonsense as well as hopelessness.

I pass back once more from the larger outlook to the individual soul. If I tell this young man that he must control himself, I am talking nonsense. He cannot control himself. He is too big, he is too vast for his own apprehension. He may not believe it, that young man! Some of us who are a little older are finding out that the things we thought were so easy are not easy. Where we thought we had controlled ourselves we were mastered by wrong forces which would have destroyed us but for the grace of God. How can anybody control himself in any way? I am sure you are ready to have patience with me if I take a personal illustration. In the days of my youth my favorite athletic sport was wrestling. Now, how can a man wrestle with himself? The whole art of wrestling is to get your opponent down and put him on his back. Try that with yourself. You cannot put yourself on your back and hold yourself there. When you are there, who is on top? That is the whole business. A

man says, I will manage myself. He may sign pledges, and give up, or he may decide to give up without any pledge. He is just cutting off here, and lopping off there, and he thinks he is self-controlled. The fact is that he is more self-confident in all the foolish pride of his nature than before he began to lop off his branches.

Humanity thinks it is able to govern itself. Government of the people by the people for the people is a ghastly failure unless you preface your idea with some other word, or follow it up with some other word. Government of the people by the people for the people under God. Yes, verily. But if we attempt it without God, the last and worst tyranny of this world will not be the tyranny of monarchy or the tyranny of wealth—it will be the tyranny of democracy. A democracy is hell unless it be also a theocracy.

Thus we see the human malady. We have been trying to do without God, and without control, and to manage; and there is no ideal we held, high or low, but that at this moment lies in ruins on the plains of Flanders! High or low, the ideal is broken, and the will to power is defeated. The ideal that we can deal with humanity by treaties and conferences at The Hague is broken into a thousand fragments.

Jesus Christ still stands, His head lifted above the smoke of battle, His eyes still lit with the vision of the eternal truth, and He is saying to men: If you will come after Me, deny yourselves, confess your folly, repent, not first of your drunkenness, and your gambling, and your lust: these are symptoms of that deeper wickedness, the underlying imagination of the nation that God is out of date, and that we can do without Him.

And there also is revealed the cure. To see the malady is to know the cure. The cure is radical and revolutionary. I have chosen my words with care.

It is radical. By that I mean it goes to the very root of the business. Let man deny himself. The word "deny," as it is usually translated, means, as many of you at once recognize, to disown, to abdicate, to put self off the throne entirely. To deny self is a great deal more than to practice self-denial in our modern sense of the phrase. We are all being urged to practice self-denial now, and a few people are doing it! But that is not the call of the text. The word of Jesus is a profounder word than that. Let man deny himself. Jesus calls men to central readjustment. To deny self is to make room for God. And that is what our governments are afraid to do. It is also to believe in God. It is, therefore, to hand the keys over to God. It is to confess folly, and to confess weakness, and to wait for God.

The call is also revolutionary; it demands the readjustment of every other relationship. Through the denial of self in the individual home is revolutionized. Given a home in which those who constitute it know this principle of denying self, and you have music and harmony and love, and all those subtle but marvelous forces that make Home.

Self being denied, the Christian Church is revolutionized. When we in the Christian Church learn the secret, and submit to it; when self is denied, and the living Lord is enthroned actually, then we shall have done with our conflicts. Not with our differences of opinion. But then we shall be able to sit down, and talk with the men who do not agree with us, and with whom we do not agree, and so we shall feel our way nearer to the truth. It is bitterness of heart that makes schism, and paralyzes power. The Church of Christ itself never has fully realized the importance of the call of Christ to

deny self.

It is so also in the national life. It is so in all international relationships. In proportion as man is at the end of himself, and humanity recognizes the necessity for the wisdom from on high, and the strength of God, in that proportion the malady will be healed.

Now let me end by stating that in nothing I have said so far have I been preaching the Gospel. But the Gospel is involved. I have already quoted some words concerning Jesus, and I stopped short. Now is the time to complete the quotation. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." There was no need for the Cross in the life of One Who was always self-emptying. It was an improper thing for Him, unless there was some larger purpose in it than that of His own Personality. He was always self-emptying. Why, then, the Cross? The Cross created the way of denying self for man who had been self-centered, self-governed, and self-ruined. The Cross is the place where we receive life as a gift of grace. At the Cross of Christ we confess that we cannot lift ourselves or save ourselves out of the depths into which we have fallen, and we take all that is provided in the Cross as His free gift.

That is why the Cross is unpopular, and that is why the Cross is powerful. The real reason in human thinking for attempting to get rid of the Cross is that it denies man; it tells man that he cannot save himself, that he can never govern himself; but that having ruined himself, it can restore that which he has ruined. Christ comes with His Cross to human cleverness, and to human might, and declares the folly of that cleverness and the wickedness of that might. He says to men: You can be made new, you can climb to the height of the ideal; but you must begin here, by the way of the Cross, taking your life from God as a gift of His infinite compassion and His infinite grace. That is where we begin to deny ourselves, not by taking up our own crosses. That comes after. No man takes up his cross in order to be saved. From that other Cross, which is outside us, in the mysterious transactions of which we had no part, there comes to us the gift of life and power and healing. It is a gift of love that keeps us forevermore sensible of our own weakness, a gift of power that keeps us forevermore sensible of our need of control from without, a gift, having received which, we shall walk every foot of the way with the sense of dependence on God.

Mark 8:34. The Spell Which Jesus Casts On Men.

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The Spell Which Jesus Casts On Men.

And He called unto Him the multitude with His disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Mark 8:34

This is a very old text, but it is by no means exhausted. It is central to Christianity, being the inclusive message of Christ, having universal as well as individual application. According to Matthew and Mark, these particular words were spoken at that hour of crisis in Christ's own ministry when He inquired of His immediate disciples what the result of His preaching and teaching and living had been. At Cæsarea Philippi He asked them: "Who do men say that I am?" One of their number made the great confession that He was infinitely more than a prophet, being the Messiah, the One to Whom all the prophets had given witness. It was then that Christ uttered the words of our text.

It is evident that these words were based on the supposition that some men desired to follow Him. That is the first arresting note of the text.

Immediately following it, we have our Lord's clear enunciation of the condition on which such a man may follow him. "Let him deny himself." He then indicated a program of life to the soul who would fulfil that condition and so follow Him. Let him take up his cross and accompany Me.

Three lines of thought are suggested by these words. The first is of the spell of Jesus. I resolutely use the word "Jesus," because that is where we must begin. That is where these men began. They had no theory of His Deity, did not know anything about it, in the early days of His mission. They began with the Man Jesus, and that is where we begin. There was in Him something which cast a spell on men, which made them want to follow Him, an attraction which created in the souls of men that desire to which He made His appeal when He uttered these words: "If any man would come after Me..." That is the subject of our present consideration.

We shall consider on subsequent occasions the sense which that spell produces in the human soul. It is the sense of surprise, of shock, of upheaval. Directly a man comes face to face with Jesus this is the result. In the days of His flesh, when men really knew Him, really reached Him, it was so; and directly men come face to face with Him today, really get to Him beyond all the things that hinder, they are staggered and shocked and frightened.

When the soul is shuddering with fear in the presence of the infinite glory and beauty of the One Who has thus attracted, He calls that trembling, frightened soul to come with Him. Let him take up his cross and travel My way.

Let us now consider that which is suggested by the words: "If any man would come after Me." Amid the myriad marvels merging in the mystery of the Person of Christ one of the most patent and persistent is His attractiveness. It is safe to say that without exception He casts the spell of His personality on all who come face to face with Him. That is the revelation of these Gospel narratives. They show how irresistibly He attracted men. I am not saying that they yielded to Him, that they obeyed Him, but that they were attracted by Him. There was something about Him which drew men after Him. They could not leave Him alone. Someone once said, and it was at least an illuminative suggestion, that probably more days of work were lost in the three years of Jesus' public ministry by men running after Him from place to place than had ever been lost in that neighborhood before.

The same sense of attractiveness exercises its spell on all those who read these records, if they read the records simply and naturally. They are the records of a Person Who irresistibly drew men after Him. Read them, and the very attractiveness that drew the men of His own age after Jesus comes through the reading and produces exactly the same effect on men today. Of course, the spell of the Lord is not felt if He be veiled or in any wise changed. If this Person of the Gospel narratives passes under the influence of merely ecclesiastical organization, they retire Him behind veils into some realm of mystery, and men are not attracted. Also, over and over again this Person of the Gospels has been hidden from men by discussions of schoolmen who have dissipated Him by theorizing. I am inclined to go further and say that very often the spell of Jesus has been destroyed by systematic theology, which at least tends to harden Him into formulas and rob Him of that vital principle that drew men in the days of His flesh and that draws men still if only they can get near Him. If we would consider Him we must do so directly, through the only medium provided. In these four brief pamphlets (gospels) we find Him, and we find Him nowhere else. Whatever method we may adopt in our attempt to understand this Person, we must correct our method by these pamphlets, or we lose Him. That is in itself a mystic test of every method that men have employed in approaching Christ. Any departure from these pamphlets ends in changing the Person or veiling Him so that He ceases to attract.

I am not going to attempt to describe Jesus in detail. Realizing the fact of the spell which He evidently cast on the men of His age, and which He still casts on men, I want to speak of the nature of that attraction as I apprehend it. Let us, then, go back and see Him as these men saw Him in order that we may discover what it was in Him that created a spell that irresistibly drew men after Him in the days of His flesh. It seems to me that there were three things about this Man that created that attraction:

First, men felt that He lived, that, somehow, He had the secret of life.

Second, men felt that He knew, that when He spoke it was with authority.

Finally, men felt that He cared, that He was not merely interesting Himself in examining social conditions, that He was not merely occupied in the academic work of collecting specimens, but that He cared.

The men who gathered about Him in Galilee, in Judea, in Perea, in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, in the metropolis and in the village, in the great crowds assembled at the feasts, in the little groups that met Him by the wayside—these men who looked at Him, listened to Him, became familiar with

Him, felt, first, that He was a Man Who lived, and a Man Who knew, and a Man Who cared. In these things I find the secret of the attractiveness of the Lord.

First, they felt that He was a Man Who lived. I am well aware how very commonplace a statement that sounds. It may at once be said that we are all living. That, however, is exactly the point. Were not all these men living who saw Him? It is evident that the impression He produced on them was that they were not living, and that He was living. He had a secret that they lacked. In reading the New Testament, all of us have observed how perpetually that great word "life" was on the lips of our Lord, and I think that nothing is more interesting than the fact that over and over again His use of the word, His reference to it, was in answer to men who asked Him questions. Men constantly broke in on His teaching to ask Him a question about life. The lawyer said to Him: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The young ruler came to Him and said: "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Peter, in one of those great outbursts of understanding, said to Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words [sayings] of eternal life." All these recognized, somehow, that Jesus had the secret of life.

Now, our trouble in reading these stories often is that we read them evangelically. We get our theological values presently. We shall be driven there. But if we take up the story, and see a young man coming to Jesus and saying to Him, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and think of this young man as going to a mission service and asking what he must do to be saved, in the full evangelical sense of the inquiry, we are wrong. This young man did not understand things as you and I understand them. It was the question of one man, who saw another Man live. In effect, he said, Tell me how you live. You have the secret I lack. What lack I yet?

Now, the arresting fact was that Jesus lived, apparently without possessing the keys of life. The very keys that men thought were necessary to admit to life He lacked. He had none of them. He was without wealth, He was without possessions. He was without worldly advantage. Nevertheless, the supreme impression He made on men who went after Him and listened to Him was that He was living a full-orbed life, a life that was rich and glorious and satisfying. The rich young ruler had all the supposed keys of life hanging on his girdle. He had wealth. He was a ruler among his people. He had social and worldly advantages. Yet he came to Jesus and said, in effect, You have the key of life and I have not; you are alive, and I am not. Tell me the secret of the life you are living. Through those fields and along those roads of Palestine there walked a Man alive, and as they watched Him men said, What is the secret of it? Here is a Man Who seems to be excluded from everything, Who is limited in every way, but Who is living. I am going to make all this superlative by saying that I think sometimes we are wrong when we speak of the poverty of our Lord as though it was something that we should be sorry for, or that He was sorry about. I do not think Jesus needs pity for being poor in the measure in which He was poor. Do we not sometimes recite great words of the Bible in such a tone as to make them utterly wrong?

"Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

I have quoted these words over and over again with a touch of sorrow in my voice. I do not think now that there was any touch of sorrow in Jesus' voice when He uttered them. It was the declaration of One Who was independent even of those very things which men count to be necessary if they are to live. It is possible to live, without nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the

thousand things which we have counted necessary.

Men looked, at Jesus, and saw that He was excluded from no realm of life. He lived and talked, always with reverence, but always as One Who was admitted into the very inner secret of the Presence of Deity, and as One Who knew no veil between Himself and God. He spoke of angels as though He knew much about them, and said things about them that we do not understand today, which yet seemed to be commonplaces in His own life and experience. Then remember that in all the illustrations that I have given we find that He answered questions by giving the secret of life. Said the lawyer, How am I going to live? Said Jesus in answer, If you want My secret of life, this is it: Love God and love your neighbor. That is life.

Said the young ruler, What shall I do to live? Jesus said, Follow Me. Put your life under control. Human life is altogether too big to manage itself. It must find its master.

Said Peter, speaking for the disciples, To whom shall we go? Thou hast the sayings of eternal life. Later on, in the hearing of the disciples, Jesus gave the ultimate key to life: This is life, age-abiding, to know God. Thus He solved the problem. We, however, are supremely interested for the moment in the experience itself and the effect it produced on men. Jesus lived, and men, rich and poor, went after Him, and said, Tell us the secret. You are alive and we are not. How do You live?

That sense abides until this moment. If we could rescue this living Personality from behind the veils of ecclesiastical organization, from the discussions of the schoolmen, from the hardening of theological formulas, so that men could see Him as He is, they would still say: What does this mean? This is life! What is its secret?

Again, men felt that Jesus knew. There are some things in these narratives that really are amusing in a holy sense. One day the Pharisees sent officers to arrest Jesus when He was teaching in Jerusalem. The officers were not prejudiced, but were under orders, and they went. By and by, they came back without their man. The rulers said, Why have you not brought Him? The officers replied, Never man spake like this Man! They forgot all about arresting Him. He had arrested them, and that simply by His teaching, by what He was saying.

Matthew tells us how after the great Manifesto to the multitudes, the people were astonished because Jesus taught them as One having authority. That is not a remarkable statement. So far, the marvel of the statement has not emerged. Jesus taught them as One having authority! Certainly, that is natural. But let us hear the statement to the end. And not as their scribes. That is what makes the story remarkable. The scribes were the men who had authority, but the multitude said, This is not like the teaching to which we have been listening all our lives. We have had authority, official authority, dogmatic authority, but this is different. This is Authority itself! What then was the nature of Jesus' authority? It was not a sense of authority created by anything in the personal appearance of our Lord. Artists never can express all the truth about Him, so they give Him a halo. But He had no halo visible to the men who were impressed with His authority. He had not the insignia of the scribes. There were no signs on Him that spoke of official position. Wherein, then, lay His authority? It was the authority of what He said. It was the authority of the truth. The arresting fact to men was that there was no gainsaying Him, no contradicting Him. Prejudice was ever angry with Him, will was constantly rebellious against Him, but conscience was ever agreeing

with Him. I need not speak in the past tense. I can employ the present tense. Take any words that are recorded in either of these Gospels as having fallen from the lips of Jesus, and listen to them carefully. I declare that, finally, you cannot gainsay them. Though prejudice may be against Him, though will may be rebellious, the human soul will always say of His teaching: Yes, that is so; it is authoritative truth. The only criticism of the teaching of Jesus that is at all reasonable, the only thing that can be said, that ever has been said truthfully against the teaching of Jesus, is that His ideals are not practicable. That has been said.

I make no apology for repeating an illustration I have used more than once in this pulpit. A generation ago, full thirty years ago, a man said to me, "You know, my quarrel with your Christ is that He is unreasonable." I said, "Tell me what you mean by that." And he gave me this illustration, and it is a perfectly fair one. He said, "Confucius said to his followers, Be just to your enemies. I can do that; it is reasonable. Your Master said, Love your enemies. I cannot do that. That is unreasonable." Don't you agree with that man? Where are you living today? Are you finding it easy to love your enemies today? As I said, I was thirty years younger then. I did not quite know how to answer him. I felt the force of what he said. I shall always believe that I was led and helped. What I did say to him was this: "I see your point, but suppose that men could learn to love their enemies!" His answer came sharp as the crack of a pistol. "Why, then," he said, "there would be no enemies in the world." Exactly. Therein is the greatness of the ideal. Not practicable, we may say of the teaching of Jesus, but we must admit immediately afterward that if it could be done, then we would have solved all our problems, social, political, and economic. Herein was, and is, the marvel of Jesus. He taught, and men were very angry because what He said ran counter to their desires, their prejudices; but they knew He was right. He spake as One having authority. Again, to quote the words of Peter with another emphasis, "Thou hast the words [sayings] of eternal life." Jesus had not only the life itself, but the interpretation of it. He interpreted this authority also. He was perfectly willing to tell men exactly how He knew. He said, My teaching is not Mine but His that sent Me. He claimed to be in direct communication with the eternal Wisdom. He gave men only the Word of God. I think on this point there is almost startling light in something John tells us. On one occasion our Lord said: "If any man hear My sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." This is most arresting, differentiating as it does between personal authority and the eternal authority of truth. Christ said distinctly, a man is to be judged at last by His word. Men knew it, and they went after Him. Here was a Man Who never said: It is reasonable to suppose; a Man Who never said: In all probability it is so; a Man Who talked quietly and simply, and as we ponder the matchless words, so full of simplicity that all the children can understand them up to a point, and we know we are hearing the last wisdom of eternity, and we have no appeal. We are often angry! We will not obey! We will crucify Him, silence His voice! But as we do it, we still know that what He said was the truth.

And last, men not only felt that Jesus lived, and that He knew; they felt also that He cared, and that He cared about them. He proved His interest by all the facts of His life. Some of the little sentences of the Gospel narratives reveal simply the exquisite beauty of the fact. Listen to this: "He could not be hidden." Why not? I put over against it another Scriptural quotation which contradicts it: "He hid Himself." Put them together. "He could not be hidden.... He hid Himself." They do not contradict.

The paradox is the revelation of truth. Why could He not be hidden? Because out there in the street was a woman in trouble about her child, trying to get help. Ah! He could not be hidden then. The agony of that woman drew Him forth from hiding. He cannot be hidden there. He hid Himself. When? When unbelief and the pride of ignorance were refusing His message and were about to do Him harm, then He hid Himself. But men irresistibly drew Him. If I have said that He attracted men, let me now add that was the deep reason that men attracted Him. He could not let them alone. That ultimately is the meaning of the Incarnation. God could not abandon the sinning world. It brought Him out of His heaven. All that found expression in the manner of life of this Man. Men knew that He cared. The appeal that He made to humanity was not due to His curiosity. You may be curious about men, but that will not attract men to you. His interest, I say, was not academic. He was not studying specimens. His interest in men was not artistic merely. What is art? It is the expression of a truth. But He shared human experience rather than sought to express it. He lived in man. His own consciousness was a self-emptied one, and therefore through it He received the consciousness of others. He felt all the agony of the widow of Nain whose boy, her only son, lay dead on the bier. He felt all the withering paralyzing pain of two women who had buried their brother, and He wept. There is a supreme illustration of this very sympathy. I confess that it is to me a most amazing story and I can understand the expositor and the commentator trying to account in some other way for those tears of Jesus. Suppose I came to see you in the presence of your dead and found you in agony and in tears, and suppose, just for the sake of argument, that I knew that in half an hour I could give you your dead back again, I do not think I could weep with you. But He did. My inability is the result of the comparative coarseness of the texture of my personality. The very fineness of His soul was such that although He knew that within half an hour the light would shine on the tears and make the rainbow, yet He wept in keen sympathy with the sorrow of their heart. Men knew that He cared.

So I see Jesus, living, knowing the deep secrets of life, and caring. Now, this is not the Gospel. I am not preaching the Gospel. But this creates the conviction that a Gospel is needed, and that we shall see more clearly in our next consideration. For the present it suffices me to say, and here I end for now, that the man who is not conscious of personal failure either has not seen Jesus, or has deliberately decided to be content with less than the best. To see Jesus is to say before He says it, If this is life, then I must be done with all my ideals, I must deny myself; everything is changed. The spell of Christ brings the soul to the shuddering, staggering sense of its own failure, of its own poverty.

Mark 10:14. Suffer The Children.

Mark 10:14.

Suffer The Children.

Suffer the little children to come unto Me; forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.

Mark 10:14

That is the Magna Charta of the children. Its words are of the simplest which ever fell from the lips of our beloved Lord. We are never able to recite them, I think I may venture to say, without feeling some thrill of the tenderness of His great heart in our own. Under whatever circumstances we hear them, they always produce the same result, touching us back from hardness to tenderness. Whenever we hear them recited, or recite them ourselves, there returns a sense of that childhood from which, alas, some of us seem to have traveled far along the dusty highways of life.

And yet, my brethren, if these words of Jesus are characterized by their simplicity, it is not the simplicity of superficiality. It is rather the simplicity of a vast and astonishing sublimity, and I sometimes wonder when I ponder these words—and others like them with which we are all familiar, the simplest things Jesus said—I wonder whether the very simplest of them all are not the sublimest.

To have heard Jesus say this would have been to be saved from misapprehension of the meaning of what He said. A statement like that seems to suggest that we have misapprehended His meaning, and I do think that we have very largely misunderstood that meaning. Not that we have misinterpreted Him, but that our understanding of His meaning has been circumscribed because we did not hear Him utter these words. There are things beyond the fine art of the printer. You cannot print a tone of the voice. You cannot reveal on the cold page, however exquisitely your work may be done, the temper of the speaker. Mark endeavors to save us from that very misapprehension by drawing our attention to the fact of the temper of Jesus at the moment when He uttered these words. "He was moved with indignation." The statement in the connection of these words is almost startling, and we are compelled to pause and consider its meaning. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." All heaven's sweetness is in the great command. It seems, if you will allow me the far-flung and spacious figure of the Bible, as though the very Mother-heart of God were singing itself out in these words. Yes, the voice thrilled in tenderness, but it vibrated in thunder; and when Jesus uttered these words there came together, into the apprehension of the men who heard Him the two things that even to this day it is so difficult to harmonize, and to understand their relation to each other: the goodness and the severity of God. No tenderer thing ever fell from His lips, but "He was moved with indignation." Out of His hot anger came the most gentle and beautiful thing that He ever said about child life.

These things being so, we need to appreciate and study these words the more carefully. Let me, however, say at once that I do not think any exposition can exhaust the meaning of this Magna

Charta of the child. What I do hope to accomplish in our brief meditation is to lead you into the atmosphere created by the strong and tender words.

Notice carefully first of all that Jesus made an appeal and used an argument, and that the two constitute His great charge to His people concerning the children. There is an appeal, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and hinder them not." There is an argument, "for of such is the Kingdom of God." If we will take the appeal and the argument together and learn their interrelationship, we come into the atmosphere created by His words, and understand what His charge to His people forevermore is concerning the children.

I take these two first values of the text, the appeal and the argument, but in the other order, asking you to think for a few minutes, first, of the argument of Jesus, "of such is the Kingdom of God," and then, in the light of that argument, to listen to His appeal, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; and hinder them not."

First, then, as to the argument. I put it first because if we are to understand these words, and become obedient to them, we must catch the profound significance of the argument that the Master used, and His reason for using it on this particular occasion. You will agree with me when I say that an argument is an appeal to conviction. It may be an appeal intended to produce a new conviction, but it is always an appeal to some conviction already held. If I say to a person on any conceivable subject, I want you to do this, because—what follows the "because" will reveal the opinion I hold of the person to whom I make my appeal. I should never appeal to a miser to give on the ground of his generosity! Whatever I make my appeal to reveals my opinion of the person to whom I make that appeal. If we can get back for a moment into the perfect human naturalness of the scene I think you will follow me. Fathers were bringing their children to Jesus. Mothers also, I have no doubt—but all the Greek pronouns go to prove that they were men who brought their children to Jesus, and the Hebrew law was that fathers were responsible for the religious training of the children. Of course the mothers were there. That goes without saying. These people were bringing their children to Jesus, desiring that He should touch them, and the disciples rebuked them, rebuked those who brought them, and so through them rebuked the children. They felt that Jesus had more important business on hand than that of holding receptions for children. They did not believe for a single moment that He could be troubled with these children. His mind was full of great matters. They knew full well that the deepest passion of His heart was a passion for the coming of the Kingdom of God. They knew perfectly well that those eyes that they loved to look upon were eyes that saw through to the infinite and far distances, eyes familiar with all the beauty of the eternal order; and they knew that He desired, for He had taught them so to pray, that there should be established in the midst of the wreckage and ruin of human conditions all the glory and beauty of the heavenly order. "Our Father who art in the heavens, Thy name be hallowed, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth." They knew, therefore, full well that He was there to teach men the meaning of the Kingdom of God, and to do such work as should bring the heavenly conditions into the earthly life. Therefore they were convinced that He had no time for children. It was a very pardonable thing that the fathers and mothers should desire that the prophet should touch the children, but it could not be. They knew His passion for the Kingdom of God, and so far as they had light they also were men into whom there had entered the selfsame passion. They had caught His enthusiasm because they had seen His vision of the Kingdom of God. This misconception explains the anger of Jesus. He was moved with indignation because,

notwithstanding the fact that they had caught His enthusiasm, having seen His vision, and consequently were men who knew something of the coming of the Kingdom of God, they had so little appreciated the real meaning of that Kingdom. Then He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; and hinder them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God." The disciples hindered the children because they thought that the Kingdom of God was a great and weighty matter, and that because He was devoted to it He had no time for children. This misconception He rebuked and corrected by declaring that children are in the Kingdom, and of the Kingdom; and going still further, He declared that they could not enter into that Kingdom, though they had seen its gleaming glory from afar, until they became like the children, for "of such is the Kingdom."

But now mark the graciousness of Christ's assumption. He assumed the devotion of these men to the Kingdom of God. He used an argument that would appeal in their case. He knew perfectly well if they could but come to understand the nature of the Kingdom of God they would never hinder the child coming. They were men in whom the passion and fire for that Kingdom was already burning, and He made His appeal on that ground, "of such is the Kingdom of God."

Thus, when I consider this argument, and note its assumption, I touch the fundamental matter in all our work for the children. I think, brethren, there are many appeals I could make to men and women in order to arouse their interest in, and attempt to compel their work for, children. I think I could appeal to men and women on the basis of the fact that the child nature is full of interest. I think I could make an appeal to men on the basis of the harmlessness of a little child. I think I could make an appeal on the basis of the helplessness of a little child. But Christ made no such appeal, and yet all these were included in His. His appeal is always "of such is the Kingdom of God." Until we have seen that Kingdom at least in outline, and until the vision has captured us, and until a passion for the establishment of it is the master passion of our life, we have no right to try to help the children. I will revise that statement if you will let me. I will not say if it so please you that we have no right, but rather that we have no power to help the children. We can never help our own children, the children in our own home, the children in our schools, the children of the nation, until we have caught Christ's vision of God's Kingdom, and until that has become the master passion of our lives. The Church, spending its strength on disputes concerning doctrines, wasting its time in quarreling about ecclesiastical formulae, becoming worldly and self-centered, always neglects the child. On the other hand, the church, seeking the Kingdom, restless in the midst of everything that is contrary to the will of God; passionately desiring the building of His city, and the bringing in of His rule—that church always seeks the child. A vision of and desire for the Kingdom of God is the master passion in all work for the children.

But while thus looking at the argument as to its assumption note its plain declaration, and consequently its simple revelation. Jesus said "of such." An old hymn is in my mind all the time this morning:

I think when I read that sweet story of old,

When Jesus was here among men,

How He called little children as lambs to His fold,

I should like to have been with Him then.

I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me;
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
"Let the little ones come unto Me."

Now let us try with all simplicity to see the actual picture. Those little children of Judaea and Galilee, quite foreign to our children, were yet of the same blood, and the same nature, and the same spiritual essence. Let us, then, look at them in their humanness. See them all about the Christ, some of them timid, clinging and shrinking; and others of them eagerly going forward. Get the human picture, do not buy it, but paint it and look at it. Now, said Christ, "of such" of these ordinary children, of these children from the cottage homes, and all the district round, "of such." For I pray you, remember that the children at whom Christ pointed were not even Sunday-school children. They were not children who had been converted in a Special Mission. I am not criticizing the Special Mission for the child, but pre-eminently desiring that we should understand that they were ordinary children. Half an hour after, if I know anything about children, they were playing and quarreling! "Of such" of these ordinary, everyday children. Oh, but you say, He was speaking of the child in the ideal. Ideal nonsense! He was talking about the bairns these disciples wanted to keep back. "Of such is the Kingdom of God."

I make two deductions from this word of Christ. The child is the microcosm of the Kingdom. If we really will pay attention to a little child we have before us, focused, condensed, the Kingdom of God. And therefore, as a necessary sequence, the Kingdom of God is the microcosm of the child. If we take in the larger outlooks, the more spacious conceptions of the Kingdom, then in every little child, the little child you saw this morning, who does not go to Sunday school at all, the child in the gutter, is the picture of the Kingdom of God.

I say, first of all, that the child is the microcosm of the Kingdom. Notice what Christ said to these men. "Of such is the Kingdom," not, Of such will be the Kingdom, but, "Of such is the Kingdom." The child as I find it today, is not the microcosm of the Kingdom of God in the ultimate, but it is the microcosm of the Kingdom of God as it is: "Of such is the Kingdom." I think, brethren, that we too inclusively interpret the Kingdom in the terms of consummation. We say, the Kingdom of God, and we attempt at once to take in its vast and ultimate meanings and reaches. There are times when we ought to do it, for the ultimate is the inspiration of the present. But that is not what Jesus said. He who knew more about these children than did their fathers and mothers, declared that the Kingdom of God at the present time is as these children are. In a child I find potentiality, imperfection, and therefore, providing always that I have that passion for the Kingdom which is the fundamental necessity, an appeal. All the glory of the oak forest lies in the single acorn which I can hold in my hand. All the glory, or the shame of England, lies in the little child that sits by your side, or that you pass in the street. All the shame of humanity lay in the first child of the race, Adam. All the glory of humanity lay in the young child, in the manger, at Bethlehem. That is potentiality. But in a child there is also imperfection. An acorn is not an oak forest. It is not even an oak. It is imperfect; it is undeveloped potentiality. Finally, therefore, a little child is a perpetual appeal for the treatment that will realize all the things that lie in its personality. The little child is forever saying, So deal with me as to realize all that is in me. That appeal is the true philosophy of education. That

perpetual cry of the child should condition all our attitudes toward it, and our relationships with it.

The child is the microcosm of the Kingdom. That Kingdom of God today is a great potentiality. The powers of that Kingdom are everywhere. There is no power being used basely, devilishly, but that if it can be redeemed, and put into true operation, is a power making for the ultimate Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God today is imperfect, not realized. The little child reveals to us what that Kingdom is in its present conditions. Just as having seen in the face of a little child great possibilities, and great imperfections, we hear the appeal of its life for treatment that will correct the imperfections and realize the possibilities, so as we look upon the world today we see the possibility, and know the imperfection, and these become the prayer of the world in its need, calling us to active service. Children's Day, did you tell me this was? So it is, thank God. But children's day is London's day, and England's day, and the World's day, and God's day. "Of such is the Kingdom."

Or take the larger outlook, and see how the Kingdom is the macrocosm of the child. We can only think of the Kingdom now in the narrow limit of our own world. Then it means first the right of God by creation, and by redemption. It means consequently that the whole world is crying out after that God Whose it is by creation and by redemption. And, finally, it means the whole world finds eternal life, that is permanence, only in right relationship to God. All these things that constitute your philosophy of the Kingdom of God in its widest application are true of every little child. The right of God in a child is infinitely more than the right of a parent, for every child is His creation, and every child upon which we look, even if our eyes may not see it, has on its face the mark of redemption. Every child is crying out after God, however we may understand or misinterpret its cry. And hear the solemn word, not now to be dealt with at length, but to be stated of necessity, the child can find eternal life only as it has right relationship with God.

And now I turn briefly to the appeal, "Suffer the little children: and forbid them not." It has three applications. There is the first and simplest. It touches the child, it shows me my duty concerning the child. There is the second and the deepest. It shows me what I must be if I would obey the instruction concerning the child. Finally, there is the third and the widest, the application of this to the world at large, and to the Church's responsibility therein.

As to the first of these, I suppose I need hardly stay to deal with it. It is the old, old story, yet hear His words once more. Said He, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." That is the positive application. Not, Bring the children to Me, but Suffer them to come. In order that it may be perfectly clear, He interprets His positive by a negative, "and hinder them not." "Suffer the little children to come." See, they are coming! Suffer them to come, and hinder them not! The negative interprets the positive. If we take this positive, and hear the negative interpretation of it, we find that Jesus meant to say that the child will come to Him if we do not hinder it. The Church's responsibility is not that of bringing children to Christ, but of getting things out of the way that hinder their coming. In that matchless picture in the last chapter of John's gospel, of Peter being restored to position and service, when Jesus gave him his work, He said first, "Feed My Lambs"; He then said, "Shepherd My sheep," and, finally, "Feed My sheep." He did not say, Shepherd My lambs, but feed them. The sheep that has wandered away must be shepherded, but the lamb is here, feed it. I make you this declaration this morning. There is not a child born into the world but that will go straight to Christ unless someone hinders it. I do not know how to go on preaching. I never hear that word of Jesus

without having my heart shaken like a tempest. Do not forget it. I would not apportion blame. Original sin, tendency to evil, is in every child; but a Saviour is waiting to receive the child, and if only we will get out of the way, and get everything else out of the way in the child's first home environment, and everywhere else, that child will get straight to Christ. Suffer them, forbid them not! Our business about the children is to see to it that we get out of the way the things that hinder. Hinder them not. Jesus was hot with indignation that men who had seen some vision of the Kingdom should hinder the children. They are trying to come today, and we are fooling the time away quarreling about their education. God have mercy upon us! Hinder them not. I would like to have it emblazoned on every hall in which children meet. Hinder them not. That is our responsibility.

And then He turns upon our own souls this great word, Except you become like the little child, you cannot enter into the Kingdom. Unless you are a submitted soul you are bound to hinder the children. And you must be of the child nature also, understanding the child. My brethren, I am content to leave the application of all that. I think it is better made to this heart of mine when I am alone, and better made to yours when you are alone.

Let me take one minute with the last, and final, and widest thought. Make the application of this to the world. "Of such is the Kingdom." He puts the child at the center, and He puts the Kingdom at the circumference, and if we will keep the child at the center the Kingdom is assured; and if we will keep the Kingdom at the circumference the child is safe. "Of such is the Kingdom." He put the child at the center. When shall we learn to do it? May God lead us there. During these weeks of absence from the country things have happened of which as yet I know nothing in detail.

I do not know about the Education Bill, I do not know about the Licensing Bill; I have not yet read the text of either.

But put the child in the midst, and then you will desire to lock Mr. McKenna and the Bishop of St. Asaph up in one room until they have settled this business once and for ever. I am ashamed; in the name of God, I am ashamed! Let us see to it that the child is made the test.

Licensing Bill! Put the child in the midst. That is the test. Vested interest? What do you mean by a vested interest? If for long, long years we have given a right to men for money's sake to harm a child, then in God's name it is time we had done with the business. No vested interest which harms a child can be permitted to remain. Does it harm a child? Oh, fools and blind, if you ask a question like that! Give some of us half a day in the slum, or in the West End! In the name of God, who is there who has not been touched somewhere by the devilry of this traffic in his own heart and life? Put the child in the midst, put the child in the midst, and fling your circumference of the Kingdom of God round it, and then you will have solved your problems.

I am glad to come back on Anniversary Day. It is a new beginning, and consecration, and I make it in the presence of the little child. We read that second chapter in Matthew for one purpose. Take a blue or red pencil, one that you will never fail to see, and put a line under these words, "the young Child." All the way through the great imperial King, the Lord Christ, Son of God, and Son of Man, is designated in that chapter, "the young Child." Thus God, to lead us and help us, makes the eternal King and Priest the eternal Child; and in proportion as we know Him, and are in fellowship with Him, we shall gather every individual child into our heart and our love; and we shall make a child

the test of our Church life, and of our political attitudes; and all the things of life and service will be governed by the presence of the child, and "of such is the Kingdom."

Mark 11:11. The Looking Of Jesus.

Mark 11:11.

The Looking Of Jesus.

And He entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when He had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Mark 11:11

This was the final incident in a wonderful day, and it was as remarkably suggestive as anything that happened on that day. In the morning Jesus had ridden toward the city amid the plaudits of the multitudes. On the way He had paused, and beholding the city, had wept over it and had pronounced its doom. Then He had entered the city and at last had come to its very heart and center, the temple itself. There He "... looked round about upon all things,..." and departed. That looking of Jesus arrests our attention. The word which the evangelist employed to describe it is a compound word and our translators, in, order to convey its significance, have become almost redundant in their use of words; "... he had looked round about upon,..." and the four words constitute the translation of one Greek word. The prefix of the Greek word suggests a looking everywhere and all round everything, and the idea is expressed by our words round about upon. The base of the word suggests thoroughness in looking. It does not indicate the gaze of wonder. There is such a word in our Greek New Testament—looking with wide-open eyes as does a child—but that is not the word of my text. Neither—and this I would enforce even more carefully—does it suggest the inspection of one not familiar with what he is looking at; it is not the inspection of one who desires to discover. There is a word in our Greek New Testament which stands for exactly that kind of looking, but this is not that word. This word suggests, rather, the voluntary contemplation of what is already known. The idea is that of looking thoroughly at the whole of the facts before His eyes, the kind of looking which suggests thought.

What did He see as at that eventide He looked round about upon all things? What did He think as He looked? The answer to both inquiries may be gathered from His subsequent actions. He came to the temple again, certainly twice, probably three times. I am going to take it for granted that He came three times and if the third coming is not established, at least we shall see that on the occasion to which I shall refer His mind and heart were there. What we shall find Him doing will reveal to us what He saw when He looked round about upon all things, and what He thought as the result of what He saw. He came the next day and cleansed the temple and for a few brief hours guarded it against all defilement and intrusion. He came the day after and spent the whole day there, judging the rulers, condemning them, and as He left He prophesied the doom of the temple, declaring that not one stone should be left upon another of all the great and glorious building. He came again, as I believe, on Passover night. When in the midst of the paschal discourse He said: "... arise, let us go hence," I think He led the disciples back toward the temple, and there at its most glorious entrance, under the shadow of the golden vine, He uttered His

teaching concerning the vine and offered His great intercessory prayer. In the light of these facts therefore, let us answer our questions; what did He see? What did He think?

What then did Jesus see? That is our first question. Let me give an answer from the three incidents briefly, before dwelling upon them at greater length. He saw a den of robbers. He saw a destructive force already at work which would never end its operations until the whole temple was demolished. He saw the Divine victory beyond the demolition.

He saw a den of robbers. He came back on the following day into the temple, cleansed and guarded it and proceeded to teach, giving reasons for His strange and wonderful action in these words: "... It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of robbers." In these words of Jesus His conception of what the temple ought to be is revealed; "... My house shall be called the house of prayer:... The emphasis was; not so much upon the fact that it was to be called the house of prayer, as upon the fact that it was to be the house of prayer for all the nations. He was by no means concerned to defend the temple as a peculiar place of worship for the Hebrew people. He was making His protest against that very misconception. Part of the defilement of the temple lay in the fact that men looked upon it only as a place where Hebrews might worship. Let it be distinctly remembered that what Jesus saw as He looked round about was that a traffic was being carried on within the temple courts but not within the holy places. This traffic was prosecuted in the courts which in the Divine provision had been set apart for the gathering of the Gentiles, the men of other nations who desired to worship the God of the Hebrews. The inner courts into which went the priests or the Hebrews bringing sacrifices were held sacred against the profanation of Gentile feet. The courts appointed for the Gentiles were filled with traffickers. They were making religion easy for the Hebrews. They were setting the Hebrew free from the responsibility of selecting his offering of a lamb or turtle dove. The moment men begin to make religion easy, they cut its nerve.

They were doing more, they were making religion difficult for the Gentiles who ought to have occupied that particular court. The temple courts were being used as a short cut from one part of the city to another. These people were going to and fro through the courts, carrying vessels and merchandise, thus making religion easy for the Jews and difficult for the Gentiles. These were the surface things, but the things upon the surface tell the story of the things that underlie them. As our Lord looked out upon that scene, He knew that the rulers of the temple were guilty in that they encouraged the traffic and permitted this crossing of the courts in order to reach a place in the city more easily; and He knew that the people who employed the method were guilty also. It was not only that they were wronging the Gentiles, in the wronging of the Gentiles they were wronging the God Who was the God of the Gentiles as surely as He was the God of the Jews. He went into the temple, and He looked round about upon all things and He saw the temple as a den of robbers.

Further, He saw a destructive force at work. When, next day, He came to the temple, He challenged the rulers while the rulers thought they were challenging Him; He tried the rulers while the rulers thought they were trying Him; He found a verdict against the rulers while they were trying to find a verdict against Him; He sentenced the rulers and the nation while they thought they were passing sentence on Him. By parabolic method of investigation and denunciation, He compelled these men to find verdicts against themselves and pass sentences upon themselves. Again eventide came and as He was leaving the temple, His disciples drew His attention to the

beauty of the building. He looked at them as one who should say: "You need not show Me the beauty of the building, I know it well; Do you see it? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." I need not stay to dwell upon the literal and absolute fulfilment of that prophecy within a generation when the armies of Titus surrounded Jerusalem and not a single stone was left upon another of that temple. That is not the point now but rather what Jesus saw. He saw what Isaiah saw. He saw the whole city, the whole temple, and the whole audience therein, enwrapped in fire, the fire of the immediate nearness of Deity, the slowly burning but surely destructive fire which destroys only that which is perishable, and purifies, ennobles, and beautifies that which is in itself noble, high, and true. We remember Isaiah's great passage: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath seized the godless ones:..." Why? "... Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" In the prophet's question there was no reference to the hell that lies beyond. There was reference rather to the very conditions in the midst of which they were living. The prophet saw that God forgotten was not God distanced; God disobeyed was not God defeated. He saw that God was there as the slowly burning fire of which there is a parabolic illustration in all nature. Scientists tell us of the eremacausis, a slowly burning fire in nature which oxidizes iron or steel if we leave it out in the dew, and paints the trees with their autumnal tints, as it destroys the effete for the perfecting of that which really lives. Jesus saw this fire everywhere. He saw the inevitable end therefore. He knew that the symbol, the temple, must be destroyed when its meaning was denied. Material strength and beauty were doomed when they were not the vehicle of spiritual interpretation and moral appeal. Therefore, as He looked round about upon all things He saw, not only the den of robbers, the desecration of the Divine ideal; He saw also doom and destruction, because God is not mocked, neither can He be distanced from human affairs.

He saw more, He saw the Divine victory. If He did not actually come to the temple on Passover night, He was certainly there in spirit. I personally believe He actually came there on that night and that the last great discourse, the allegory of the vine, was uttered there. At Passover time the gates of the temple were open for pilgrims that they might enter and meditate. The main entrance was never closed. Josephus tells us in his "Antiquities" that over the entrance Herod had constructed a thing of infinite beauty, the wonder and amazement of all who looked at it, the golden vine, the vine being the scriptural symbol of the Hebrew people. Under that golden vine then it is probable that Jesus stood with His disciples when He said: "I am the true vine,...." What then did He see as He looked round about upon all things? He saw a city without a temple. He saw the realization of the Divine ideal symbolized in the vine which Israel had never succeeded in fulfilling. He saw the vine bearing fruit for the nations. Israel had failed and He must curse and denounce the city. But if it be true that God is not distanced, it is also true that God cannot be defeated. Looking out upon all things in the temple, He saw with great clearness a city wherein there should be no temple. The woman of Samaria had said to Him: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus had answered her: "... Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.... the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth:..." He saw beyond the doom and destruction of the temple, the glad, glorious, wonderful day, when the temple should be unnecessary in the perfected city of God. John saw that city in Patmos, the city of God with no temple therein. Looking through the darkness, He saw a sanctified life in which worship would no longer be special, occasional, but

normal and persistent. Looking round about upon all things, He saw a den of robbers, a destructive force, but a Divine victory.

What, then, let us ask in the second place, did He think as He saw these things? Here again we are instructed by the things that followed. When He saw the house appointed for worship, a house of prayer for all the nations, desecrated, He knew that the Divine ideal must be maintained at all costs. Therefore, He returned on the morrow. He cast out the moneychangers and overthrew their tables, and more, He would not suffer any carrying a vessel to pass through those courts. Look at the scene. How long it lasted I cannot tell, probably some hours. Jesus is seen holding the temple, guarding it against intrusion, and turning it to its rightful uses. First of all, He cleared away abuse; turned men out, overturned tables, halted every man who tried to take a short cut through the courts to some other part of the city. Matthew says that two things were going on during the time He held and guarded the temple. It is a beautiful picture; Jesus the Lord and Master of the temple is seen healing sick folk, and all the while the children are singing round about Him—a musical obligato to Divine healing. For a moment He gave the city and the world for all time to see what a house of prayer is; not a place where we go to ask for things for ourselves, but a place where the halt and maimed are healed while children sing. If man has destroyed the Divine ideal, the Divine ideal must not be lost. He gave us a picture in a flash of what He is still doing and what He will continue to do until He has completed the work of driving out the traffickers and overturning the money tables and guarding men's right of access to God.

But He came again and argued all day long with the rulers and condemned them, and as He left He pronounced the final doom upon the city and declared that not one stone should be left upon another of the temple. What then did He think as He looked round about upon all things?

That the human degradation must be destroyed. That human degradation was complete He knew full well as witness His parables in that long day's teaching. These men would kill, not merely the servants sent unto them, but the very Son Who came out from the Father's heart. Because the degradation was complete, nothing must be left which would be of the nature of false security. There are times when the best thing we can do with a church is to close it. Better abandon a sacrament and close a church than traffic with the church and with the sacrament in an unholy way. The temple must be destroyed because if it remain it becomes a false security and a libel on God. Consequently, we find that the fierce fire of His wrath is kindled by the deeper passion of His heart in mercy. He will destroy all false security that the soul in its nakedness may be driven out toward Himself for help, healing, and blessing.

As He looked round about upon all things, He knew not only that the Divine ideal must be maintained and human degradation destroyed, but that the Divine purpose must be realized in the Divine way. When He came back on Passover night, after He said: "I am the true Vine,..." He began to pray. "... Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee." He was praying for strength for the Cross. As He looked round about upon all things, He knew that in order to the final establishment of the Divine ideal and in order to move toward the Divine purpose in spite of destruction, it was necessary that He should gather up into His heart and life in a mystery utterly beyond the possibility of human analysis, all the sin that had wrought the havoc and quench it in His blood.

So He still observes. So He still looks round about upon all things. There are no questions more important for us individually, socially, nationally, ecclesiastically, than those we have been asking in the presence of this old-time story. He looks down upon men wherever they foregather, whether it be a church or in a theatre; whether it be in the halls of commerce or in places of amusement; whether in the capitalist club or the labor church; He looks, He observes, He sees. He looks at the national attitudes and activities and understands them in their profoundest depths, in those depths that no diplomacy will ever discover to statesmen, and yet with which statesmen must deal if nationality is ever to be anything worth the name. He still looks round about upon all things in the church, upon all its worship and upon all its work. We need to remember that when Jesus looks He sees everything thoroughly. He sees the good, and He sees the bad. He sees that which is high, and that which is low. He sees that which is true, and that which is merely formal. He knows whether, when our lips recite the prayer He taught His disciples, we are indulging in the talk of parrots or praying. He sees thoroughly the internal as well as the external, the motive as well as the manner, the aspiration as well as the achievement. If this be a scorching, burning truth, there is yet more comfort in it than in anything else I know. He sees everything. Your neighbor listens to your profession; He knows the truth about you. Your friend knows how you blundered, failed, sinned. He knows why you did it, and how you did not want to do it, and how your aspiration was a great deal better than your achievement. He knows all about you, the fire in the blood, the deadly, dastardly, devilish poison that drives you; He takes it all into account. He sees everything and sees thoroughly.

Remember, in the second place, that when He looks, He measures everything by the Divine standard. He does not measure anything by the standards of human convenience, or selfishness, or by that of vested interests. They had vested interests in the temple, and He hurried them out overturning their tables. He does not measure the drink traffic today by the standard of vested interests. We ought to be filled with shame that we are not taking out of the way of our sons the possibility of temptation and from devilish men and women the chance of tempting them.

Neither does He measure by the standard of our ability. You say, "I am doing the best I can." He does not measure us that way. That is not all the truth of life. Doing the best we can is a poor business. What then are the standards of His measurement? The purpose of God and the power of God as available for every man. It is not enough that I do the best I can. I am to do the best that God and I can do. "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" said Paul. He expects, not that I shall do the best I can, but that I shall avail myself of all the power that is at my disposal in God. He measures by Divine standards.

Again, when He looks, He always agrees with God in His destructive judgments. His parable of the barren fig tree teaches this. The hour comes, according to that parable, when the vinedresser after long provocation to fruit bearing has to say with the proprietor: "Cut it down." He ever agrees with God. The building must go even though it be the temple, be it never so ancient, never so strong, never so beautiful. It is leprous, it must go. If that be true of a building, it is much more true of the men who have caused the pollution.

One thing more. I would not have said all I have said if I had not something else to say. When He looks, He pities and He provides a way of escape, even from the pre-determined judgments. That was the goal of all His journeyings and that the explanation of the pathway of His choice, the

pathway that led Him ultimately to Calvary. When there was no eye to pity, He pitied. When there was no arm to save, He saved. So mighty was His pity and so profound His compassion that when He had to curse the city, he wept over it. Robert William Dale once said that Dwight Lyman Moody was the one and only man he knew who had any right to preach about hell. When asked what he meant, he said: "Moody never talks of hell except with tears in his voice." Jesus never talked of destruction except with tears in His voice. O man, under the destructive judgment of God because of thy pollution, remember there is pity in His heart, and if thou wilt but avail thyself of His provision, He will deliver thee even from that pre-determined judgment. He looked upon all things with love-lit eyes, eyes illumined, irradiated, by the infinite compassion of His heart.

I will end our meditation by grouping one or two Scriptures together. "... He looked round about upon all things...." Then in the last picture of Him in the New Testament, I find this sentence: "... His eyes were as a flame of fire." In a letter written by one of His apostles, I find these words: "Each man's work... is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work, of what sort it is." Then I read again, with new understanding: "... Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Then I come back from the apocalyptic word, the apostolic declaration, and the prophetic inquiry, and standing again in the presence of the One Who looks I hear Him saying: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then I feel as though I must go, and I hear Him say one other word: "... him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Under the scrutiny of those eyes of fire may we hear the sweetness of that voice of love.

Mark 10:21. The Young Ruler.

Mark 10:21.

The Young Ruler.

One thing thou lackest.

Mark 10:21

It seems to us as though Jesus never said a more startling thing to any man who came to Him than this, "One thing thou lackest." Yet whether the "one thing" be much or little depends wholly upon what it is. Some five or six years ago, in an American city, as I stood upon the platform and gave out my first hymn in a series of meetings, I heard the weak tones of a small reed organ, notwithstanding the fact that there was a very fine organ in the building. Turning to my friend, the minister of the church, I said to him, "What is the matter with the great organ?" He replied, "Nothing." "Why is it not being played?" I asked. "It lacks only one thing, and that is a player," he replied.

One thing lacking! An instrument, fearfully and wonderfully made, constructed to catch the wind and transmute it into music—silent, no harmony, no symphony—why? There was one thing lacking, a master hand to sweep the keys and bring the music out. Which is a parable, helping us to see what Christ meant. "One thing thou lackest."

In order that we may understand what this lack really was, I am going to ask you first to look carefully at this young man. I want to say three things about him. I shall say nothing about his wealth; nothing concerning his position in the nation, except incidentally, for a man's wealth and position are nothing when you are measuring him by the standards of eternity, or looking upon him in the light of spiritual things. Let us see the man as he was in himself.

The first thing I say concerning him is that he was a man of fine natural temperament. This is revealed in his whole attitude toward Jesus Christ. That he was discerning is revealed in the fact that to Christ he said, "Good Master."

He was also a man of courage. He was a ruler, and so belonged to a class which had been critical at the commencement of our Lord's ministry, but now were openly against Him. Notwithstanding this fact, when this man saw goodness, he confessed it, daring to say, "Good Master."

He was moreover, a man of humility, for when he came into the presence of Jesus he knelt. You may tell me there is nothing more in that than the Eastern method of salutation. It was not the method by which a ruler saluted a peasant, even in the East. Peasants knelt to rulers. It was as strange a thing then as it would be for a ruler to kneel in the presence of a peasant in London. Jesus was most evidently, to the seeing of His own age, a peasant. Yet here is a man, who is a wealthy ruler, who dared to kneel in His presence.

At this man, discerning, courageous, humble, Christ looked, and said, "One thing thou lackest."

He was more than a man of fine temperament, he had a clean record. Never allow any man, be he prophet or priest or preacher, to tell you there is any value in pollution. Let no man make you believe there is no value in having a clean record. Even if you are not a Christian man, there is value in it. This man had a clean record. Jesus flashed upon him the light of six commandments from the decalogue, not the first four, which indicate the relationship which ought to exist between man and God, but the last six, which condition the relation of man to his neighbor. "Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother." One light after another flashed upon the inner, hidden, secret life of the man, and he looked back into the face of Christ and said, "Master, all these things have I observed from my youth." Now, it has been declared that this was an empty boast, that this man said to Christ a thing that was not true. I do not believe it. I believe his statement was the simple, honest truth. I believe that standing there, confronting Jesus Christ, and looking into the eyes of incarnate purity, here was a man who was able to say concerning these ancient commandments which forbid a man violating the true relationship between himself and his neighbor, "All these things have I observed from my youth." Immediately the evangelist tells us that "Jesus looking upon him, loved him." I do not mean to infer by that statement that if he had broken the whole six Christ would not have loved him. There is, perchance, a man in this building, hiding away from the crowd, who has broken the whole ten. Christ loves that man, and can save him if he will let Him. It is noticeable, however, that at this point the evangelist declares He loved him. I do not think you will ever find it declared that Christ loved a hypocrite or a liar. There is a sense in which he loved even them, but never in the act of hypocrisy or lying. Christ's anger was white-hot in the presence of all lying and hypocrisy. This young man said, "Master, all these things have I observed from my youth." He was a man of clean record.

Once again, he was a man of true aspiration. What is this question with which he comes to Christ, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Let us be careful here in order that we may catch if possible the real thought in the mind of this man. What is the meaning of this phrase, "eternal life"? We have used it constantly in the Christian Church as though it were a phrase indicating continuity of existence merely. I do not deny that this is partially the meaning of the phrase, but there is much more in it than this. Age-abiding life is what he was seeking. This is not merely life which continues; it is life which contains. It is perfectly evident that in his own soul he was conscious of a present lack. All his wealth could not purchase that something which he needed. He was a man of position, but his position could not command that which his soul was supremely seeking. It was life that he needed, more life that he was seeking. He was conscious of the infinite, and yet could not grasp it. In the midst of all the things of time and sense he heard the echoes of the eternal and spiritual. His clean record did not satisfy him. His power of discernment left him still hungry. His courage had behind it an ache and an agony. His very humility did not bring his inner soul into the realization of that for which it was perpetually asking. He wanted life, he desired to take hold of that which can satisfy the deepest in a man. He heard the call of the infinite sighing its way up through his own nature. He knew he was more than flesh. He knew he was more than that which could be fed with the things which were all about him. Life! Let us state the truth at once. This cry after life is the cry of the lost offspring of God after the Father God. He was seeking God, seeking life, and all this before Christ met him. His meeting with Christ, as we see it in the Gospel narrative, simply brings out into clear relief these facts concerning him, a man of fine temperament, a man of clean record, a man of true aspiration, and to that man Christ said,

"One thing thou lackest."

Let us proceed at once to ask what Christ meant. What did he lack? The popular, and I had almost said, the superficial interpretation of the story declares that he lacked poverty. Nothing of the kind. If you leave your story there you have not listened to it, you have not caught the meaning of Christ's strange question at the beginning, "Why callest thou Me good?" If when Christ told this man to sell all that he had and give to the poor. He meant that what he lacked was poverty, then there is no application to the vast majority of us. That surely is not the last word. I am not going to lose that. It has its place in the story. The fact that Christ told this man to sell all that he had and give to the poor is not to be omitted, but it is to be placed in its right relationship. What is the word of Christ to this man? "One thing thou lackest," and then as a preliminary the Master Physician puts His hand upon the one thing that stands in his way. Christ will deal with some of you tonight, but He will not say to you, sell all that you have and give to the poor. He will say something else, put His hand upon some preliminary thing, something, which if you do not abandon you will never be able to obey Him in the ultimate and supreme command. He is moving toward the heart and center of man's need, and it is necessary in doing so to clear out of the way the things that stand between him and the realization of his own life. What is the final word, "Come, follow Me." That is the man's lack. You say to me, Then do you mean to say that what the man lacked was following Christ? Yes, finally, that is what this word really means. Look at it from the standpoint, first of all, not of the Person of Christ, though there we must end, but from the standpoint of the man's real condition. What did this man lack? He lacked a center of authority. He lacked a dominating principle in his life. He had never found his King.

Will you patiently for a moment keep that statement in mind, while I come a little way from it in order to get back to it. Another of the New Testament stories reveals the principle. A Roman centurion once said, "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." When he uttered these words he did not intend to state a principle, but he did so. He was speaking out of the natural order of his own life. Remember, he was a centurion. In that sentence of his is revealed the whole system of true government. "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers." No man ought to have soldiers under him who is not himself under authority. No man—to put this now, not in its application to soldier life, but to all life—no man can reign who does not serve. No man can wield a scepter who has not kissed a scepter. No man can enter into and possess the kingdom of his own life who has not first of all recognized that he is part of a larger kingdom, and has submitted himself to control. "I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers," is a true philosophy of life. This young ruler coming to Christ said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life," that I may enter into it and possess it, that I may reign in life. Christ said to him, "One thing thou lackest." You have never found your King. You have never bent before the supreme will, even in your religion. In your seeking and your planning you have been self-centered, self-governed. You cannot find life until you have found a King, external and superior to yourself.

Let me take you a little further back for a moment. This man first came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good, save One, even God." I do not believe that was an idle question. I do not believe that it was spoken carelessly. I think that when our Lord asked the question He desired to arrest this man and to leave an impression upon his mind to which presently He would return.

Hear the question, and think of it quite simply. "Why callest thou Me Good? None is good, save One, even God." I know there are different interpretations of that question. As a matter of fact, it is one of the sayings of the New Testament which Professor Schmiedel acknowledges to be true, and he tells us it is true because in it Christ evidently discounts Himself, that He evidently meant to say to this man, Do not call Me good. There is none good save God, and I am not God. Did He mean that? Look at the question again. When Christ said, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good, save One, even God," He meant one of two things. He either meant I am not good, or, I am God. I do not think you can escape the alternative. You may escape it by denying the accuracy of the story. If you accept the view that He denied Deity, then if He were true in His philosophy that only God is good, He denied goodness. I do not believe that here Jesus denied good, He denied goodness. I do not believe that He claimed Deity. Looking into the face of this man, He knew that what he wanted was a Master. Man has only one Master, God. There is only one King able to realize the kingdom of human life, and that is God. If a man shall bow the knee to any human teacher, and submit himself to him, he is in peril of his soul, of his very life. There is only one scepter we must kiss, it is the scepter of the Most High. There is only one King Who can govern your complex mysterious, far-reaching life, and that is God. When Christ asked that question, it is as though He had said to the man, You are after life. Your discernment is great, because you have linked life with goodness—"Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" You come to goodness to inquire the way into life. Why do you call Me good? Think what you are saying. If you have seen goodness in Me, you have seen God. If you have recognized goodness as you have looked into My face, watched My deeds, and listened to My words, your life has come into the light of the Divine, into the light of God Himself.

Presently we read, "One thing thou lackest. Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor... and come, follow Me." That is to say, He confronted this man and said in effect, Fine is the temperament, clean is the record, true is the aspiration, but in order that all these things may be brought to fruition you must find your King Who is God, "Follow Me." He called the man after Himself. This again is one of those stupendous, appalling, overwhelming claims of Christ which either demonstrate Him God in very deed and truth, or prove Him to have been devoid of honesty, purity, and meekness. Standing confronting this man, He says, You need your King. Your King is God. Behold your King. Follow Me!

How is this man to follow Him? What stands in the way? All the things that have ministered perpetually to his own selfish life. Now, says Christ, put them all away. Do not dream for one single moment that if you are really bent on finding your life, and if you are coming after your King, that you can do so by manipulating the things that have ministered to the self life. By drastic, daring, courageous heroism, make an end of them. That is Christ's method with the man, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." There is a touch of fine, sweet satire in Christ's terms, "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." You will lose your treasure for a moment, and grasp it for the ages. Christ recommends this man to invest his money in such a way that rust cannot corrupt it, and thieves cannot steal it. Postpone the possession to increase it, that is all. Put out of thy life all the things that minister to selfish desire. Be at the end of them. "Follow Me."

What happened? I do not know. Alternatively I do know what happened. The story is left at a point full of sadness, full of suggestiveness. You have no right to say that this man never found his way to Christ. You do not know. This you know, "he went away sorrowful for he was one that had great

possessions." "Sorrowful" is the most hopeful word in that statement. I make no dogmatic declaration about the actual issue in his case, but I will tell you absolutely what happened as between one of two things. He had heard the voice which spoke to his inmost heart and soul. From the lips of poverty he had heard the language of the infinite wealth. All the light of spiritual truth flashed and flamed about him, and he knew it. Why was he sorrowful? Tell me, did you ever read anything so strangely contradictory if you measure it by the philosophy of this age or any other age. "He went away sorrowful, because," that is the real force of it, "because he was one that had great possessions." You say, men do not go away sorrowful because they have great possessions. Oh, yes they do, if they have stood face to face with Christ and have heard Him calling them to abandon them, and they do not do it. He had stood in the light and had seen the power of the life which he was seeking. He had come nearer than ever before. For years, I believe, there had been a sighing, groaning, sobbing, agony in the soul of this man after life. He had been close to it, had seen it, had heard its music, had heard its demands, and he went away sorrowful. What happened? One of two things. He got back presently to his own home, a home of ease and luxury, doubtless, for he was a man who had great possessions, a home which in all probability the merchants of Damascus had made beautiful. I see him go back to his own house. I follow him home. There came a moment presently when he said: I can no longer bear it, I have seen life and I must have it. Call in my steward, render an account of my possessions; it is drastic, terrible, I shall suffer lack, but sweep it all out. I must find Him again, the Man of the seamless robe, the lowly Stranger Who looked into my eyes and flashed the very light of life upon me. If he did that, sold all, obeyed Christ, and swept away the power and authority of his past life, he found the age-abiding life. If not, he said to himself, That was a strange thing I did yesterday. I cannot imagine what possessed me to kneel to that peasant. I thought I wanted life, and that He could say something about it—and the conscience says, He did say something about it. But no, it was a mere phantasy. Thus gradually he would argue himself out of the thing. If that were his action, the day came when he laughed at the weakness of the moment when he knelt in the presence of Jesus. Not long ago a Member of Parliament laughed in the presence of a great meeting as he told them that he was nearly born again in a great revival meeting years before. When a man has stood face to face with Christ, as that young ruler had done, it is higher or lower, it is either an ascent by the way of the cross, or a descent by the way of selfishness and luxury and sin. I do not know which it was in the case of this young man. Men tell us that tradition has it that this was Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary. I do not know. It has been said that this may actually have been Saul of Tarsus. I do not know. I do not think so. I know this. From that hour he was never the same. Either the sorrow with which he turned away from Christ was turned into joy when he obeyed Him, and found his life, or else the sorrow passed to numbness and deadness, and he became, to use the terrific word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, "hardened." That is the one condition of all others against which we need to pray.

My brothers and sisters, the story needs very little application. You tell me it is an old story. It is as fresh as this Palm Sunday. You tell me it is Eastern. It is Western. You tell me it happened long ago. I tell you it is happening here and now. There are those of you in this house who have a fine temperament. I do not undervalue it. Your friends love you. You are generous and kind and discerning, frank and courageous. Some of you have a clean record, so far as the vulgarities of sin are concerned. You have right aspirations. You will not be angry with me if I say that your presence here proves it. You do not come here for entertainment. You have heard the undertone

of the eternities in your lives, and you have paused this Sabbath evening for a little to listen once again to a man who will speak to you only of Christ and of your relation to God, and you knew it when you came.

There is in your soul the sob after life. Even now the Christ is confronting you. What is He saying to you? I do not know as to the preliminary. I do know as to the ultimate. I cannot say whether He is telling you to go and sell all you have. I do know that He is saying, "Come, follow Me." He is saying "Go"—but what else, I do not know. You say, I wish you would tell me. I cannot tell you. God in heaven give us two or three minutes of honesty! There is no man here tonight who has not yielded to Christ but knows what stands between him and his Lord. "One thing thou lackest, Go,"—and I cannot fill in the gap. If I gave you one illustration, or two or three, what are they in a crowd like this? Scores of men and women would say, These things do not refer to us, therefore we are all right. Listen, not to me, but for the Voice which makes no mistake, "One thing thou lackest. Go—" You know the thing that stands between you and the "Follow Me." What stands between? Right hand? Right eye? Cut it off. Pluck it out. Brother? Sister? Father? Mother? Wife? Child? Man, you know what it is. Fling it out, and then, "Follow Me." Now one would like to begin to preach again. I am not going to. Oh, that "Follow Me." No man ever did it but that he found his own life, found its meaning, found its unfolding, its realization. "Follow Me." Here is my last word to you, my brother, you cannot reign in life until you have found your King. There are no words I have ever heard sung that have rung in my soul more than these:—

Make me a captive, Lord,

And then I shall be free;

Force me to render up my sword,

And I shall conqueror be.

I sink in life's alarms

When by myself I stand;

Imprison me within Thine arms,

And strong shall be my hand.

My heart is weak and poor

Until it Master find:

It has no spring of action sure—

It varies with the wind:

It cannot freely move

Till Thou hast wrought its chain;

Enslave it with Thy matchless love

And deathless it shall reign.

My power is faint and low
Till I have learned to serve:
It wants the needed fire to glow,
It wants the breeze to nerve;
It cannot drive the world
Until itself be driven;
Its flag can only be unfurled
When Thou shalt breathe from heaven.
My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine;
If it would reach the monarch's throne
It must its crown resign;
It only stands unbent,
Amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leant,
And found in Thee its life.

That is the meaning of our story. Anything that stands between you and the crowning of Christ, I beseech you, sweep it away. You will never be just the same again after this hour, but higher or lower, to the throne or to the dungeon, and that of your own choice and action in the presence of the Christ. May God in His great grace help us to crown Him and follow Him and find our life.

Luke 1:74, 75. Holiness: Definition.

Luke 1:74, 75.

Holiness: Definition.

To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

Luke 1:74-75

The Gospel according to Luke is that of the universal Saviour. In it, Jesus is seen as Man, and His work is dealt with in its widest application. The true ideal of God's ancient people Israel is recognized. Messiah is revealed as of the stock of Abraham, and yet as the Saviour of all men. The song of Mary, the prophecy of Zacharias, the chanting of the angels, and the speech of Simeon, all sacred and beautiful utterances peculiar to the Gospel, recognize Jesus both as the Messiah of the ancient people according to their prophecies; and as the Saviour of all such as put their trust in Him, without regard to nationality. The benefits accruing to the chosen people are recognized, but they are ever seen flowing through them to all peoples. In the song of Zacharias, in which our text is found, Jehovah the God of Israel is declared as visiting, redeeming, and raising up a horn of salvation in the house of David; but the purpose of this visitation of His ancient people is that the light may shine on them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

In order to perform this wider mission, the Messiah brings to His own people "salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, to show mercy toward our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He should swear to Abraham our father, to grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days."

These two words, holiness and righteousness, mark two aspects of one condition. Holiness has to do with character; righteousness with conduct. They cannot possibly be separated from each other. They are as intimately related as are root and fruit. There can be no fruit unless there be a root. If there be living root it must issue in fruit. There can be no righteousness unless there is holiness; holiness must issue in righteousness. Holiness describes being; righteousness describes doing.

The particular word translated holiness in this verse occurs twice only in the New Testament; in this passage, and in the letter to the Ephesians, in which the apostle urges those to whom he writes to "put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." In each case it is linked with the word righteousness. Thus in each of these passages the root principle out of which righteousness grows is recognized.

"In holiness and righteousness." The essential meaning of holiness is right but it is right in intrinsic character. The essential meaning of righteousness is right, but it is right in actual conduct.

In the son of Zacharias holiness and righteousness are declared to be the condition of life resulting from the salvation which the Messiah and Saviour should bring to men. In the Ephesian letter righteousness and holiness are declared to be the result of the new man created after God. Thus whether we take the passage from the song of Zacharias, which recognizes the right and privilege and responsibility of Israel, and all the Divine intention to bless the peoples through Israel; or whether we take the specific writing of the New Testament apostle, it is perfectly evident that the work of Christ was directed toward righteousness of life, issuing from holiness of character.

Let us, then, consider this subject of holiness according to New Testament teaching. It is a very remarkable fact that thousands of the saints of God are a little afraid of the word "holiness." I believe a great many Christian people keep away from all sorts of conventions and conferences because of this fear. It is not very long since a very dear friend of mine, a Christian man, said to me, You know, I don't believe in holiness. I told him how very sorry I was to hear it, because the Bible says that without holiness no man can see the Lord. Of course, he did not mean quite what he said. I have quoted it only to indicate the attitude toward this great word, and this great subject, which is alarmingly prevalent in the Christian Church. I recognize the reason of this fear. A great many unholy things have been said and done by those who perhaps have been loudest in their attempt to explain, and in their claim to the experience of holiness.

Yet is it quite fair that we should turn away from a great word, and a great thought, and a great intention of the Christian religion, because the word itself has been prostituted to base uses, and an interpretation of its meaning not warranted by the Scripture has become widespread and popular? It is well that we should understand what the New Testament teaches, for this much is evident, whatever God means by holiness, whatever the intention of the Holy Spirit is by the use of the term, whatever the New Testament writers meant when they used the word, that for holiness Christ came into the world; that the real intention of His coming was that men being delivered from their enemies might be able to serve Him in holiness and righteousness before Him all their days; that the ultimate charge of Paul in this great crowning letter of his whole system of teaching is that Christians should put off the old man, and put on the new, which is created after God in holiness and in righteousness.

Therefore, with the utmost simplicity of statement of which I am capable, I want, first of all, to speak by way of definition. What is holiness? In the first place, let me repeat in one brief sentence the sum and substance of that already said in introduction. Holiness is rightness or rectitude of character, inspiring righteousness, which is rightness or rectitude of conduct. There is no motive for right conduct sufficiently strong to maintain it in all places, and under all conditions, other than holiness of character. Any other motive breaks down sooner or later. Men do right things from self-respect for a very long while, but sooner or later, under stress of temptation, swift and sudden and subtle, or in the presence of some alluring advantage, they will turn to the thing that is mean and low and dastardly and ignoble. A high sense of duty is not enough at all times and under all circumstances to compel righteousness of conduct; and it is perfectly certain that if men are right only from policy they will break down. There is an old maxim I remember writing when I was a boy in my copybooks, Honesty is the best policy. I think it is true, but it is a pernicious thing to give a child to write, because you thereby inculcate an entirely wrong view of honesty. Honesty is the best policy. Is that the reason why I am to be honest? Then I shall become a rogue before many years pass over my head. The man who is honest only because it is the best policy is a rogue at

heart. No, policy is not enough to compel righteousness. To do right at all times and under all circumstances is only possible to the man who is right in the deepest of him. There is no other motive sufficiently strong to impel and compel righteousness of conduct than that of holiness of character. Now the thought suggested by the word holiness, as the thought suggested by the word righteousness, is that of a standard. What is the standard of holiness? If holiness be rectitude of character, what is rectitude of character? The only answer possible to such an inquiry, at least to the mind of the Christian believer, is that the standard of holiness of character is the character of God. I know how hard that sounds, and yet what other can I say? Holiness is not an idea, formulated in experience, by which we measure God. It is an idea in human experience derived from the revelation which God has made of Himself to humanity. And whether men today are worshipping our God after our fashion or not, every true ideal of holiness obtaining in our common life is derived from revelation, and God remains forevermore the ultimate standard both of holiness and of righteousness. Holiness in man therefore is approximation to the character of God. Righteousness in man is partnership in the activity of God. So that holiness and righteousness alike, in the experience of man, result from fellowship with God.

And yet so far that is but to define a method of discovery rather than to state the discovery. I once again ask, and I know the difficulty of my inquiry, what is the holiness of God? Will you allow me to say, talking quite freely and familiarly to you, I have sat down quite alone in the presence of that inquiry and attempted to discover the answer, and all the while I have seemed to know the meaning, and yet have been unable to define it. The only definition, therefore, that I shall venture to make is by quotation of words occurring in the New Testament descriptive of Jesus. For, after all, is not that the only way to know God? Must I not find my way to a knowledge of God through Him? If you take Him away, then I am in the midst of an infinite and incomprehensible and overwhelming Wisdom and Might, which I cannot know. But when I come into the presence of Jesus I know God. I read this wonderful thing written of Him by the seer of blue Galilee, John the mystic: "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And to my inquiring heart, in thinking of this subject, and asking what is the holiness of God, that is the only answer that came, from which I could not escape. What is holiness? Grace and truth. I may speak of the love of God, and declare that at the center of love is holiness, and yet is that quite accurate as definition? Is not holiness rather the combination of these two things, grace and truth? Take that word "grace," in its more original intention, not so much as descriptive of the great river of tender compassion and mercy and mighty salvation which, flowing through the ages, heals men. Oh, that is grace, and some of us still like, with our friends of the Salvation Army, to sing

Grace is flowing like a river.

Yes, but what is the nature of the river? Grace is love in action. That is, grace and truth. Love is grace, and its action is truth. We cannot possibly divide these things. Jesus Christ, describing the devil on one occasion, said two things concerning him: "He was a murderer from the beginning." "He is a liar, and the father thereof." Those are the superlative opposites of grace and truth. What is the opposite of grace? Murder, the ultimate of hate. What is the opposite of truth? A lie.

Holiness in God is the combination, or unity of grace and truth. We cannot speak of cause and effect when we speak of these in action. Everything God does is inspired of love, and governed by truth. That is holiness in God; and in the universe, and in all human history, that is the standard of

holiness. The holiness of God is the standard of holiness in man. Holiness in man means approximation to the character of God.

I am not now dealing with the methods by which this is made possible, with the earlier statements of this song of Zacharias, that He came to deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, but rather with the result of that great deliverance, "that we... should serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness." Holiness in man is right relation to God, resulting in participation in the very character of God. I go back to the very beginning of the story of man as told in the Bible, and I read that man was made in the Divine image, and after the Divine likeness. The enemy entered with temptation at the base of which was the infinite blasphemy that he proposed to present the initial purpose as an ultimate goal. You shall be like gods. Therein lay the subtlety of the temptation. It was suggested that man should realize the highest, be like God, but should do so by a wrong method. I have quoted the Genesis story only to lead on to the ultimate word of Jesus: "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"; and to another word in the Ephesian letter, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children."

Holiness of character, then, is approximation to the character of God, which is love and truth. If we were less conventional, and could now pass into absolute silence, in order to apply that test to our own lives, what a startling experience it would be for very many of us. How far am I in character a man of grace and of truth? I choose to ask the question personally, rather than of any other, for there are things the preacher cannot say to men, but must say with men. I shrink from the test, yet that is holiness, a life love-mastered, and true in its every activity. Moreover, it was in order that men should be holy that Jesus came. That is the meaning of the Christian religion. The Christian religion is not an arrangement by which a man can sin and escape the penalty. The Christian religion is great and glorious deliverance from enemies in order that in holiness and righteousness we may serve God. And to be satisfied with anything short of this character is to be satisfied with something short of the intention and purpose of the coming of our Lord into the world.

Righteousness, then, is conduct inspired by grace, and governed by truth. In business life, professional life, political life, how far are we righteous? We are righteous in the measure in which we are holy.

Thus, if we take these New Testament words, and interpret them in the light of New Testament teaching, we do not drag the idea of holiness to the dust. We are compelled rather, whether we will or not, to climb the mountain, and feel the rare and searching atmosphere above the snow line. Oh, my God, I am inclined to put my hand on my lips, and say I am a leper, unclean, unclean! By these standards the life of the past week is unhealthy, and the man who glibly declares that he has been holy for seven years has never seen the light, or climbed to the whiteness of the purity of God.

But if this thing is to search our hearts, and humble our spirits, it is nevertheless part of an evangel. He came to deliver us from our enemies in order that we might serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. And if we look back over the life of the past week, and over the whole period of our Christian experience, and know how little we have been love-mastered, and truth-governed, let us remember that it is because of the very enemies from whom He came to deliver us. If we have not yet been delivered our inquiry should be, not how are we to climb to that height of holiness, but how we can submit ourselves to the Christ that He may be able to lift us to

the height of holiness? He came to deliver us, and if He has not delivered us it is because we have not put ourselves absolutely and utterly under His control.

Now, brethren, if that is holiness essentially and eternally in God and in man—because I would not for all my soul send away any child of God who is aspiring after the heights and earnestly desiring to attain thereto, discouraged or crushed or broken—let me spend a few moments in speaking of what holiness is experimentally and temporally. I am not going to lower the standard for a moment, but I do propose to declare the measure in which holiness of character is possible, and what the experience is, according to the teaching of the New Testament. And I will do that quite briefly in seven statements, which, in the first place, are negative, but each of which has its positive side.

Holiness is not freedom from all sin as imperfection: but it is freedom from the dominion of sin, and from wilful sinning. I say that holiness is not freedom from all sin as imperfection. Now let me in the simplest way explain that. What is sin? I fall back upon the word most often translated sin in the New Testament, or the Hebrew word most often translated sin in the Old Testament, each of which has the one significance. "Sin," taking the word in its most general sense, is missing the mark, imperfection. Whether I can help it or not does not matter, does not enter into the thought of this particular word. The ideal is recognized, if I do not realize it, that is sin, missing the mark. In that sense holiness for today does not mean sinlessness. At best, we are unprofitable servants, and in the present life we never can come to the absolute perfection of consummation. In the sight of heaven, and according to the infinite standards of God, everything lower than the highest is sin.

But holiness does mean freedom from the dominion of sin. I need not be mastered by sin, and I never need sin wilfully. Surely, brethren, I need not argue that. I know how it has been argued, and yet think, and think quietly and simply and honestly, is there any need that I should wilfully sin? In the presence of a clear shining of light, when two paths are in front of me, and I am called to choose, there can be no necessity that I should walk in the wrong one. Perhaps there is no escape for a man who has never yet crowned the Christ. But He came to deliver me from my enemies, and He has made possible the freedom of the will. I can understand that somebody studying psychology says to me, What do you mean? I mean this, "To me who would do good evil is present." That is the language of the man who has never yet known perfectly the power of Christ. But the language of the man, that same man under the dominion of Christ, is this, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." I will the good, and do the evil, until I have surrendered myself to the Lord Christ. But when I have surrendered to Him, I will the good, and do it. Thus my will is free, for action follows its choice.

Imperfect still, at the close of every day I hasten back to the cleft Rock, to the shelter of the blood redemption; and yet all the way it is possible, in this life, in the power of the present Christ, not to sin wilfully.

But again: Holiness is not freedom from mistakes in judgment; but it is freedom from the need to exercise judgment alone. To the end of the chapter we may make mistakes in judgment, out of absolute sincerity and loyalty to Christ; but at least remember this, we are not left alone to exercise our judgment if we are under the dominion of this One Who was manifested to deliver us from all our enemies. We can have government and light. You tell me God does not speak to men as He did to Abraham. Will you let me correct that statement? This is the truth, men are not listening as Abraham listened. Right in the depth of the soul, by a direct and definite revelation, He will speak

to the man who wants to hear Him. I would to God there might be throughout all the churches of Jesus Christ a return to a recognition of the doctrine of the truth of the inner light. We can have guidance about the business we are to take up, the profession we are to follow, the house in which we are to live. Of course, the trouble is that we seek guidance so seldom.

Again: Holiness is not freedom from temptation, but it is freedom from the paralysis which necessitates failure. So far from being freedom from temptation, holiness means a new sense of temptation, a new attack of the forces of evil; but holiness means freedom from that paralysis, that necessitates failure under temptation. Tempted I shall be to the end, but defeated I need not be.

Holiness does not mean freedom from bodily infirmity, but it does mean freedom from all ailments which are the direct result of disobedience.

There is a vast amount of physical sickness in the Church of God that ought not to be there. And if there were real holiness of life there would be a great absence of very much which we suffer.

Holiness does not mean freedom from conflict, but it does mean freedom from defeat. I know at that point some of my friends do not agree. They say that the life of holiness means cessation of conflict. I do not believe it. I believe that to the end there will be conflict. Against principalities, against powers, the world rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places, we have to fight our way through. But there need not be defeat. The great and gracious word of the apostle comes back to the mind, "Having done all to stand."

Holiness is not freedom from liability to fall, but it is freedom from the necessity of falling.

The freedom of the will remains as an essential part of redeemed human nature, and it is ever possible to choose to turn aside from the path of obedience; but the freedom of the will in the new sense, to which we have before referred, means that we can ever yield ourselves in hours of crisis to "Him that is able to guard us from stumbling."

And once again, and finally: Holiness is not freedom from the possibility of advance, but it is freedom from the impossibility of advance. Holiness does not mean that those who are living the life of present holiness have now arrived at a stage of Christian experience from which there can be no advance. It means rather a condition of life which makes it possible to advance. On a previous occasion I have spoken of health as being holiness, and of growth as being consequent thereupon. Such is the relationship of holiness to advancement. You gave yourself to Christ but recently, but a few days, or weeks, or months ago, therefore you are but a babe in Christ, you have but commenced the journey. You can be holy, and yet there is much for you to know, to learn; and ere the work be done in you there will be long years of advancement and growth and development. Holiness, I repeat, is not a condition from which it is not possible to advance. It is a condition in which it is possible to advance.

And now turning back again for conclusion to the actual word of this great song of Zacharias, I pray you remember that the Christ around Whose name and Whose presence we are gathered this morning came that we might be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, in order that we might "serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days."

What there is in us therefore that is unlike grace and unlike truth is there because we have never allowed our Lord to win His victory, and have His way.

May He lead us into such close fellowship with Himself that in the measure possible to us at the moment the very purpose of His coming may be fulfilled as we begin the life that is inspired by holiness of character and expressed in righteousness of conduct.

Luke 2:7; Colossians 1:15; 1:18; Romans 8:29. The Firstborn.

Luke 2:7; Colossians 1:15; 1:18; Romans 8:29.

The Firstborn.

And she brought forth her first-born son.

Luke 2:7

Who is... the first-born of all creation.

Colossians 1:15

Who is... the first-born from the dead.

Colossians 1:18

The first-born among many brethren.

Romans 8:29

We celebrate at Christmas the supreme event in human history, the central act of God in that cosmic order in the midst of which we live. Its importance in the affairs of men is demonstrated by the accumulated results of two millenniums, by the spiritual conceptions which it has created, the moral standards which have resulted from it, and, what is more wonderful still, by the renovation and reconstruction of things spoiled and ruined which have followed. These results, however, are but the beginnings. If we would realize the stupendous meaning of the birth of the One of Whom we speak as Jesus of Nazareth, we need to detach ourselves from the merely local and historic, and endeavor to see it in its place in the economy of God. In order to do this no single word in the New Testament is more helpful, perhaps, than the one which is common to these passages of Scripture, the title "first-born"; and no group of passages is more illuminating.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the teaching of these texts it is of the utmost importance that we most carefully recognize the exact meaning of our word "firstborn," and of the Greek word of which in each case it is the singularly apt and beautiful translation.

We may divide our word into two parts, as indeed it is, in its very nature, already divided: first, and born. In so doing we are at once helped to a true understanding of the Greek word of which it is a translation. The word "first" means foremost, and is variously used in reference to time, place, order, or importance. This we need to recognize, or we may think of it as referring to time only in these particular passages, whereas, as a matter of fact, it has a far more spacious value, and in some cases the reference is not to time at all, but to that which is beyond time, the timeless and the eternal. The root of the word "born" literally means to produce from a seed, but it must be remembered that it always signifies to bear, or to bring forth, never to beget. The word has no reference whatever to those profounder matters of being associated with the function of begetting.

Therefore it does not necessarily give any revelation of the nature of the one born. It always refers to that hour, or event, or method, by which something already in being is manifested.

The compound word is used of Jesus of Nazareth in our texts in different relationships, but always with the same significance, as of One born or brought forth, and of His being born or brought forth in order to take a permanent place in relation to the subject under consideration. The statement that Mary brought forth her first-born Son does not necessarily mean that no son had been born of Mary before that, although, in all probability, that was true. That, however, is not the significance of the statement. It means, rather, that the Son born of Mary in that mystic hour was the foremost Son, the One taking precedence of all her other sons. The description, "the first-born of creation," does not mean that He was the first of the creation in time, that He existed before all other creations. It means rather that He is the ultimate of creation, that toward which all creation moved, its goal, its consummation, its final glory. "The firstborn from the dead" does not mean that He was the first raised from the dead in human history. Lazarus had preceded Him, and if we are to trust our Biblical record, men in the old economy had preceded Him. It means rather that He was the foremost, taking precedence over all others who rise from the dead, and in that sense was the "first-born of the dead." "The first-born among many brethren" suggests not merely His priority in point of time, but rather His eternal supremacy over even all those who are brought into new life as the result of His great and gracious mission.

The profounder questions of being and of begetting are dealt with or referred to in the context in each case. The first-born of the virgin mother was foreannounced by the angel as "The Son of the Most High," "The Son of God." The first-born of creation is described as "The Son of His love," "The image of the invisible God"; and in His own essential being as the One Who is "before all things," the One in Whom "all things consist." The "first-born from the dead" is the same Person, as the continuity of the apostolic argument proves. "The first-born among many brethren" is with equal clearness described in the context as the Son of God.

Thus in every case the Person referred to is the Son of God in the fullest sense of that term, and the very fulness of the term necessitates limitation in our understanding or interpretation of the word. If that statement appears to be of the nature of a paradox let us consider it carefully. "The Son of God" is a term so full that, when we use it in order to explain it, we must limit it. We must limit it as a figure of speech by declining to limit it as we are compelled to limit the term "son" when we use it on the level of our own experience. As God can have no essential beginning, neither can His Son, Who is of His very nature. Therefore the only sense in which the Son of God can ever be spoken of as begotten is in reference to some new manifestation or activity of Deity.

We celebrate at this season the beginning of the central age in the history of man, that which was initiated when the Son of God was manifested. It is an age of consummation and of initiation, and in both cases the Son of God is declared to be first-born.

The four texts I have selected fall into two groups. The first two deal with consummations: the first-born Son of the virgin mother, and the first-born of all creation. The second two deal with initiation: the first-born from the dead, and the first-born among many brethren.

The first two have reference to the original creation of God. "Let us make Man" was the crowning word of that creation. It was preceded by all the lower forms of being. Jesus, as the first-born of a

woman, was the first-born of creation, that is, in the sense of being its goal and its glory.

The second two have to do with redemption. Jesus became a man, a member of the race, involved in sin, and as such He passed to death. Suddenly appearing out of the darkness and mystery of death, He was the first-born from the dead. Man having lost the scepter and possibilities of his own being, a new race is to be created by the process of the Divine activity, and Jesus is the first-born among many brethren.

In the first two the redeeming purpose is seen operative in the realm of creation; in the second two the creative purpose is seen as realized through redemption. Thus the movement suggested by these four passages is one, and cannot ultimately be divided. For the purpose of our meditation, however, we may follow the suggested division, being careful so far as possible to observe the relation maintained between the creative purpose of God and His redemptive work, between the redemptive purpose of God and its fulfilment of the meaning of His creative activity.

Let us, then, consider these four passages, not in anything like full or exhaustive treatment, but in order to think of what they suggest concerning the Son of God as the first-born in regard to creation, and as the first-born in regard to redemption.

First, then, the Son of God as the first-born in regard to creation. The words written by Luke in his gospel are full of simplicity, and yet full of sublimity; "She brought forth her first-born Son." In that birth we are brought face to face with One Who is the crown and glory of humanity. According to these Divine records and revelations, man was made in the image and likeness of God. Whether it is necessary for us to accept the interpretation of the Biblical statement which affirms that man in those earliest experiences had come to the fulness of that image and likeness may be a very doubtful and debatable question. Personally, I should say that Adam did not realize that great ideal in all its fulness of experience, but potentially only. In the Bible, before the story of sin, we are face to face with primitive man, with man, that is, in his probationary state, not yet having come to full realization of the dignity and glory of his being, not yet realizing within his own experience what it is to be in the image and likeness of God. Whether that be so or not, the declaration here is that one "born of a woman"—I quote Paul's words from Galatians—is a Son Who is first-born, that is, One Who realized in Himself the Divine purpose and intention, One through Whom, therefore, is revealed in the universe of God, to the heavens above and to the earth beneath, the thought that was in the mind of God when He said, "Let us make man in our own image, and in our likeness." All who preceded Jesus in time, even at their highest and best, had been but hints and prophecies as to the meaning and purpose of God in humanity.

We must remember that this word was written by Luke concerning the birth of Jesus after the completion of His life, after the crucifixion, beyond the resurrection, after there had come to the disciples the illuminating glory of the Pentecostal baptism. Luke was writing of the whole fact of Christ as he knew it as the result of that Pentecostal illumination, and with the sense of the whole life of the Man Jesus on his mind. When his pen wrote the story of that birth, he wrote it thus: "She brought forth her first-born Son." She brought forth the Son of Man, Who takes precedence and preeminence above and beyond all other of the sons of men in that He was in Himself the crown and glory of humanity. On that day, in the manger in Bethlehem, was born the archetypal Man, God's Man, Man according to the Divine counsel, the Divine purpose, the Divine possibility, the Divine power. Perhaps I may illustrate what I am attempting to insist on concerning the hour in

which this was written in the most simple way by saying that I do not think Mary would have used these words at that moment. I do not think the worshiping shepherds would have understood Who was born at that moment. Even if Mary pondered in her heart this strange and wonderful thing that had happened by the grace and favor of heaven, as most certainly she did, I think she had no true apprehension of Who her Son really was in this great movement of the Divine activity. Presently, beyond the life of purity, patience, beauty, and power; beyond the awful tragedy of the death in which that life so resplendent in glory seemed to go out and be eclipsed; beyond that strange, transforming resurrection hour setting its seal on the truth of His own teaching, and transfiguring the mystery of the Cross; and beyond that hour of illumination which appeared when the Holy Spirit came for the interpretation of the Christ—looking back, those who had thus come to know Him said, He is the "first-born Son," the crown and the glory of our own humanity. In Him humanity came to its own, to use the phrase we so often employ in other applications; in Him humanity realized itself. He was, and is, the first-born of the race.

That consideration must be supplemented by another. If in Him the ultimate glory of creation in the purpose of God, which is man, was realized, the whole story of the birth of Jesus reminds us of the fact that this did not happen as the result of a process of creation. There was some arrest, some change, some new and interfering activity on the part of God in order that there might appear this crowning glory of humanity in a Man. This One born was begotten by neither the will nor the act of humanity, but by the will and activity of God in a strange mystic brooding and mystery of the Holy Spirit, by which operation motherhood was sanctified and purified for its sacred office, so that the angel announcing the coming of the Babe did say to her, "That which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God."

When Paul came to write his Colossian letter—the purpose of the letter being that of showing the infinite resources of the believer on Christ—it was necessary in the course of it to speak of this selfsame One, of His peculiar glories, and His relationship to the whole cosmos; and Paul described Him as the first-born of creation. Let us again remind ourselves that that phrase is the exact description of the true place of man in the cosmos. Man is the ultimate in creation. For the purpose of a meditation such as this, it does not at all matter what view we may hold of the process of creation, that is, if we admit that this order is a created order. It does not signify whether we think that the creative process was that of long eons through which creation moved ever higher and higher until it came to its ultimate, or whether we believe that these things came originally into being by some stupendous word of God, immediately producing results. Either view equally demonstrates the glory and majesty of God. To my own understanding the more wonderful and splendid idea is that which—and it is not out of harmony with Genesis, but is consonant with scientific investigation—that which by long, and to our thinking, slow, processes creation climbed higher and ever higher, until it reached its goal in man. Even if men deny the Creator, they are compelled to admit that the last and final glory of the cosmic order is man. That is exactly what the Apostle meant when he wrote of Jesus as the first-born of creation. He saw Him as the One to Whom the whole creation moved, its ultimate goal, the destiny of everything. It was probably a slow-moving process, but it went ever and ever on, until at last Man appeared. That is the Divine order. Here, of course, we must be very careful to allow the Biblical revelation to flash on our thinking, and to correct it; for the Biblical revelation is not that of man finally evolved into separate being, but that of man ultimately created by an act in which the spiritual and material were united

in order that the possibilities of the material might be fully realized; and in order that the glory of the spiritual through the material might be fully manifested. In other words, all creation is an expression of God. No flower decks the sod but that is a revelation of the Divine. No single tint of the rainbow or fleck of color on the petal of a flower but speaks of God. In His temple all things say, Glory! That was a great word of the Psalmist. When Isaiah saw the vision of the uplifted throne he heard also this majestic song, not the song of holiness alone, but this also: "The whole earth is full of His glory." All creation is an expression of God. But its foremost born, its ultimate expression, its last and final word concerning God is expressed in man. The first-born of the virgin is the final Man, the goal and glory of humanity. In that sense He is the firstborn of creation, the foremost One, the last and final voicing of the glory of God in and through creation.

Yet here again we halt. As we have already seen, this Man whose birth we celebrate at Christmastide was not born as the result of what we describe as natural processes. Here was a strange new intrusion on the part of God into affairs and facts which He Himself had originally created and ordered, and which have ever been under His government. The writer of the Colossian letter is careful to tell us in this very connection that Christ is before all things: that is the language of time. He also declares that in Christ all things hold together, or consist. That is the language of continuity.

Let us face the mystery: He Who came, the first-born of creation, the goal to which the whole creation moved until He came, came not by the movement of creation toward Him, but by a new order of God, a new act of God, a new overruling of God. By the power of God He came, the Creator, Who is before all things; He came, the Sustainer, in Whom all things consist. Thus we stand in the presence of a Light that blinds and a glory that is as darkness to our finite minds; in the presence of that kenosis, that self-emptying of which I never can think without remembering that most awe-inspiring, and yet most illuminating, line of Charles Wesley: "God contracted to a span." The first-born came, not by processes of creation, which God originated and governed, but by a new touch and new intrusion, by a new activity of God. In that is evidence of the redeeming purpose of God in His coming. Man cannot redeem his own kind. Man is of the creation entirely, and, while causing, also shares its failure. God only can redeem; He is beyond the creation. The creation is of Him, but in Him is no failure. He Who faileth never, bends to that which fails and touches it anew with power, and enters into it by His own mysterious self-emptying. That is the deeper truth concerning the birth of Jesus.

Thus we come to that of which the mystic light has been on all our earlier considerations. The Apostle directly writes that Christ is not only first-born of creation, but "firstborn from among the dead." The arresting word here is the word "dead." It suggests a condition that ought not to be in human life. Into that condition—a condition expressed in the words, "In the midst of life, we are in death"—He came. He was crowned with glory and honor in order that He might die, not after He had died. Let us read the Hebrew letter very carefully at this point. It does not affirm that Christ was crowned with glory and honor as a result of His dying, but in order that He might die. That is one of the supreme words of revelation: "Crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man." The ultimate crown on the brow of God is that which crowns the Living One Who stooped to die to redeem men. He came into the condition of humanity resulting from sin, lived in the midst of it, passed down into death itself. We can never now celebrate Christmas without realizing the Cross in the midst of it all. I was greatly impressed

yesterday with a little poem in a daily newspaper. It may be imagination merely, but listen to it:—

On the night when Christ was born,
In the starlight's gleaming,
Sharp-speared thorn boughs in the shadow
Stirred with troubled dreaming
Of a cruel, piercing crown,
Of a King in death bowed down:
On the night when Christ was born,
And the glad song breaking,
Reeds about a marish pool,
As with long heart aching,
Wailed with pain of that far hour
When a reed should mock His power.
On the night when Christ was born,
To a bleak moon clinging,
Stood a grey, ungladdened wood
With the olives flinging
Writhen shadows—watchers dim
Of the tree which heareth Him.

Whoever wrote that had been very near to Christ. That is a poetic fancy, but it is nearer to truth than much prose and argument. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain."

I want that same poet to write me three more verses about the Cross, telling how those thorns blossomed with the roses of eternity, of how the reed at last became the iron rod of government, of how after a little while the olive wood became the material of the throne of eternal Deity. The cradle and the Cross must always remain close together in our thinking.

We see Him passed to that condition of death, and then we see Him as "first-born from the dead," manifested beyond death as the Living One, passing out of its gloom to the glory of the everlasting day. First-born of dead ones, taking preeminence over all others—behold Him!

In the context will be found this suggestive phrase: "The Kingdom of the Son of His love." That is a picture of the issue of all the wonder. It means that He Who is the firstborn from the dead is He Who will yet realize all creation and establish the great Kingdom of God. Through His Church, His Ecclesia, His called-out saints, He will make the desert blossom as the rose, heal the salt marshes, give the world its final bloom, and make the whole creation the anthem of the glory of

God.

Let us pass to the last suggestive phrase, "The first-born among many brethren." Immediately there rises before the mind a picture of a new race upspringing as the result of His birth, His dying, and His resurrection. From the Roman epistle let me select some illuminative phrases and sentences, for the moment stringing them together like pearls without the complete statements of which they form a part: "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?... Through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." "All things work together for good." Through these sayings we gain a picture of the new race delivered from death, through the Spirit of life set free from the opposing forces of life, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, conscious that, in the midst of forces, the grind of which sometimes is terrible, but the direction of which is of God, all things work together for good. In the midst of creation the new race is broken, bruised, groaning, travailing in pain; and that new race is groaning and travailing in pain together with creation. The groaning and travailing have to do with birth; they constitute the birth pangs of a new creation out of which at last the Divine purpose is to be realized and fulfilled. Of that race Christ is first-born, "the first-born among many brethren."

We are not celebrating a small matter at this holy season. We are celebrating the coming into time and human history of the eternally first-born. The hour is mystic and marvelous, the hour in which He came in splendid lowliness, bowed to our level, even though it was the level of sin and of death, in order to lift us to His level, which is the level of holiness and age-abiding life.

Thus we take our four texts, and from them we hear the music of hope, of courage, of victory.

We shall gather in our homes, and the bairns will be about us. We shall not check their merriment, but rather laugh and play and romp with them. The glory of all the glad news will be that on the faces of our children we shall see the light that comes from the cradle of the Babe. The first-born Son is our ground of hope when we look into the faces of our children.

Then we shall pause a moment in the merriment, and think of that of which all our newspapers speak every day, of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain. We cannot read a newspaper without seeing this, if the light of God illumine our reading. Look again. Shining between the lines of the paper is the mystic message of Christmas; Christ is the first-born of creation, and that is the prophecy of the hour in which the groaning shall cease, the travail be over, and God's great triumph be come.

We look at death. I would speak with all tenderness. Some of us will know more of the pain of death at Christmas than ever before. A place is empty! No, it is not empty. Look again, oh ye who are crushed and broken of heart. Look at the vacant chair. Behold, it is occupied by the First-born from among the dead. Now we know that those who sleep with Jesus will God bring with Him.

Lastly, we look at ourselves, and that is the most tragic look of all! Oh, the failings of another year, the deflections from the path of faith, the terrific sense of things that master me. Look again! Cease looking at yourself! "Behold the first-born among many brethren," and in that beholding find assurance in His face that at last He will perfect that which concerneth you. So while the bairns are laughing and angels are singing, let us sing our carols and keep our Christmas. It is a great festival! It is the Festival of the Firstborn!

Luke 2:14. Peace Among Men Of God's Pleasure.

Luke 2:14.

Peace Among Men Of God's Pleasure.

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased.

Luke 2:14

These words constituted the angelic anthem of welcome to the New Race. The angel messenger had told the shepherds of "a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." In this chorus the angels expressed their understanding of the significance of the event, "Glory to God in the highest." The term "in the highest" does not signify degree but location; "the highest" in the text stands in contrast to the earth, not necessarily separated from it, but suggesting the fact of the two spheres, earth and heaven.

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men in whom

He is well pleased.

This was more than the song that celebrated the birth of the Babe; it was the song that celebrated the race which was to result from the birth of the Babe. The terms are quite explicit: peace, not toward men, but among men. However much we may differ about the translation and interpretation of that which remains of the passage, about this there is no doubt, that it is not peace or good will toward men, but among men—peace among men in whom He is well pleased. That is at once the limitation of the thought and the indication of the true region of peace.

The significance of the song which the angels sang will be discovered in recognition of the Biblical teaching concerning the interest which angels have taken in this world of ours. Their first song about the world, according to Biblical revelation, is recorded in the book of Job, in that wonderful passage of the Theophany or unveiling of God before the astonished vision of His servant, tried, buffeted and bruised by temptation. In the course of that great unveiling it is declared that when God laid the cornerstone of the earth,

The Morning stars sang together

And all the sons of God shouted for joy.

You will remember that Milton couples these songs—the song of creation and the song of the Advent of the Saviour—in the great hymn of the Nativity, when he sings:

Such music (as 'tis said),

Before was never made.

But when of old the sons of morning sang

While the Creator great

His constellations set,

And the well-balanced word on hinges hung

And cast the dark foundations deep

And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel keep.

Such is the first Scripture suggestion about angel interest. They sang in creation.

If Faber was right when he sang that

There is no place where earth's sorrows

Are more felt than up in heaven,

then angel sons had surely merged from the major shoutings of creation's dawn into minor wailings in view of the miseries of men resulting from their sin. I immediately say to you that I think Faber was quite right, that there is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heaven. All sorrow there is transfigured by the light that we know not yet; all sorrow there is modified, and experienced within its relationship to the infinite movements; but sorrow is surely there, for it is in the heart of God Himself in the presence of human suffering and misery. I repeat, I verily believe that often the angels had sung in minor wailing over the miseries of men.

Now at last, as the angel said to the shepherds, "there is born... in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." To those angel singers the One born was "a second man," "the last Adam." In the view of the angels his birth was a new commencement in human history. From that child lying in the manger they saw a new race springing, and in celebration of the new race they raised their anthem:

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men in whom

He is well pleased.

The first note of the anthem was a recognition of the Source of the New Movement, "Glory to God in the highest." The central note celebrated the issue which had happened that day, "on earth peace." The final note revealed the condition of realization, "among men in whom He is well pleased."

If thus, in this anthem, we discover the note of limitation, and surely it is here, let us remember that the limitation is but declared in order to reveal the condition on which the ultimate purpose may be realized. There can be no question that at last the men of His good pleasure, the men in whom He is well pleased, will be men of all kindreds and races, that, at last, "though a wide compass first be fetched," His victory is secure; that, although the process may be one of conflict and long and painful struggle in the history of the world, yet finally the note of the angel anthem will be found to be the chord of the dominant, and all the music of human conditions will be true to its suggestion.

Let us briefly consider these three things in a slightly different order: first, the issue described, "on earth peace"; second, the condition revealed, "among men in whom He is well pleased"; and, finally, in a closing and brief word, the source suggested, "Glory to God in the highest."

First, then, "on earth peace." Is it not difficult to understand that word? Probably not, in our own hearts and personal experiences as Christian men and women; for already all such as have reposed their trust in this Lord Christ know something of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. But if we look away from these personal experiences, and endeavor to enter into the consciousness of our own times and of the conditions in the midst of which we live, is it not almost impossible to understand this phrase, "on earth peace"? That is to say, the ideal seems far from realization. If we contrast all that is suggested by this phrase with all that we find in history, how startling is the difference between peace and the perpetual conflict and unrest, the pain and suffering of the world. I do not desire to dwell particularly on matters that are wholly immediate and local, and yet we are all painfully conscious of the actual condition of the world. We are all conscious, for instance, of the fact that the world's national peace is a mockery and a sham, that it is merely an armed neutrality based on suspicion. We are all terribly, and more acutely, conscious of the fact that the very peace of our own life is often rudely broken in on by the shock of strife and catastrophe. Where is peace?

Without staying to deal with other of the evidences of immediate unrest, let us take a broader outlook, and I think a deeper inlook, and inquire what are the underlying reasons of the restlessness of the world? I should be inclined to summarize them thus. First of all—this would not be put first by many, but Christian men must put it first—a moral malady without remedy, that is the profoundest reason of human restlessness. Consequent on that there is the fact of suffering without succor, and often without sympathy. And finally we have the fact of death without hope. Of course, in Christian experience death is not without hope, but neither is suffering without succor, for moral malady is not without remedy. But death without hope is the world outlook; I am not for the moment referring to the larger and more terrible fact of death merging into some experience beyond yet more awful; but to the hard fact of death with its severance, its breaking of ties, and ending of companionship, with no certainty of anything beyond; for there is no certainty apart from Christ. These are the reasons for unrest.

Moral malady without remedy, conflict everywhere between good and evil, between principle and passion. Man is in the midst of conflict, plunged into it at his birth. Whatever theory he may have of the universe, and whatever his philosophy may be, he is face to face with this conflict in his own nature, in his city, in his nation, in the world from the beginning; with this most appalling fact, that victory seems to be forever on the side of evil, "wrong forever on the throne." The outcome is perpetual unrest.

Suffering without succor. Without any attempt now to account for suffering, we recognize that it is here. There is the suffering of poverty—and never believe any man who tells you that poverty is a blessing in the economy of God. It is not so. It would be as untrue as to say that disease comes from God. These things may be overruled by God in the great economy of His grace, and be made instruments by which He perfects character; but poverty has no place in the economy of God for man. But its pain is here. There are also the sufferings of sickness and of persecution. And in Nature there is no proof of the Divine sympathy. Lift out of human history this Christ-child Whose

birth we celebrate today, take this Christian fact out of the world, and we cannot prove that God has any sympathy with humanity. The sun will shine as brightly on your dead child as on your living, loving one. Nature will shed no tears for your agony. Poets talk about nature weeping; but in the day of heartbreak nature will prove nothing to you of the tenderness and compassion of God. There are multitudes of souls today suffering without any consciousness of sympathy, and without any immediate succor.

Death without hope. Philosophy has no proof of immortality. In the submerging of the soul in unutterable agony a man will cry out, "If a man die, shall he live again?" That is an inquiry, but, as in the case of Job, it constantly merges into the wail of unutterable despair, without hope or a gleam of light. We have no proof of immortality if this Christ-child was not born. If all this story is myth, then the world has no sure evidence of a life beyond. These are the things that create the unrest of humanity.

But let us turn to the other side of the matter, and inquire what is peace. Peace is, first, moral rectitude, a perfect ethic combined with a sufficient dynamic, and resulting in a conscience void of offense. That is peace.

Or, again, peace is joy without alloy, the result of an inclusive outlook, the measurement of the part by the whole, the ability to sing "Light after darkness"; and, consequently, a heart full and strong, firm and steady, in the midst of problems which are not yet solved.

Or inclusively, what is peace? Eternal life is peace, the secret of the ages, the transfiguration of death, a spirit homed in God. Such is the experience of peace.

The angels sang "on earth peace." Peace can come only as there shall come to men who are conscious of moral malady without remedy the remedy for that malady. Peace can come only to men who are conscious of suffering without succor or sympathy that is more than sentiment, as there comes to them the succor that takes hold of suffering and transmutes the sorrow into joy, and gives them the assurance that not here and now is all of that which is here and now, but that the ultimate meanings lie beyond, and that in the economy of God they are meanings of perfect realization. Peace can come only to a world where death confronts men, when, somehow, death can be transfigured, and men cease to speak of death, and talk, instead of decease, of exodus, going out. Peace can come only when death is no longer looked on as a harbor of refuge into which the ship all battered escapes, but rather as the harbor from which the ship puts out to sea and finds the ultimate fulfilment of all being. These are Christian ideals, and can be realized by men only when they enter into Christian experience.

We now turn to that which is central to this meditation, the suggestion of the angels concerning the condition of peace, "peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

This song was sung, first, because of the birth of the Babe. I take up this gospel in which alone the song is recorded, which is peculiarly the gospel portraying the perfection of Jesus of Nazareth, and I trace the story through a little way in order that we may catch the fuller meaning of the angel song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

I turn to the fortieth verse of the first chapter, and I read:

And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

That was twelve years afterwards, measuring the life by human measurements.

I run on down the same chapter to the fifty-second verse; eighteen more years have passed, thirty years from the hour of the angel song, and now I read:

Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

I go a little further in this wonderful story of His life and I read in the third chapter, verse twenty-two:

A voice came out of heaven, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.

Why, then, was the song sung? Because there in the manger lying was the Babe in Whom God was well pleased, which does not suggest that God is not well pleased in the presence of every child, every babe, but which does suggest a difference. It suggests this initial fact of absolute perfection, a new beginning in human history, a strange wonder never to be finally understood. There was the Child, the first of a new race. There is a sense today in which any child that lies in its mother's arms, every little one, is dear to His heart, dearer than to the mother who nurses it. But there were peculiar facts about this Child. As a Boy the grace of God was on Him; as a Man of thirty it is declared that He had grown in favor with God and man. Then Luke tells us that the heavens were opened and a voice declared, Here is the Man in Whom I am well pleased. In Him, then, there is peace, for peace is among men in whom He is well pleased.

And still further we follow the story as Luke tells it, and in the first and second verses of the fourth chapter we read:

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil.

There He mastered all temptations.

Still reading on in order to discover the music that follows the angelic anthem, we find in the fourteenth verse of the same chapter:

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit.

He went to service and to sacrifice, until, let it be reverently stated, "He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit." All the way from the beginning to the end we see the Man in Whom God is well pleased.

Thus we see peace, focused in one human being, peace in the Man in whom God was well pleased. He was a lowly Man, at first a Babe, then a Boy, then a Man, and through all a Servant. One Who went to death in the fulfilment of His service; and all the way He was a Man of peace.

Now, do not let us be anxious for the moment about the ultimate application of all this, but let us earnestly behold this Man of Nazareth, the Man of peace. If there is one thing more certain than anything else in the revelation of Jesus in these gospels it is that of His peace. In neither of these gospel stories can we find any occasion, any circumstance, any hour, in which He was perturbed. Always He is the Man of peace.

When we come to the final scenes—and I cannot tell you why it is so, but I never come to Christmas now without feeling that the cradle and the Cross are close together—I cannot think of Him Who came and rejoice in His coming without thinking of the ultimate in the mystery of His passion; I say, when we come to those last tragic scenes, we find that the One human being, undisturbed, quiet, and strong, was the Man of peace, not the priests, who were determined to ensure His murder, not the cool, dispassionate Roman Procurator Pilate, who was strangely perturbed; but Jesus only was quiet and at peace.

What was this experience of His peace? A perfect and perpetual victory over sin, the constant transmutation of suffering in His own life, so that under the very shadow of the Cross in the midst of those paschal discourses He could say to His disciples, "My joy"; and, speaking of the deepest thing in His life, the annihilation of death, long ere He was apprehended and crucified, He had said, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Even on the holy mount, having come to the fulfilment of His humanity in the splendor of the metamorphosis, He spoke, not of the death He should die, but of the exodus He should accomplish. In these three things I find the secrets of His peace.

But is that all the angels meant? Nay verily! They sang not only of the Babe, but also of the race that was to spring from Him; not merely of peace in the Man of His good pleasure, but of "peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

Now let us turn from Luke to John, and in that gospel so brief in many respects, and yet so full of understanding of the deepest things in the life and ministry of our Lord, we find that in the midst of the paschal discourses, with the shadow of the Cross upon Him, and the last things close at hand, talking to a little group of men, He said:

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

And for these men that was the day when they were more troubled and afraid than they had ever been in their lives; it was the day when all the restlessness of the world seemed to be their portion, the day when hope was dying down and every gleam of light seemed wholly vanishing, the day when high and holy aspirations seemed doomed to utter disappointment in that He persisted in going out to die! Yet on that day He said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you."

Then follow the next pages in the gospel of John, telling the story of dark days for them, days in which there came the end of all peace; the moral malady against which He had protested was victorious over Him, and He was murdered, suffering without succor finding its final expression in His untold sorrow, as they watched Him as long as they were able and then fled for very fear; death, which He had seemed to count as a small matter in the whole economy of life mastered Him, and He was put into the grave; and all that after He had said, "Peace I leave with you." I am in sympathy with these men in their sorrow and in their inevitable sense that peace was no more.

Now let us turn to the twentieth chapter. Here we find ourselves in the midst of a little company of terrified souls gathered in an upper room with doors locked. I have no criticism for them. I would have shared their fear. I think I would have been more fearful than they, and hardly been present at all. Suddenly standing in the midst is the same One, the Man of God's good pleasure. What is the first word that passes His lips? "Peace be unto you." It was His answer to their fear. And again

in a few moments, "Peace be unto you." It was His preparation for their service. Eight days later, with Thomas the great believer present, again He said, "Peace be unto you." It was the call to faith.

From that moment the number of men of peace in the world was multiplied. Much later John wrote, "As He is, even so are we in this world." Was there ever such a daring word written under inspiration? Yet in this very matter of peace how true it was! The peacefulness of Christ's witnesses under persecution has been one of the world's perpetual wonders.

What created the peace that possessed these men and sent them out in the midst of the world's suffering and conflict and darkness? They shared His peace. What was His peace? Victory over sin. The transmutation of suffering, so that these men—mark the true and deep mystery of the word in Acts—are seen "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name." Finally, the annihilation of death, for when they write their letters these men will not speak of death as other men speak of death; they will take up His words and use them, and Peter will say, After my exodus, using the very word that Jesus used on the holy mount; and Paul will say, After my departure, that is my going away out into the larger life. These are the secrets of peace, "peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

In a final word, notice the suggestion of the angels concerning the source, "Glory to God in the highest." Salvation must come from God and not from man. Salvation must come out of the heavens to the earth; it cannot arise out of the earth and climb to the heavens. Therefore, glory to God is a necessity as it is a fact.

When the Babe was born a movement began that will issue in a race in which He is well pleased. That was the meaning of Christmas to the angels. Who is this Child? He is the Son of God, the Lord from heaven. He is also the Babe of the new race, Who, not by human will or act, laid hold on humanity and entered thereinto for a new beginning, for the accomplishment of the larger purposes of God. Those angels, then, sang o'er the plains of Bethlehem not of the Babe alone, but of the race.

Take this Christ away and all the conditions of unrest abide: moral malady without remedy, suffering without succor and with no proof of God's sympathy, and death as an appalling darkness out of which no ray of certain light shines and out of which no voice comes, and we still shall have to describe it as "the bourne whence no traveler returns." Take this Christ-child away, then, and peace is impossible.

But the Christ-child is not taken away. We are not merely celebrating a far-off event, we are gathered around the presence of the living Lord Himself, and around all the great eternal facts focused, and rendered visible, by the mystery of Incarnation and by way of the Cross.

Consequently, if our trust is reposed in Him we are men of peace, we are men in whom God by grace is well pleased. Already in us He finds the forces of His own life and of the Son of His love; and He knows that the deepest facts of our lives are those, and that at last they will bring a perfect and final salvation and an eternal peace. Thus while yet we are in the midst of the clash of battle there is peace.

If you take this Christ away, have you any song to sing worth the singing? I know full well that the tragedy sometimes makes faith falter. I know what it is—and if there are those who do not, then let them be patient with me, for I speak not for myself alone—I know what it is in some hour of calamity to say, Where is God? But my question does not alter the calamity; and if I am allowing my unbelief to silence these angels, to hush these bells, to deny this music, then, God help me, what is life?

Oh, hear the song of the angels over all sighing humanity. We are celebrating today the infinite mystery, and mystery it is, of incarnate God. From it all light is streaming, and all songs are coming, all hope is flaming, and we believe that at last there shall be peace.

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,

And heaven and nature sing.

Luke 8:45. The Touch Of Faith.

Luke 8:45.

The Touch Of Faith.

Who is it that touched Me?

Luke 8:45

In this narrative we have an illustration in the concrete of Christ's relation to the crowds, and in the particular question which constitutes the text a revelation of that principle of discrimination which was always manifest in His attitude toward the multitudes that gathered round about Him. It was a strange question from the standpoint of the disciples who were close to Him on that memorable occasion, and from the standpoint of the multitudes who observed. It was not only a strange question, to them it must have seemed absurd. "Who touched Me?" Peter, spokesman of the rest, said to Him in effect, Lord, how sayest Thou, Who touched Me? Everyone is touching Thee who can get near enough to do so. The multitudes press Thee and crowd upon Thee. In the last half an hour it may be that a hundred people have touched Thee! But He said, Nay, someone touched Me differently, for I perceive—and I like the Authorized Version, although the Revised may be more literal—virtue has gone out of Me. I perceive that virtue—in the old and gracious sense of the word in our English language—has gone out of Me. Who did it? Who touched Me? A hundred men have touched Me within half an hour, but someone has touched Me differently!

Let us look at the picture. I do not know among the pictures of the New Testament another that makes a more powerful appeal to me than does this. At this time Our Lord was conducting an itinerant ministry, passing from place to place, consenting to receive the necessities of His physical life by the ministration of a company of women of substance who loved Him and followed Him. Luke tells us in this chapter that Jesus went about through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the Kingdom of God, and with Him were the twelve and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, "Mary of Magdala, Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto them of their substance." This is the only account we have of that fact; it is the only place where some of the women are named. A little company of women, whom He had healed and helped physically, mentally, and spiritually, were now responding to His ministry by supplying His daily needs. So He was passing from place to place, exercising His great ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing, these accompanying Him as He went.

Among other places, He had just been to the country of the Gerasenes, and on the very shores of their country had given an evidence of the meaning of His ministry by casting out the evil spirits from a man who had been the pest of the entire neighborhood, and at the same moment had rebuked their unholy traffic by destroying their swine. They had made a protest, and had besought Him to leave them. There is infinite pathos in the declaration that He entered into a ship, and crossed the sea. Now on the other side of the waters He took up His work again, and that

wonderful declaration is made: "And as Jesus returned, the multitude welcomed Him; for they were all waiting for Him." As he proceeded on His way two wonderful things happened, the stories of which are so interwoven that we cannot deal with the one without considering the other, for there are values in the one which belong to the other. These two things were the healing of the child of Jairus and the healing of this woman, the woman who touched Him.

Let us see the picture. Our Lord was passing on His way. The multitudes were following Him. Sometimes, while reading this story and others, I like to sit down and allow myself to attempt to picture the actual scene. I attempt to look into the faces of the crowd, to watch the different expressions on their faces. Strong men jostle each other to get near the Teacher, to get one glance into His eyes. In all probability, mothers lift their children that the little ones may look just once at Him Whose fame has gone so far afield. For the most part reverently, men and women following after Him, interested men and women, attracted multitudes, were prepared to welcome Him, not merely from the standpoint of idle curiosity, but because of their real interest in Him. They went after Him as He traveled, eager that if He should say something they might hear it, desiring supremely to see Him work some wonder, that they might observe it. He Himself was the center of attraction.

Then I see approaching Him a man, a ruler of the synagogue. If I had the artistic sense I would like to paint the picture of Jairus. On his face sits a terrible shadow. Back in his home is a child, his little daughter, twelve years old; and she lies dying. To that nothing can be added, nothing need be added in the case of those who have ever known anything of the experience in their own lives. Look at Jairus; notice the agony, and anxiety and earnestness in his face. He has asked the Lord to come and heal the child ere it be too late. With an immediate response the Master walked along the highway toward the house of Jairus. If I could paint that picture I would. It is one of the great pictures of the New Testament. If I were painting it as a picture, this procession toward the house of Jairus, I would place Jairus a little ahead of Jesus, walking with eagerness, desiring by any means to hurry Christ to his house. At the center of all the thronging crowd we see the one figure, regal, beautiful, dignified, full of tenderness, the Christ Himself.

Suddenly the procession was arrested because the Master stood and said: "Who touched Me?" Then the protest of the disciples was heard, "Master, the multitudes press Thee and crush Thee." But, said Jesus, someone has touched Me, for I perceive that power has gone out of me. So far, no one knew what had happened except the Master and one other. Then in the hush and the constraint, and amid the almost amused glances of the people who thought it was a foolish question, a woman was seen moving round, until she knelt in front of Him, and there she told Him all the truth. Bending over her, and looking straight into that woman's eyes, He used to her the only particularly tender epithet that He is ever recorded as having addressed to a woman, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

And where was Jairus while this was taking place? Waiting, eager, anxious, if I know him, and I think I do. I think I know him by actual sympathy with his breaking heart. I think he was almost rebellious because the Lord had halted. Yet I think that when that woman had told her story of how by touching she had been healed, there was a song in the heart of Jairus, new light on the shadowed pathway, a new hope breaking in his soul, for that was a new evidence of the power of the One Whose aid he had come to seek.

Then they moved a little farther forward, and there come messengers from the house of Jairus, who said: Do not worry the Rabbi, the child is dead. In a moment another voice sounded in his ears, the voice of Jesus, saying: "Fear not, believe only; thy child shall be made whole." Arrived at the house, He said: "She is not dead but sleepeth"; and they laughed Him to scorn. He put them all out. It is the only proper treatment for such people! Besides Himself, He kept in that room three disciples, the father and the mother, six of them; and the dead child made seven. Then bending over her, He said—and I am going to take liberty with the translation, and try to express some of the poetry of the Aramaic in our English tongue, not "Maiden, arise"—that is altogether too formal a translation—but "Talitha cumi" that is, "Little lamb, arise." The beautiful eyelids quivered, and the eyes surely looked first at His face. Then He gave her back to her father and mother, and went on His way.

Now, in the atmosphere created by these stories I ask you to fasten your attention on this question of Jesus, so startling, strange, uncalled for, absurd in the hearing of the men who listened to it, "Who touched Me?" There are three things I want to suggest concerning that question. First, it was selective; it separated. Second, it was a revealing question, one that resulted in a revelation, and ultimately in a confession. Finally, in the case of the woman it was causative; it brought her to a new relationship with Christ, in advance of that which had been established when she touched Him.

I say in the first place that the question was selective. It revealed the fact that in that crowd all the multitudes were not on the same footing, that someone had reached Him in a way that others had not reached Him. It was a question revealing, on the part of Our Lord, discernment, discrimination, division. "Who touched Me?" A hundred men have touched Thee! Nay, one soul has touched Me! Everyone is jostling Thee! But someone has got near to Me! But surely they were all near. No, they were far away, though brushing by Him; removed to infinite distances, though looking right into His eyes. Someone has touched Me! It was a selective question, dividing the crowd, and putting some one person in separation from the crowd, revealing the fact that some one person in that curious, jostling, interested, reverently kindly multitude stood on an entirely different footing from the rest. "Who touched me?"

The question, therefore, was revealing in the sense that it reveals the fact that there is a contact which makes demands on Christ, and there is a contact which makes no demands on Him. It reveals that men may come very near to Him, and yet never be near to Him; that men may look into His eyes, and never see Him; catch all the accents of His voice, but never hear Him; jostle His garments, be familiar with the sacraments of His house, observe all the externalities of worship, and yet never make contact with Himself. It reveals the fact, therefore, on the other hand, that there is a contact which, if once made, He must answer. Without the uttering of a word, virtue will pass from Him to the person who makes that contact. I had nearly said—and I will say it, though I have to amend it—without volition on His part. I amend it by saying without apparent volition on His part; not without volition, for did He not know she was near Him, did He not know, was He not prepared for her approach? Surely, yes. He needed not that any man should tell Him what was in man, for He knew all men. He knew the crowds intimately and particularly, and knew every individual life in the crowds. A crowd was never a mob to Jesus. It was always a company of individual souls. There was no need for Him to turn to find her. He knew she was there. His question was not a question asked that he might discover who it was, but that He might bring her

yet nearer to Himself; and that He might create a value for another breaking heart, the heart of Jairus. He knew, He knew she was coming; and in that moment when she made contact with Him, far more quickly than the lightning's flash, virtue, power, health, healing, strength passed from Him to her, and all that canceled her limitation and restored to her everything that she had lost.

What, then, was the contact? This question is answered best by a little careful examination of the story, and a little careful observation of the woman. Mark her condition. The story, as Luke tells it in medical terms, reveals a fact, which expressed in the terms of the Hebrew economy, may thus be stated: On account of the peculiar form of physical disease from which she was suffering she was excommunicated from the temple, not allowed to mingle with the worshipers. By that selfsame law she was divorced from her husband, not allowed to live with him. By that same law she was ostracized from society, and in appalling loneliness she had lived for twelve years. It is quite easy to say all this; but let imagination help us to understand it. Twelve years of a disease that had weakened her day by day, until all her physical powers were feeble. Twelve years shut out from the fellowship of the saints as they went up to the house of God. Twelve years shut away from the comradeships of home and the fellowship of her husband. Twelve years shut out from all the circle of her friends and acquaintances. Twelve years of suffering and weakness. Twelve years in which she had done all she knew for healing; for Luke tells us she "had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any," or, as writes Mark, who held no brief for doctors, "She had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

Now look at this woman again, thin, emaciated, worn, weary! She heard that Jesus was coming her way. What did she know of Him? Ah, I cannot tell. All I can surmise from the story is that she had heard of Him, that the news of Him had reached her in her weakness and in her suffering; that she had heard how He had healed the sick and given back strength to those weak and infirm. Now the moment had come when He was actually coming by her, coming her way. I never can quite understand how she reached Him at all. It is very difficult even for a strong man to get through a crowd. Yet, somehow, that woman made her way through the crowd.

Now, I pray you, observe her. Was this faith which moved her firm, strong, absolute, settled? I do not think so. What, then, was it? It was a profound sense of need, an acquaintance with a testimony that told of His power; it was hope springing in her heart that perhaps He could help even her. Then it was faith, the outcome of hope, hope based on testimony; but principally it was faith expressing itself in a venture. She found her way through the crowd, and there hung the tassel on His garment, that cord of blue, according to the ancient economy. I see her struggling to reach Him; at last she is near enough to stretch out her hand; and it was not a passing touch she gave; she clutched it, grasped it!

This was an act growing out of need; it was an act inspired by testimony heard; it was the result of hope springing anew within the heart; it was an act of faith inspired by testimony, hope; it was faith venturing to make an appeal, the appeal of a touch. Call it superstition if you will; and the answer of the Lord in power, and the words spoken to her presently, are of infinite value, and become more impressive, the more we see that the act of the woman was not the act of a reasoned and argumentative and logical faith. It was a venture in an hour of great need.

That is the contact that Christ always answers. I have of set purpose attempted to put the event in the light of its simplicity. I do not think that woman came to Him with profound and strong conviction. Hers was a great agony, a great need, a simple willingness to believe a testimony spoken by others, expressed in a determination to make the final venture. So surreptitiously, hidden away, she clutched at His garment. That is the contact that He answers, that is the attitude to which He is compelled, by virtue of what He is in Himself, to make an immediate response. Need, agony, without logic and without reason, but in answer to testimony and to hope, making a venture—to that He responds, and the virtue passes from Him to the seeker, and heals.

Writing of this story, and contrasting the crowds that pressed Jesus with the woman who touched Him, Augustine said, "Flesh presses, faith touches." How true the words still are. Flesh presses; that which is merely of human interest and human curiosity, presses Him; but faith reaches Him, touches Him; and, believe me, this Lord of hope and glory still knows the difference between the jostle of a curious crowd and the touch of a weak and frail and appealing soul. Not the healthy, robust, self-complacent, satisfied, curious jostle of a crowd draws anything out of Him; but the weak, frail, agonized, almost hopeless and yet venturing, touch of a hidden woman is answered by a flow of virtue and a rush of power, and the healing and the health for which the soul is waiting.

But the question in itself was not only selective, and revelatory to us of the difference between the press of the flesh and the touch of faith. The question in the case of the woman was causative. She hoped to get her healing and quietly depart. She hoped to touch, and get her blessing, and quietly to slip away, with no one knowing. How many people hope to do that! But this woman was not permitted to do so. She must come from behind and stand in front. She must come from that attitude of hiding into the open. It was necessary that if she had received a benefit she should confess the Lord, not in order that He might find out who touched Him, not in order ultimately that the crowd might discover why He halted, but that she might come in front and confess Him.

Now notice carefully what happened. First, that confession brought to the woman a yet deeper blessing. She told Him in the hearing of the crowds, and I think there was a great hush over them as she spoke, how she had come, and how she was healed. Then He looked at her, and He said, "Daughter." Oh, after all, what a faulty thing preaching is! I cannot say that as it ought to be said, and I am almost afraid to try. Put yourself in her place—not weak any longer, but strong, for when He heals He heals. He never plays at healing, this Lord of ours. But though healed, she was still excommunicate, with no right of entry to synagogue or temple; still divorced, for even if there would be restoration presently to home and husband, it was not yet accomplished. Still ostracized from society, and likely to remain ostracized, because she had lost all her property. But He said, "Daughter." Then what do you think she cared about anything else? What did it matter now? She was excommunicate from temple, shut out from home, ostracized from friends; but He said, "Daughter"; He had adopted her, and by the sweet word of ineffable tenderness had brought her to His heart and had given her His own heart. "Daughter!" There is an old Roman legend—very foolish many of them are, and very beautiful some of them—that this was Veronica, the woman who, by the by, in the hour of His dying, was the only one who ministered to Him. It is only a legend, but if it is not true, it might be. He said, "Daughter;" and heaven dawned, all the shadows melted, and new life began. Not merely had He adopted her as His daughter in order that she might be benefited, but He had admitted her to fellowship with Himself in fullest grace. Just before this, according to Luke, He had said, Who is My mother, and who are My brethren and My sisters?

They that do the will of My Father in heaven: "My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it." Now He added another word, "Daughter." Do you observe the profounder, more glorious blessing that came to the woman when she ceased her attempt to remain in hiding and confessed Him? For her own sake it was necessary that she should no longer be content with gaining the blessing which the fringe of His garments diffused, but should pass to the front, look into His eyes, and come into personal and eternal fellowship with Him as He said to her, "Daughter... go in peace."

But there was another reason why she should make her confession. I hinted at it just now, and will do no more than return to the matter in a brief word. Look again at Jairus. I think I know something of what was passing through his mind. He was surely saying within himself, Why does He wait? My girlie is dying! He will be too late! My girlie is twelve years of age; my home has been full of sunshine for twelve years. Her laughter and tears have made rainbow radiance in my home for twelve years; and she is dying! What is that woman saying? Twelve years of shadow, why that woman has been ill just as long as my child has been with me! She has been under the shadows all the time I have been in the sunshine. What is this the woman says? Her shadows have gone and the sunshine has come back to her! Then if He could heal her, and help her when she does but touch the border of His garment, let us get Him on, and home. For the strengthening of Jairus' faith she must confess.

Yet is not the final word the highest? Not only for deeper blessing she must confess, not only for the strengthening of Jairus' faith; but surely also, and supremely, for the honor and glory of the Lord Himself. It was fit that she should confess Him. In that jostling, curious crowd were men lurking, already planning and plotting for His murder. It was surely fit that the voice of one who had been healed should be raised to confess Him. For His sake then. And so the question caused deeper blessing for the sufferer, strengthened the faith of Jairus, and ultimately glorified the Lord Himself.

So the story itself preaches if the preacher fails. You say, That is a very old story. No, not so very old. It is as new as this wonderful morning. Ere I pronounce the benediction it is all being repeated. We here are interested in Jesus Christ. I think I am safe in saying that. We all feel we would like to be near to Him, for there is something in the very name that calls us to higher things. There is always a beauty in the story of Jesus, even though it be told for envy; it is ever a victorious story; even though Christ be preached for very strife, Paul must rejoice. We have gathered this morning, a part of the great crowd around Christ, reverent, interested. But His question is this: "Who touched Me?" I cannot answer it. He knows who touched Him. We may have been in His immediate presence, and never near Him, even this morning. But someone has touched Him. Some broken heart, some weary soul, some bruised man or tired woman has touched Him, has ventured, and already is feeling the force of the virtue that heals. You were in entire despair half an hour ago. You are going to make another venture. You had almost given up the strife after righteousness when you entered this building, but now you are going to begin again. I cannot interfere, only to say to you that the Lord asks that if you have received the benefit you will confess Him.

"Who touched Me?" Did you? Did you touch Him, brother mine, sister mine, hidden away in the crowd? Do you feel the thrill of the virtue? Has the glory of a new vision broken upon you? Then, in

the name of the Lord and Master, confess Him. Or to gather the philosophy of the New Testament story and utter it in the splendid language of the old psalmist, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary." I call you who have received the virtue to confess Him for your own sake. Do not be satisfied with the blessing so received. Confess Him; looking into His own face, avow yourself His own and His follower and listen for the voice that speaks some word more beautiful in its music, more powerful in its values, than any other blessing you have ever received. I call you to confess because of some Jairus hiding in the crowd, anxious, stricken, and smitten. Do you know how you can prove Christ to him and save him? By telling what Christ has done for you.

Finally, and this is the last argument, not for your sake alone, not principally for the sake of helping other men, but for His own glory and honor, and that you may stand by His side, one committed to Him, confess Him.

Brethren, of the things I have spoken this is the sum:

No fable old, nor mythic lore,

No dream of bards and seers,

No dead fact stranded on the shore

Of the oblivious years.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet

A present help is He;

And faith has still its Olivet,

And love its Galilee.

The healing of His seamless dress

Is by our beds of pain;

We touch Him in life's throng and press,

And we are whole again.

Luke 9:51. Christ's Vision Of Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51.

Christ's Vision Of Jerusalem.

And it came to pass, when the days were well nigh come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51

Every contemplation of the last month, and weeks, and days in the life of our Lord fills the soul with a sense of solemn and almost overwhelming awe. Through all those movements which culminated in the Cross and resurrection, He stands out, awful in His loneliness, magnificent in His heroism, supreme in His revelation of the highest possible in human life, and of the greatest in God.

This determined setting of His face to Jerusalem is worthy of our closest attention. A superficial reading would leave the impression that the value of the statement is exhausted geographically. This is by no means so. Jesus had just left the mount of glory, and set His face toward the valley, and the multitudes, toward the sin, the sorrow, and the suffering. And "when the days were well nigh come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

This declaration, as a revelation of His outlook, and in the light of the teaching which immediately followed, is of supreme value to all such as bear His name and share His toil.

I shall ask you to consider first this attitude of Christ, and then the things concerning discipleship, which are chronicled for us immediately after this declaration of Luke concerning the Lord.

In consideration of His attitude notice first His vision of Jerusalem, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"; second, the consciousness that created the stedfastness, "The days were well nigh come that He should be received up"; and, finally, His action, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

What, then, was the vision which Jesus had of Jerusalem? First of all, it was that of a city utterly and absolutely hostile to Himself. He was drawing near the end of His ministry. He had walked the streets of Jerusalem, had taught in the courts of the temple, had held intercourse with the leaders of the people, and He knew right well that the whole city was hostile to Him. The religious leaders, the political parties, the multitudes who were city folk, were against Him.

The religious leaders were against Him because His spiritual teaching had been directly contradictory to all for which they stood. There were two great religious parties at the time, which we may broadly describe as rationalistic and ritualistic. There were the Sadducees, and the Pharisees, diametrically opposed, and yet both of them against Jesus Christ.

The Sadducees did not believe in angel, or spirit, or resurrection. That is to say, they were the rationalists in religion, the men who were attempting still to retain the religious ideal, while yet

denying all the supernatural element therein. These men were against Christ necessarily. He had ruthlessly swept aside their views by speaking of angels, by referring to the Spirit, by declaring that God was not the God of the dead but of the living.

The Pharisees stood for ritualistic practice, were eager and anxious about the tithing of mint, anise, cummin, and rue; while neglecting the weightier matters of the law. They would not eat with unwashed hands, but were content to stand before the altar of God with filthy hearts.

The political parties were against Him. None of them had been able to capture Him. He had dictated the terms of righteousness to all as they had come to Him with subtle questions, but He had stood aloof from them, not uninterested in the affairs of city and nation, but speaking to His time the things of God alone.

The Jerusalem multitudes were against Him, for I think there is a sharp line of distinction to be drawn between the simple folk of Galilee and the city dwellers. It has been said that the people shouted, "Hosanna!" and within a week shouted, "Crucify!" I do not think so. I think that they were two quite different multitudes. The Galileans who had come with Him shouted, "Hosanna." The people of the city were priest-ridden, and king-enslaved, and they were all against Him.

Jesus had had His day, His opportunity. He had delivered His message. He had unburdened His soul. He had flashed upon them the light of the Divine Kingdom. His message was refused, and they were against Him; and subtle and devilish intrigues were busy, waiting for the opportunity to lay hands on Him, and hand Him over to death. All this He knew, and yet "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

But then He had another vision of Jerusalem. Not only did He see it hostile, He saw it doomed. At last, with a sigh and a sob, He pronounced that doom. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy children together," and He saw Jerusalem doomed by the inevitable sequence of wrong. False shepherds and scattered sheep. False prophets, and deluded people. False priests, and degraded religion. He knew perfectly well that Jerusalem was doomed by the deliberate rejection of its own opportunity. "How often would I!" That was the desire of His heart. "And ye would not!" That was the choice of their sin. He knew perfectly well therefore that the sentence must be carried out. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Nevertheless, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," the hostile city, and the doomed city.

He had another vision of Jerusalem, and I have dwelt only upon the first two that I might lead you to the third. He saw Jerusalem hostile. He saw Jerusalem doomed. But He saw Jerusalem rebuilt. He saw through all the mists and the darkness and the opposition and the doom to something beyond.

The men of faith had ever been men of vision, looking "for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." When Abraham turned his back upon Ur of the Chaldees, and went out seeking a city, he did not go to seek a heaven beyond the earth. His passion, the passion of all the men of faith, and supremely the passion of Jesus, was not that men should pass through earth and win heaven; but that there should be established on the earth the city of God. The vision which had kept the Hebrews a people through all the processes of their failure, was the vision of the ultimate. Read the ancient prophecies carefully, and amid the thunder of denunciation you will constantly hear tones that tell of coming accomplishment in the world, of the day when "the

knowledge of the glory of the Lord" shall fill the earth, "as the waters cover the sea"; of the day when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain." All these men had looked toward the building of a city. Cities had been built, but the hopes and aspirations of seers and psalmists had never been realized.

Jerusalem as Jesus looked at it was the home of evil things, and yet it was "the city of the great King," and through it He saw the city of God established, "the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God," the ultimate accomplishment of that which is in the heart of God, not merely in individual life, but in civic life; the setting up of the Kingdom of God in the world, and seeing that, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Let us gather up these thoughts. When the time was coming that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. What Jerusalem? The Jerusalem hostile to Himself, waiting to arrest and murder Him. What Jerusalem? That Jerusalem over which hung the sword of God, upon which the judgment of God must soon fall. What Jerusalem? The Jerusalem beyond all this, that which the hostile and doomed city must yet become in the economy of God, a city established, "the joy of the whole earth," because the home of "the great King," and the center from which His government was to go forth to the ends of the world. Jesus saw the city, and deliberately set His face toward its hostility, its doom, and its ultimate triumph. He had a vision of the immediate, but He had that more wonderful vision which sees through the immediate to the ultimate. Beyond the gathering storm clouds settling over Himself and the city He saw the morning without clouds, the ultimate and final victory, when the last stone will be brought on to the city of God, and all tribes of the earth will rejoice in the setting up of His government and the accomplishment of His will. He saw through the process of pain to that ultimate for which He taught us to pray, for the day when God's name shall be hallowed, His Kingdom come, His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. And he set his face toward the Jerusalem of hostility, because He saw through it the Jerusalem of ultimate achievement.

Notice, in the second place, the consciousness which created the vision. "It came to pass, when the days were well nigh come that He should be received up,..." He is coming down. He has just turned His back upon the mountain, and has set His face to the valley, and has immediately cast the devil out of the boy, and is still moving down to the valley of darkness. No, that is not the story. That is only part of it. He is moving toward the day in which "He should be received up." Here the declaration is an incidental one, but in the Gospel of John we find how perpetually our Lord looked upon His mission in its entirety. "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." He saw the Cross, but He saw the resurrection. He saw the travail, and shrank from it, but He saw the triumph, and hastened to it. He saw the hostility in Jerusalem, the cruel, brutal hostility. He knew exactly what was awaiting Him, but He saw beyond the hostility to the crowning and the victory, and the position He was to occupy when He was received up. He was going down, but the descent was the preliminary to an ascent. The setting of His face toward the darkness was the lifting of His face toward the light, and although He set His face stedfastly toward Jerusalem, and the sorrow, and the shame, and the pain, and the dying, He set His face toward the victory, and the joy, and the triumph. To Him the Cross was the way of ascent to the throne. To Him all the travail that waited for Him was the very process that made possible the triumph upon which His heart was set. From the glorious height of the Transfiguration Mount He had seen the mists as they lay along the valleys through which He must pass—the

strange and chilly mists of death; but He had seen them from the height of glory, and they had been purple as the light shone upon them. Men are going to nail Him to a Cross, and taunt Him as He hangs there; "If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the Cross." But He knows perfectly well by the way of the helplessness of that hour of His dying that help is to be laid upon Him for all who put their trust in Him, and by the way of that mystery of descent He is moving out toward eternal ascent. He is to be received up.

What, then, was the effect of this consciousness upon Him? That hostility could neither hinder nor anger Him. I wish I knew how to say that so as to arrest you. Is there anything more wonderful in the story of His coming than the fact that hostility never hindered Him? We speak of Gethsemane and the shrinking there, but we must remember that the shrinking was not from human hostility, but from something far more deep and mysterious, into the meaning of which you and I can never enter. But the hostility in Jerusalem never hindered Him, and never angered Him. Is there anything in human history and literature that begins to compare with the patient, unprovoked spirit in which this Christ of ours set His face toward Jerusalem, or in the majestic and exhaustive language of the ancient prophecy, "As a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, He opened not His mouth." The vision of the glory beyond the hostility made Him such a One as could set His face toward the city, and be unhindered and unangered by its hostility.

Again, the doom which He Himself must pronounce upon the city could not thwart Him, could not dishearten Him. Could there be a greater triumph than the triumph of One Who saw through the ruined, doomed city, a greater city, and was not disheartened by the doom?

Yet there is another thing which must be said. He saw Jerusalem hostile, He saw Jerusalem doomed, He saw Jerusalem certainly to be rebuilt; but the vision of the ultimate, the assurance that God must win, did not make Him careless. He did not say because this victory of God must be won in the long run of the centuries, I may turn aside and leave it. He set His face toward the pain, and toward the suffering, and toward the strife. Jerusalem hostile, He is to be received up; but He will go through hostile Jerusalem. Its hostility cannot hinder him. Jerusalem doomed, He is to be received up; but He cannot be disheartened about the doom of Jerusalem, for He knows through what He will do amid its darkness He will create a new day for it. Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, ah, yes, but He must go through the midst of its darkness to turn it into light; through the midst of its sin to take hold upon it and make possible that which He sees in the economy of God.

As I read this word about my Lord, I stand in His presence overawed. "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," because He was to be received up. That is suffering transfigured by the light of the victory which would result from it. The only thing I fear now is that a multiplicity of my words may hide the vision. Behold the Man of Nazareth. There He stands at the foot of the hill where He has been transfigured. The multitudes are all about Him. In the city all the forces are against Him. Over the city hang the dark thunder clouds of the Divine judgment. But beyond is Jerusalem the golden, God's own perfect city! He stedfastly set His face toward the hostility, toward the doom, caring not for the one, gathering the other into His own soul, looking ultimately toward the glory and toward the victory.

Turn now to the things which immediately follow, for they are full of significance for us. What is the next thing that Luke tells us? As He set His face toward Jerusalem they came to a Samaritan village, and the Samaritans would not receive Him. Why not? Mark it carefully, because His face

was toward Jerusalem. See how people may put a narrow and local interpretation upon a broad and infinite truth. They simply saw Him as a Jew traveling toward Jerusalem, and because Jerusalem was the objective of His journey, they would not entertain Him. The narrowness of the Samaritan was manifest there. That which was His purpose of blessing for them was the reason of their anger with Him. As He set His face toward Jerusalem it was not for Jerusalem merely, but for Samaria. Presently, having been to Jerusalem, having been smitten to the death in Jerusalem, having been raised from the dead, He will stand among these disciples who wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritan village, and He will say to them, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." His vision had not been the vision of Jerusalem only. It had been the vision of Samaria won and redeemed, of the uttermost part of the earth brought into right relationship with the government of God. And that is why His face was set steadfastly toward Jerusalem, and these Samaritans are against Him because He was going to Jerusalem. All unknowingly and ignorantly they were angry with Him, because of the purpose which was in His heart to bring blessing to them.

Then notice the disciples' anger. They requested that they might call down fire to destroy this village. They respected His person, but they were quite ignorant of His purpose. They were standing outside the great circle in which He lived and moved. They had not the vision of the ultimate as He had; and, consequently, while loyal to Him, and angry because He was not hospitably received, they rather hindered than helped Him.

Now look at the Lord. Mark the patience of His purpose. He rebuked the disciples, and quietly went to another village. The village that would not entertain Him He left, not in anger, but in patience. And yet there is a touch of impatience here in Christ. It is only a great patience that ever can be purely impatient. What impatience is there? Impatience with His own disciples. There is no impatience with the Samaritan village that had not understood Him. There is a touch of impatience with His disciples because of their blindness. Ah, methinks sometimes He must be impatient with some of us. He was moving toward the city, with all the glory filling His vision, and He rebukes the disciples, and yet is patient with Samaria.

Let us read on. On His way three men came to Him. One of them said impulsively, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." I always love that man. I like the man who speaks out what is in His heart even though impulsively. Christ did not rebuke him, but He flashed before him the truth, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Jesus looked at another and said, "Follow Me," and the man answered, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," which does not mean that his father was dead. Dr. George Adam Smith told me, talking about this very story, that when he was in Palestine he very particularly desired to get a certain man to act as guide in one of those wonderful journeys of his into the unknown regions, and was startled when the man said to him in actual words, with the Eastern salaam, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." His father was alive and hale and hearty. What the man meant was, I have home ties and responsibilities, and I cannot break them. And that is what this man in the Gospel story meant. The word of Jesus is more severe than it seems. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God."

A little further on another man said, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." To him Christ said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Now reverently I bring the three men together, and I look at the Lord. His face is set toward Jerusalem. Mark the answers. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests." What is that? Detachment from all that prevents progress to Jerusalem. And what next? "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." What is that? Abandonment of the nearest earthly tie in the interest of the heavenly purpose. And what next? "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." "Looking back." Mark it! His face set toward Jerusalem. "No man looking back." The face set. The looking back.

Christ speaking to these men unveiled His own attitude. It was first that of detachment from everything that prevented progress to Jerusalem. I want to say this most reverently, and carefully. Do not pity Him because He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Rather pity yourself if you have something left in your life that makes it hard to go with Him to Jerusalem. It was a declaration of the splendid detachment of Christ from all the things that prevented the progress. I have not where to lay My head. All personal property is abandoned that I may reach Jerusalem, the hostile and the doomed, and make it Jerusalem, the city of God.

Then mark the next word. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." Abandonment of the nearest earthly tie in the interest of the heavenly purpose. And was not that true of Him? Did He not say upon one memorable occasion, when they said, "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak with Thee," "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" When Jesus asked that question He was not speaking disrespectfully of His mother. In the last consummating agony of His life, when all the sins of the world were sweeping in anguish over His soul, He was able to think of His mother, and provide for the days remaining to her, "Woman, behold, thy son!... Behold, thy mother!" What, then, did He mean? He meant that even so dear a tie as the tie of relationship between son and mother must be swept aside in the interests of getting to Jerusalem the doomed and turning it into Jerusalem the glorified!

And then, again, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back." How they tried to persuade Him to look back! How the devil tried, how His own disciples tried! But He never looked back. He put His hand to the plow, and the furrow was lone and long, but, blessed be God, it was straight; and He reached the ultimate goal, because He never looked back.

Brethren, if this is the revelation of Christ's own heart, and I think it is, then if I am to go after Him, I must come this way. If I am to have anything to do in the building of God's city, it must be by detachment from all that prevents progress to Jerusalem. Oh, soul of mine, what hast thou of thine own that hinders thy progress toward Jerusalem with Him? And I have come in hours of meditation almost to feel myself filled with envy for the men who can say, I have not where to lay my head, I have not a thing that stands between me and this one supreme purpose.

I must also abandon the nearest earthly tie that prevents. I must remember that to look back from this enterprise is to make myself unfit for the Kingdom.

But let me thus conclude. Every city is Jerusalem for the purpose of my application. London is Jerusalem, hostile, doomed, and yet possible. London is as hostile to Jesus Christ as Jerusalem was. And therefore it is as surely doomed as Jerusalem was. Yet it is for Christian men and women in London to see through, to see to the ultimate, to see the purpose of God. And if it be impossible for us to take in the larger whole, take the local, take the thing close to you. Take the hostility that abounds all about the place where you live and serve and work. How much there is of it! And take the fact that doom is writ upon everything that is hostile. It does seem to me sometimes we want to remind ourselves of that. Are we not tempted sometimes to think that all these hostile things are going to win? Never! God's verdict is found, and His sentence passed, and all hell cannot prevent the doom of the thing hostile to Jesus Christ. Yes, but, brethren, you and I are to look through, and are to see the possible and God's ultimate.

And if it be true that every city is Jerusalem, in this sense of application, then I will say another thing, and it is this. His face is still toward Jerusalem, stedfastly set toward it, coming to it even when it is hostile to Him. Has it never occurred to you that it is an amazing wonder that He has not turned His back upon London long ago? He has not. His face is toward it. Tears are upon His cheeks even now. Call it figurative language if you will, but remember the fact is finer than the figure. His heart is still moved with compassion toward the city. He knows men will bruise Him, and are bruising Him, but He is coming toward it always. The Cross is not over. It is in His heart today, the infinite passion that was manifest on the green hill is there yet.

The Son of God in tears,

The wondering angels see.

Be thou astonished, Oh, my soul!

He shed those tears for thee.

That is His attitude toward us today.

Now, this is the question. Who is with Him? How many see these things as He saw them? How many can see through to the light and the victory? It is the men and women whose eyes are illumined with His love to see through who are prepared today to tread the pathway of shame and suffering. It would be so much easier to do something else.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."

He said, "No, walk in the town."

I said, "There are no flowers there."

He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black;

There is nothing but noise and din,"

And He wept as He sent me back:

"There is more," He said, "there is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."
I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you, or they."
I pleaded for time to be given.
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."
May God set our faces toward Jerusalem!

Luke 9:51-62. But!.

Luke 9:51-62.

But!.

I will follow Thee, Lord; but...

Luke 9:51-62

When the events took place which are recorded in the paragraph from which the text is taken, the face of Jesus was set toward Jerusalem, and the days were days of crisis and testing in the matter of all human relationships to Himself.

While He was a boy, a youth, and a young man in Nazareth, He was beloved, for Luke tells us that He grew in favour, not with God only, but with men also. In the early days of His public ministry. He was the center of attraction, and men of all grades and all classes crowded after Him to see and hear Him. In the process of that ministry, as He began to make clear to those who listened that His mission was a mission of right and truth and purity, the essential things of the Kingdom of God, men gradually fell away from Him; and in these last weeks or months prior to the cross there were great crises in many lives, and all human relationships passed through a time of severe testing.

His own disciples were busy reasoning among themselves as to their relative greatness, and He rebuked and corrected them by putting the child in the midst. John was disturbed because someone had been seen working in the name of Christ, who was not following with the disciples. Mark carefully what John complained about. He was not able to say that the man was not following Christ, but he was not following with the disciples. Jesus quietly and firmly rebuked his exclusivism. The Samaritans refused to receive Him into one of their villages because His face was set evidently toward Jerusalem. Boanerges, sons of thunder, would have called down fire upon them, but Jesus rebuked them, and passed on to another village.

Somewhere on those journeys toward Jerusalem, while His face was set toward the city which He knew and which He loved—the city which He well knew at this time was so hostile to Him that it was only waiting for His arrival to arrest Him and kill Him; somewhere on these journeyings toward the city, the things happened which are chronicled in this brief paragraph.

One man, for some reason unexplained by the story, in the fulness of his heart, under sudden impulse as it would seem, said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Another man, perchance a little farther on the way, Christ looked at, and called him to follow, saying, "Follow Me." Yet a third, with less impulsiveness than the first, and with more of hesitation, said: "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house."

Before the first of these men, who declared himself willing to follow the Lord wherever He went, He set a difficulty. It is as though He said to him: You say you are prepared to follow Me whithersoever I go. Do you really know what My lot in life is? "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven

have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head"—that is, does not possess as His own a resting-place for His head.

The second man, whom the Lord called to follow Him, declined on the plea of filial duty; for when he said "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," his father in all probability was still living. It was not a case of asking to attend a funeral. I never understood that, until in conversation with Dr. George Adam Smith, he told me of what happened to himself when endeavouring to persuade a young Arab to accompany him into the interior. At last the Arab looked at him, and said, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," in the very words of Scripture; and the old man was sitting by his side when he uttered them. What he meant was, I have a filial obligation that prevents my coming. To the man who raised that difficulty Christ said: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." That is the supreme matter, and its demands are more imperative even than such filial obligation.

Before the third, the man who suggested that he desired to follow, but would like first to bid farewell to those who were at his own house, Christ affirmed the superlativeness of His own claim: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

Now, let me at once say to you, I do not propose to follow the incidents that are given here in any further detail. They constitute a background. I am far more anxious to discover the principles involved, and make application of them to the present hour and present congregation. Whether any of these men ultimately followed the Lord, we do not know. There is no reason to suppose they did not, although that has been very generally taken for granted. It has been our habit to consign all these doubtful cases to perdition. We have no right to do so. We know nothing about them. It may be that these men followed Christ at last. We do not know. It is not intended that we should know. The things of value are the revelations in this passage; first, of the call of Christ and of the supremacy of Christ as He calls men; second, of the fact that difficulties present themselves to the minds of many, which are very real and very definite; third and finally, the passage teaches us the urgency of immediate decision, that when we come to deal with Christ, counting the cost is out of place. He calls us to follow, to follow immediately, to follow whatever the cost may be.

Let us first spend two or three minutes with this word of Christ, this call of Christ to follow. On two occasions in the course of this paragraph men made use of the word. In the central one, Christ used it. The first man said, "I will follow Thee." The third man said, "I will follow Thee, Lord, but..." To the other man Christ said, "Follow Me."

I think it is quite fair to suppose that the word of the first man and of the third prove that they had heard Christ utter that call to someone. It was His favourite method of calling men after Himself, "Follow Me." There are other things that He said to other men when He dealt with them as to their spiritual needs, but all His other methods were incidental, and are not often repeated. For instance, He said "Ye must be born again" only to one man, never repeating it. Over and over again, to men when He would first attract them, to the disciples when He would call them into the fellowship of His work, to the apostles when He would call them to higher service, He made use of the same simple words, "Follow Me."

If we consider quietly the suggestiveness of the call of Christ, we shall discover in it a demand made for confidence and submission. Confronting a man sitting in the midst of his daily avocation,

let us say, at the receipt of custom, He looked into his eyes and said, "Follow Me," and we at once see that He meant: trust Me, trust yourself to Me, put confidence in Me, and obey Me. It is His claim of supremacy and His call to submission to that supremacy.

There is more in it than the claim of supremacy and the call to submission; there is inferentially the promise of guidance and of victory. The assumptions of this word of Jesus' are very great and gracious. He assumes His own knowledge of the way, His own ability to direct those who come after Him, His own ability so to guide and direct them that they shall come to the fulfilment of all that is highest and noblest in life.

"Follow Me" is still Christ's word to men. I say this out of my heart. I believe it is the one thing He would say to every man and woman in this house. A thousand things to a thousand of us, all different when dealing with particular and definite individual need, but one thing to all, "Follow Me."

It is His universal call to men, a call in which He claims authority, and assumes ability to guide, and lead, and deliver; a call in which He insists that those who come after Him must believe in Him and demonstrate their belief by obedience. Its simplicity is its sublimity. The very fact that the words are brief, and so natural that any little child can understand them, still does indicate the fact that when they are uttered there is nothing more to be said, "Follow Me." The first step in the Christian life is that of obedience to that word. The whole pathway of Christian experience is trodden in obedience to that ideal. The final triumph of the Christian life will be won when the trusting soul, in final confidence in Christ, passes over the threshold into the "other room"—to quote George Meredith's description of death. It will be but following Him.

But, there are difficulties in the way. There are those who positively and definitely refuse to obey Him, those who reject His claim of Kingship. There are those who hear Him, but are not attracted; they neglect the wooing winsomeness of His call. To neither of these classes is my message tonight addressed. There is yet another class, made up of those who are attracted by Jesus Christ, who admire all they know concerning Him, who are supremely conscious of their own need of just that which He claims to be able to supply, who, in their deepest heart intend to follow Him, but... "I will follow Thee, Lord; but..."; men and women who can make use of the exact language of the last man in our paragraph. "I will follow Thee, Lord"; I recognize Thy supremacy; Thou art Lord; I confess my desire and determination to follow Thee; but... And the following never begins, the discipleship never commences. To such I desire to speak tonight.

I am constrained to do so by the fact that in my correspondence, and quite recently especially, I have heard from numbers, who perchance are sitting in this house tonight, who virtually have said that. Two weeks ago, in our after-meeting, God gave us great and gracious evidences of His power and His willingness to save, and since then message after message has reached me from someone who was present, saying: I want to be right with God; I fain would give myself to Him; but... And they have halted at that point. "I will follow Thee, Lord; but..."

My message tonight, if I may state it broadly before I proceed to deal with it and to illustrate it, is that the claims of Christ are such, and the power of Christ is such that everything which comes after the "but" needs to be resolutely put out of the life. There can be nothing after such a "but" as that, which warrants the halting of a soul. "I will follow Thee, Lord; but...!" You cannot add to that "but" anything which is justifiable in the light of the claims of Christ, in the light of your own deep

need, in the light of the ability of Christ. Yet, how many and how varied are the things that are thus dealt with.

Many years ago I heard Margaret Bottome, the founder of the King's Daughters in America, speaking to a great gathering in Northfield, and her address consisted of a simple story in her own experience in travel, and of illustrations from it, in application to the young life which she was then confronting. She told us that when she first traveled in the Far East, there came an hour when the guide came to take possession of the party, and lead them through all their journeys. Three simple things happened which revealed to her the meaning of a guide. In the first place, the guide came to them and said: "Will you be good enough to give everything to me? I will take charge of everything." They handed over to him all their main articles of baggage—or luggage, whichever you choose—but they were retaining, she among the rest, those small handbags which ladies carry. The guide said: "You must give everything to me." They made their protest, saying there were in those bags things that would be necessary on the journey. Said the guide: "They will be far safer with me, and you will be far safer without them."

After a little while, they were waiting at a railway station for a train; the guide was attending to the baggage. A train came in, they selected a carriage, and the whole party entered it. As soon as they were seated, the guide returned, and said: "Will you be good enough to come out?" They came out, and then asked why he had required them to do so. He replied: "That is the wrong train. Will you be kind enough not to go before me, but after me?" She had learned her second lesson as to the necessity for a guide. In the course of the next day or two, on a long train journey, they were wondering what provision would be made for them on their arrival at their destination. Some stranger, coming from the place at which they were to stay, had told them there was no accommodation, and the guide was strangely silent. When they arrived everything was ready, and the guide said quietly: "Perhaps you will trust me to prepare for you ahead." Three things: Give everything to me. Follow me; but do not go before me. Trust me about the hidden things of the future.

Margaret Bottome has entered into rest, but I bring you that simple message tonight. Whatever your philosophy of life may be, whatever your intellectual difficulties, the whole suggestiveness of that simple story illuminates the thought in the word of Christ, "Follow Me."

"I will follow Thee, Lord; but..." Surely there is no need to give everything up to Thee; there are so many things I shall need on the way. Is it not enough to give myself to Thee and keep as for myself and under my own control some of these things that are so necessary—my money, my occupation, my affectional interests? May I not keep these things?

The answer of Christ to the soul that makes such inquiry is: "You will be far safer when I have charge of them, and they will be infinitely safer with Me." In other words, there are those who are holding back from Jesus Christ because they are not prepared to give to Him all—themselves and everything they have. They are not prepared to recognize that the moment in which they become the possession of Christ, their business belongs to Him, and must be under His control. They are not prepared to recognize that in the moment in which they hand themselves over to the Lord, all they have, as well as all they are, must be handed to Him; that in all things He may direct, control, suggest and master. Is that the way with you, my brother? Would you have given yourself to Christ, but that, in the handing over of your life to the Kingship of the Lord Christ, He claims, and

must have, authority over everything you possess?

If that be recognized, something else grows out of it. Perhaps you are saying, That is not quite the trouble, though you are approaching it. If I consent to hand over to Him all I possess, I know what will happen. There are things I possess which He will immediately destroy, and permit me to carry no further. In the case of some, there are actual evils in the life, evil habits, practices, friendships; in the case of others there are forces which are mere impedimenta, hindering progress—"weights," as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews calls them. These must be left, dropped, lost. It is all quite true. Let there be no mistake about it. There can be no discipleship, as the Lord Himself said, save as a man renounceth all that he hath. "I will follow Thee, Lord; but..."

How shall we answer? I answer in the exact words of the guide. You will be much safer without them. You will be much safer when you have handed them over to Christ, and they, so far as they are right, true, pure things—your possessions, your occupation, your affectional interests—will be far safer in His keeping and under His direction. The things which ruin apart from His control become the things which make and glorify when He guides and governs.

Again, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but..." I do not desire to give up entirely my own independence. My aim is to be right, but I rebel against being refused permission to think or plan, or initiate or arrange. There are so many things in which the way seems quite plain, and I cannot understand why I am asked to remit every decision to Christ. I am not imagining a case. Sitting in my vestry not long ago was a young lady of position and culture, who said to me: "I have never learnt to submit, and I do not think I can." It is the story of hundreds of people.

I am afraid the trouble is that some of us lead men to suppose that it is not necessary. I am here to affirm that it is absolutely necessary. I can undertake nothing concerning which I have not consulted Him. Discipleship means I cannot choose my own calling, or friends, or place of residence. I must consult. I am compelled to prayer. Everything must be remitted to Christ. Jesus Christ is not asking for that kind of submission to Him which means sentimental acquiescence in the glory of His ideal, or in the accuracy of His ethic, or in the beauty of His own person. He says, "Follow Me." He demands submission of the whole being, and, that from the moment when we begin to follow Him we shall consult Him. Again, to return to the simple figure of the guide, Christ says: "Come after Me; do not go before Me."

There are others who are saying: "All these things are not my difficulties. 'I will follow Thee, Lord; but...' I desire to follow. I desire to be a Christian, but there are difficulties ahead of me. There are great uncertainties in the future, and if I give myself to the Christ of Whom you speak, Whose call I have heard, I do not know what will happen. I am afraid to follow in the direction He indicates. Discipleship with me," says such an one, "means in all probability absolute change in my vocation, the passing out of my life of things essential to my material being. I am afraid to follow because I cannot see how the way is to be made clear, or what I am going to do." I hope I am not stating this too indefinitely. Someone says: "I shall have to resign the position I hold in life, and face possible beggary." I do not think that is so very often, but it certainly is so sometimes. I have seen, in the course of the ministry here, more than once, cession to Christ, which meant loss of all the living. It may mean it to someone else. We halt for fear of the uncertain tomorrow. We see the immediate, and the immediate is that of obedience and sacrifice. What lies beyond it?

How am I to answer that statement of difficulty? I might answer it theoretically. If I did so, I would do it by citation from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. I would remind you of the one who in olden days spoke of a "covenant ordered in all things and sure." I would remind you of one who, in the New Testament, declared that the saints walk in works foreordained of God. I would remind you of that great song of the leader of Israel, who, looking back over the way, told them that God had ever moved before them, choosing them out a place in which to pitch their tents, even when they marched through what he himself described as that "great and terrible wilderness." God was always ahead of them. When at eventide the moving pillar halted, and they pitched their tents for the night, they pitched them in the place which God had chosen.

Such is the ancient picture. Do you say, It is full of poetry? Then let me answer you no longer by citation of Scripture, but in the voice of the experience of the saints of God. No man has ever yet committed his way to this Christ and followed Him, but that, although mists hung immediately in front of him, they dispersed. He leads us surely onward, and we have never missed our way, as we have followed Him. Though all those things in which our trust reposes have to be abandoned for the following, He is equal to all the way; and when at eventide we reach the place of our abode, we shall find everything prepared, the bread given and the water sure, and shelter provided and secure, and out of every place of temptation the door of escape provided. Such is our final answer to all objections. It is the universal testimony of trusting souls.

Those are but illustrations. Add to my suggestions other difficulties which suggest themselves to you. Nay, rather put in after the "but" the word you yourselves are saying, the thing you have allowed to hinder your following: "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," but—what?

Christ will halt the impulsive man, not to check him entirely, but to show him what following means. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." What shall we say in answer to that? That it were better to be His companion in the loneliness of the longest night than to be homed and housed without Him. It is such an easy thing to say, yet so absolutely impossible to say it as one knows it to be. Does not your heart agree that it would be better, far better for the sake of the joy of life, of the victory of life, to be the comrade of the poor and lonely Christ, though He never comes to wealth, though He never comes to victory? In other words, the heart of the man who has ever looked into the face of this Christ is compelled to own it, were better to be defeated and die with Him, than being apart from Him to win any passing triumph. "I will follow Thee, Lord!"

Let me urge upon you the importance of definite decision, in view of these very words of Christ. If the following be admittedly costly, then remember this also. The things I have been supposing are not the final things. To follow Him means to go with Him by the way of the Cross, but do you remember the last time He said "Follow Me" to Peter? It was by the shore of the Galilean Lake, in the tender, gracious light of the morning hour, when He Himself, the risen Lord, was bringing Peter face to face with the necessity for his own cross, telling him that at last even he should stretch out his hands and die by the death of the cross. He led Peter to the cross by saying "Follow Me." Being Himself the risen Lord, the light of His resurrection flashed back upon the cross and transfigured it. If it be by the cross, you must follow Him, remember that whoever shares the shame of His cross enters into the glory of His resurrection; and that not merely in God's great tomorrow, not merely in that life which lies beyond; but here and now, in the midst of the present

life, the way of the cross is the way of resurrection.

The Lord insisted that the supreme duty of life is to follow him. "Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." He thus set up a claim upon human life which is absolutely supreme. Neither father nor mother, husband nor wife, child nor lover, must be permitted to stand between the soul and Himself. He calls us to follow Him with all the heart. Following Christ means finding the highest, truest wealth, whatever it may be that we abandon; the highest service, however sacred, we have to leave in order to follow Him; the fullest, most glorious realization of life, however, for the moment we may seem to be impoverished in obedience to His command.

The Master waits for our answer, "I will follow Thee." Now, can we not be away from all theory to the actual business of this. In the quiet hush of this Sabbath evening, I appeal to you once again. How is it that you are not following Him? I do not ask that answer to be given to me. I ask you to remember that the answer is given. You cannot escape it. You are now making reply to that inquiry in the very presence of God. You have declared the reason already. That is a thing that I say with all confidence and with all earnestness. I find men today are trying to persuade themselves that they are not sure of the reason. If you will be perfectly honest with your own heart and with the God in Whose presence you are in this evening hour, you know why you are not following. "I will follow Thee, Lord; but..." But what?

That which comes after that "but" is that against which you must fling all the force of your resolve; for the ending of it, the putting away of it, you must bring to bear your own will and choice, and henceforth say to Him: "I will follow Thee, Lord," though there be no place where I can rest my head. I will follow Thee though I have to abandon all that seems most dear to me. I will follow Thee in order to find my way into that fellowship with Thee whereby Thy name shall be glorified, my life shall be realized, and I shall be at Thy disposal for helpfulness to others in the publication of the Kingdom of God.

Luke 12:35, 36. Men Looking For Their Lord.

Luke 12:35, 36.

Men Looking For Their Lord.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord.

Luke 12:35-36

Every man has some conception of life as a whole, a conception which affects all his attitudes and activities, even though at times unconsciously to himself. This is illustrated by the different figures of which we make use when speaking of life as a whole. We liken it to a race, to a voyage, to a pilgrimage, to a quest, to a warfare; and in every case a complete conception is presented to the mind by the figure of speech. Under the figure of a race we think not merely of the track along which men run, but of the goal which they desire to reach. Under the figure of a voyage we think not merely of the seas which men cross, but of the harbor which they fain would make. Under the figure of a pilgrimage we think not merely of the pathway which winds through the valleys and over the mountains, but of that city, the habitation which men fain would reach. Under the figure of a quest we think not merely of the diligent painstaking search, but of that glad hour when what is sought for is found. Under the figure of a warfare we think not merely of the clash of conflict, but of the crowning joy of the ultimate victory.

In every case, moreover, the ultimate is the inspiration of the immediate. Men run in order to win. Men are careful concerning the navigation of their passage in order that they may reach the harbor. Men are earnest in their prosecution of the pilgrimage, that they may finally come to the city of their desire. The diligence of the quest is inspired by the passionate desire to find what is sought. All the earnestness of the conflict is born of the passion for victory.

Every man, I repeat, has some conception of life. He may not express it figuratively; indeed he may never have formulated it for himself; perhaps he has never talked about it, never thought of it, on the surface of his thinking; and yet underneath that surface thinking he has some conception of what his life means to him. To some men life would seem to be a day of business, the goal of which is the amassing of wealth. To others life would seem to be one constant opportunity for pleasure, the intervals being filled with strenuous work in order to secure that pleasure. Whatever his conception of life may be, it determines the conduct of a man and affects all his relationships in this world. Conduct based on conception creates character, and a man will conform in character to what he makes his conception of life.

In this word of Jesus He reveals the true conception of life in the case of those who have yielded themselves to Him. It is the Christian conception, that is, the conception of the follower of the Christ, of whatever man has seen His beauty and heard His call, and responding to both, has passed under His direction, and shares in all the values of His redeeming work. According to our

Lord's teaching, that man becomes in all the activities of his life, in all his relationships with his fellow men, in all the conduct of the passing days, a man looking for his Lord.

This conception is altogether too largely lost sight of by Christian men today. When Dr. Denney wrote his volume on the Thessalonian epistles he said some things that are very worthy of consideration. He declared that the bloom of beauty on apostolic Christianity was created by the upward look, by the fact that those early Christians did most certainly live, looking for the Lord. He went further and declared that where that expectant attitude is lost, the upward look abandoned, while there may remain very much of Christian strength, that bloom is lost. I believe all that to be most true and most important. Therefore I have turned this evening to this subject, and I shall ask you to meditate with me the conception of life which our Lord suggests; the attitudes of life which will result from such a conception, and the character which response to the conception will invariably produce.

First, then, what is this conception of life? Life becomes, according to this view, a period the duration of which, long or short no man knows, a period ending not with death but with the coming of the Lord Himself. According to this view, in that moment when a man yields himself to the Lord Jesus Christ, the boundaries of his life are changed for him. The boundaries of life to the man not yielded to the Christ are his birth and his death; that man looks back through the years to the day of his birth, the day of beginning; and he looks on speculatively, wonderingly, tremblingly toward the day of death; life is bounded for him by the day of birth and the day of death. To the Christian man the boundaries are altered. The boundary of his life begins with his first meeting with Jesus. In the hour when the Lord comes to him, in the hour of the Lord's first advent to his personal experience, life begins. The other boundary is the moment when the Lord shall come to him again, gathering him to be with Himself. All that is expressed by Paul in that one brief and wonderful word, "To me to live is Christ." Those are the words of a man who had lost count of all except that in his life which was Christ-conditioned. He said, in effect, after three and thirty years of personal comradeship with the Lord, Life began for me when Jesus apprehended me, "to me to live is Christ," He is the origin of my life. Before that first meeting with Christ I had other experiences, other ambitions, other values; but things that were gain I count loss, I blot them out, I cancel them; they are of no value. Life began for me, said the apostle in effect, when above the brightness of the sun, the Lord shone upon me and possessed my life. What is the other boundary of life for this man? According to his own writing in that same autobiographical Chapter, it is the hour in which He shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory. To all Christian men life's boundaries have thus been changed. Said the same apostle to the Thessalonian Christians, "Ye turned to God from idols"—such was the beginning—"to serve the living and true God"—such was the process—"and to wait for His Son from heaven"—such is the consummation. The coming of Jesus to the soul is the beginning of the Christian life, and it is to be consummated by His coming again.

This means that the goal of the life of the individual Christian is always out of sight. Finality is never reached, ambition is never fully realized in these passing days. It means that all other hopes are subservient to this one glorious hope of the coming of the Lord Himself, of looking into His face, of being changed into His likeness. That is to be the hour of supreme, perfect satisfaction in the experience of the Christian man. The man thus looking and waiting for the Lord is willing that every other hope should not be realized if but the interference shall be that of the glad hour of the

Advent of the Master. The man waiting for his Lord recognized the larger hope in all the smaller; and the smaller hopes are forevermore conditioned by the larger. Every man here is living in the expectation of some event toward which he is moving in the ordinary course of things in his own life; looking for the day of graduation, looking for the day when he shall commence the stern work of life, looking for the day when after the process of effort he shall have arrived at a place of power. Such hopes are the very inspirations of conduct. But the Christian man, while having all such hopes, has as the supreme, the ultimate, the profoundest hope, the coming of the Lord; and all these lesser hopes are conditioned by that supreme hope. The truly Christian man will have no desire in his heart to postpone the coming of the Lord that he may reach some other goal; he will be perfectly ready, willing, glad, to know that every other goal toward which he properly runs is lost, canceled, because the Lord Himself will greet him.

This conception of life means that all fear is checked, corrected, hushed to rest. The man who lives waiting for the coming of the Lord will know nothing of panic in the midst of catastrophe, will know nothing of despair in the hour of apparent defeat. The glory of that certain Advent of the King will transfigure all the sackcloth, illuminate every hour of bereavement, irradiate with glory every dark cloud that sweeps across the life. The man who lives forever waiting for the Lord, looking for Him, is the man in whom fear never gains the mastery. Fear will assail the soul, for so are we fashioned; fear will threaten the courage, for so are we made; but when fear arises, then the upward look and the eager expectation will check the fear and cancel it so that the soul is again filled with new courage.

Yet I pray you observe that the ideal is this: if the goal is out of sight and finality can never be reached for this man until he see his Master, nevertheless, the goal reached, the hope realized, the fear forever ended, these things are always close at hand. In the midst of the most strenuous running the goal is expected immediately. In the hour when fears threaten the soul, hope is victorious because at once the Lord may appear.

The Christian life is not a race the end of which is seen, nor a course of probationary preparation the length of which is known. The end of the Christian life to the Christian soul, according to the Lord's conception, is always the next step.

"Men looking for their Lord." This is a return to first principles, the life dependent on the unseen. In the terms of the abiding values of the incarnation, that is the true view of life, that it is forevermore linked to the unseen and waits the disturbance of God. The life that is never disturbed is the life that is always prepared to be disturbed. The life that is always disturbed is the life that is seeking never to be disturbed. When a man's life is poised toward eternity and God; when a man understands that God has a plan for his life and is leading, guiding him, and may at any moment change the direction, thwart the purpose, recall the order, issue new commands, then that man finds profound peace and content, and with loins girt about, and lamps trimmed and burning he is ready for the commanding word, undisturbed because forever waiting to be disturbed. So in the terms and value of the incarnation that master principle of life is made real and personal to the Christian soul. As the God Whom no man hath seen at any time came into observation by the way of incarnation, so ere He passed from the earthly scene He left this word with the sons of men: Expect Me again. I shall return, I shall come again in My glory. Live as though expecting Me.

In the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension our Lord trained His disciples to this conception. Have you ever tried imaginatively to enter into the experience of those men during those forty days? They never knew where they would see Him next. Suddenly appearing in their midst, no door opened, no bolt shot, no preparation made; but He was there with them. His presence, parousia, nearness, they were made conscious of! With equal suddenness He disappeared. The appearances and disappearances of the forty days were but to train these people to the consciousness of His constant presence, and to the fact that at any moment He might appear. That is the teaching of the New Testament about the coming of our Lord. Nothing in human pomp or pageantry can express the true idea of this great truth of the New Testament as to our Lord's second Advent. Even in the hymns tonight we were away from Scripture truth. When we speak of the sound of chariot wheels, we are affected by the coming of kings and queens of earthly lands. When King George V is to appear, we wait for him, and there are signs and tokens, outward signs, of his approach. It will not be so when our King shall come. He will come with a voice and a shout, and the voice and the shout will synchronize with the manifestation; and ere we know it, as swiftly and suddenly as He appeared in the upper room, we shall be face to face with the King, we shall see Him, and the vision will be the final movement in our transformation, for we shall be like Him.

This, then, is the true conception of life according to Christ: He came to me in the hour when I yielded to Him, He is coming to me again; when, I know not; and life, between the initial coming when I became His and that final coming when He will become mine in a profounder sense than ever before, is a waiting, looking, watching for Him.

That leads us to the consideration of the attitude of those who hold this conception: "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." That is the old version. The Revised Version reads: "Ye yourselves like unto men looking for their Lord." In this case I think we suffer loss by the change. Looking for—yes, if we quite understand what we mean. But it does not mean star-gazing! In the word translated "looking for" there is really no thought of the activity of the eye. The real thought is that of men who are eagerly expecting to receive, to receive a guest, men who are expecting to give hospitality. Not men who have abandoned duty in order to look for portents and signs, and presently for the Lord; but men who in fulfilment of duty are forevermore prepared for the King Himself, and in that sense looking for the coming of the Lord.

The attitude, moreover, is that of men waiting for the Master, for the King, for the Supreme One! Not looking for a servant, although, infinite mystery of His great and wonderful grace, He does say to them that if, when He comes, they are waiting, He will gird Himself and serve them. Not men who are waiting finally to give hospitality to a friend, although they are to give hospitality to Him, and He comes for the reception of that hospitality, for He cometh and knocketh and asks admission. The attitude is that of waiting for the Lord Himself. The thought is that of supremacy, of control, and leads us back to the initial words which reveal the true attitude of waiting: doing His business, "let your loins be girded about"; seeking His interests, "let your lamps be burning."

For an understanding of our Lord's meaning we may go to the scene of His glorious ascension. When He had ascended on high and passed out of sight, the Galileans stood gazing up into heaven, and were immediately, if not rebuked, at least corrected: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in

like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven." Then at once the upward gaze ceased, and they turned back to obedience and waiting; and presently, when baptism of the Spirit came to them, they went out into service, with loins girded about, the girding of the loins the sign of bond-service to the King; with light burning, the flashing light the revelation of their care for His interests. So are men to wait for the Lord: with loins girded, and lamps burning, going about the King's business.

We wait for His coming as we fulfil our appointed tasks, as girt about, His bondslaves, we carry the light of His own life, and serve Him and our fellow men for His sake. Such is the true attitude of waiting for the Lord.

So finally let us inquire what is the character that is produced by those who adopt this attitude as the result of this conception of life.

First, the character toward the Master Himself will be partly of separation and partly of submission. It seems to me it needs no argument, and hardly requires illustration. If I really am expecting that He may come, then my relation to Him will ever be that of separation to His will and of submission to His law. Make what personal application of it suits your individual case. Suffer the personal application which I venture to make. If a man shall always preach, expecting that he may be interrupted in his preaching by the parousia, the presence of his Lord, what a difference it will make to his preaching. If a man shall always transact his business through the six days of the week expecting that at any moment in the midst of any transaction, the Lord Himself may be there, to call him away from things material to the eternal habitations, how it will safeguard his transactions.

It will not make him less diligent in his business, but it will make him infinitely more diligent in seeing to it that his business conforms to the will of his God.

The effect of this doctrine on a man's character in regard to his fellow men will be that of the constancy of his cheerfulness, and love. Cheerfulness! I freely confess that to me herein is a problem! I have long been strangely puzzled by the fact that some men who profess to hold this doctrine, and to be waiting for the Lord, are the most cheerless men I know. I cannot understand it. Surely it is the result of some wrong conception of the doctrine itself. Is He coming? Then there should ever be light on the brow, and the eye should never lack luster. Let me speak the things of actual experience. How often my brow is shadowed and my eye lacks luster. It is because I forget. When next you see me in that mood know this, I have forgotten that the Lord is at hand! When we remember, the result is perpetual sunniness, rejoicing forevermore, an eager, glad look of expectation in all our attitude toward our fellow men. That cheerfulness, moreover, will proceed out of a great love; for if I expect to meet Him, I know how He loves all men, and to quote the language of John, I should surely be ashamed before Him at His coming, if coming He found me lacking in love toward my fellow men.

How does this expectation affect Christian service? It has been declared that to hold this doctrine of the New Testament and preach it, to believe that the apostles were not mistaken and that Jesus was not mistaken, is to cut the nerve of Christian service. I declare that to expect that the Lord may at any moment appear to me, coming to me Himself, is to give immediateness and thoroughness to every piece of work that I take up in His name. Immediateness. He may come and the thing He has commanded me to do may not be done. Therefore let me do it forthwith, straightway, lest the

opportunity be gone at His coming, and I be found to have neglected the thing that He commanded, and gave me time to do.

Again, to expect Him, is to give the quality of thoroughness to all our work. I should like when He comes that whatever I am doing, whether preaching or playing. I may be doing thoroughly, for there is nothing this Lord of life hates more than halfheartedness: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

Take one larger outlook. If in very deed this be our conception, and we are waiting for the King, that waiting and that expectation will create patience in the soul, patience with God, patience with the Church, patience with the world.

Patience with God. Did the suggestion sound somewhat irreverent? Then bear with me, if perchance I speak only for a few in this audience. There are some for whom I know I may speak. There are hours in which we feel impatient with God; at least—shall I amend the declaration?—there are hours in which we are tempted to be impatient with God. I am not referring to the hour of personal sorrow and suffering; I am not referring to the hour in which we ourselves are buffeted, bruised, defeated, but to those larger hours, those more tragic hours, when the world's agony surges on our souls, when we stand face to face with wrong; then we cry out with old Carlyle, God is doing nothing. If we have never had such an hour it is because we have never yet put our lives very near to the world's agony and the world's need.

If I take this word of Jesus and believe it, and interpret it, not as men too often have interpreted it, but according to the whole scheme of His teaching; and I see that His coming means, not a catastrophe in which the world will be destroyed, but that it will be the advent of yet another day of opportunity for the world, the beginning of another movement in time; that it will be a crisis as real and definite, and no more mysterious than the crisis of His first advent; and that proceeding from it, His Kingdom will be set up—if I have caught that view I shall count that the long-suffering of God is due to His patience, to the fact that the processes of today are necessary to the perfection of the crisis of His coming, and a preparation for the larger process that lies beyond.

Patience is not laziness! Patience does not say, Therefore, because He is coming, I have no responsibility and have nothing to do. Patient waiting for Christ and patience with the world in the light of the glory of the coming of the Christ mean loins girt about, lamps burning, service rendered, haste upon the King's business, restful haste, peaceful speed, dignified diligence, recognition of the fact that in all the details of my service today I am in co-operation with the great processes by which God is preparing for that Advent, and which are necessary for the larger movements that lie beyond this age.

So to wait for Him is to have the life forevermore full of song and of peace:

My life flows on in endless song;

Above earth's lamentation

I hear the sweet, and glorious hymn,

That hails a new creation;

Through all the tumult and the strife

I hear the music ringing.

It finds an echo in my soul—

How can I keep from singing?

Finally, it is a very solemn and searching consideration that our Christian life may always be tested, gauged, valued, by this fact of the Lord's return. His word is, "Behold I come quickly." The true answer of the Christian heart is always, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Anything that prevents that answer is out of place in our lives. Anything that makes it difficult for us to say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus," is an element of weakness. That ambition which makes me seriously hope, even though I hardly dare confess it, that He will not come yet is a false ambition. That enterprise, however high and holy it may seem, which makes me desire to postpone the Advent until it be accomplished is a false enterprise. That hope, that new joy, to which I am looking forward, has in it something of wrong, producing in my heart something of disloyalty if it make me desire to postpone His coming. So we are to test all ambitions, all enterprises, all hopes, by this ambition, this enterprise, this hope of the Lord's return.

I have most carefully avoided any reference to human almanacs and calendars, to mechanical and mathematical calculations. Their effect has been to bring this doctrine into disrepute, and thousands of men desiring to be truly loyal to Jesus Christ are afraid of it because someone once said He would come on such a day at such a time, and He did not come! Men have been trying to find out the day and the hour which the Lord said no man knoweth, not even the Son, but only the Father. The moment we introduce into this great doctrine the element of the mathematician, the element of the almanac and calendar, times and seasons, we postpone the sense of the coming of the Lord. If it should be that any man in this house has ascertained for absolute certainty that Jesus the Lord is coming again, let us say, for the sake of illustration, on the 25th of December, in the name of God let him not tell me, because that knowledge would put Him all those months away and I expect Him now. The moment men begin to try to fix a date they controvert the teaching of the New Testament and contravene the purpose of the glorious truth. The Church has been commanded to wait for His Advent.

There are many apocryphal stories of our late beloved Queen Victoria, but there is one story that is certainly true coming on the authority of the man to whom the word was spoken. Talking with him one day on this very doctrine, she said, "There is nothing I should love more than to live long enough to lay my crown at His feet when He comes." That is the true attitude. It was not in His will that she should do so. It may be that I also shall come to the valley all shrouded in mist, but even there the consummation will not be the mere consciousness of death, but the dawning glory of His presence breaking through the mist, the vision of the face of the One Whom not having seen I have loved.

So we are to live, not as men fearing death or thinking of it, but as men looking for the Lord. May the Lord direct our hearts into patient waiting for His coming.

Luke 12:49, 50. The Passion-Baptism.

Luke 12:49, 50.

The Passion-Baptism.

I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.

Luke 12:49-50

In the calendar of the Christian Church this is spoken of as Passion Sunday. The day has been devoted to the Church's contemplation of those sorrows of our Lord which, in human history and to human observation, culminated in the Cross.

I propose to ask you to meditate with me through the medium of these words of Jesus, on our Lord's thought of his Cross, in those days when His face was stedfastly set toward Jerusalem.

Perhaps there is no passage in the gospel narratives which has suffered more difficulty of translation than this. It is one in which absolutely literal translation would almost result in misinterpretation. A reverent translation into our more modern speech, greatly helps us. In Weymouth's Testament the text reads thus:

I came to throw fire upon the earth, and what is My desire? Oh that it were even now kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo; and how am I pent up till it is accomplished!

These words constitute what I venture to describe as a soliloquy of Jesus. By that I mean they were not addressed directly to the crowd; nor directly, even to His own disciples. They occur in the midst of a set discourse, but they stand alone. You can omit them entirely, and that particular discourse is not interfered with, its meaning is not hampered, it abides. In the midst of it He broke out into these words. I would venture, very reverently, to describe this soliloquy of Jesus as a heartburst.

Let us look at the chapter. It opens thus, "In the meantime, when the many thousands of the multitude were gathered together.... He began to say unto His disciples first of all." He was speaking in the presence of the multitudes, but first of all to His disciples. The discourse runs quietly on until we come to the thirteenth verse where we find the first interruption, "One of the multitude said unto Him, Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." The Lord answered with a parable. At verse twenty-two He resumes the discourse to His disciples, "And He said unto His disciples..."; and proceeds quietly, until He is again disturbed, not this time by one of the multitude, but by one of the disciples, "Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" The Lord answered Peter with a parable. Now let us link verse forty-eight with verse fifty-one, and by so doing we find the true connection of the discourse. Between those two verses lie the words of my text.

If all this is somewhat tedious, it is absolutely important. It is only as we can get back into the very atmosphere of the occasion upon which our Lord uttered these words that we can hope to come into full sympathy with them, or into anything like intelligent understanding of their meaning.

Earlier in the gospel story it is declared that He set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem. He is on His way to the Cross. He is traversing the Via Dolorosa. His own soul is filled with sorrow, and He is talking to His disciples. A man in the multitude interrupts Him, "Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." He rebukes him for his sordidness and resumes His discourse. Peter interrupts Him. He answers Peter in a parable; and there breaks in upon His soul anew His perpetual consciousness of how dull His disciples and the multitudes are. The man who said "Bid my brother divide the inheritance with me" is typical of the crowd, and they do not understand Him at all. They imagine He is there to be a divider of property, a mere social reformer. His own disciples did not understand. Peter said, "Is this parable for us, or for the rest? Is there no difference between us?" While patiently instructing their dullness, the abiding sense of their dullness and of His own limitation, finds expression in a great heartburst; "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

Jesus was straitened, so straitened that the disciples could not understand Him; so straitened that the jostling crowd misinterpreted Him. Reverently, let me say the whole thing. He was eager for His Cross, because He knew that apart from that He could not fulfil His mission.

Mark the opening words of this soliloquy. "I came to cast fire upon the earth." In the third chapter of this gospel, Luke tells us how His forerunner, John the Baptist, had declared to the multitudes who listened to him, "I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh He that is mightier than I, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." I turn to the second treatise of Luke, which we call the Acts of the Apostles, and I listen to Jesus now on the other side of His Cross and resurrection, and He says, referring to the very words of the forerunner, "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." I turn over the page and come to the second chapter, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly, there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." That was the historic fulfilment of the prediction of John; the Holy Ghost came and they were baptized, and the symbol of His coming was fire.

Between the prophecy of the forerunner and the historic fulfilment occurred the soliloquy of Jesus, in which in effect He said, "I cannot fulfil John's prediction, I cannot cast the fire that purifies, energizes, and remakes; that enlightens the darkened intellect, enkindles the deadened emotion, energizes the degraded will, until I have been baptized with My own baptism." Pentecost cannot precede the Cross. That is the theme of the soliloquy.

Let us reverently tarry in the presence of the great words, conscious in every word that I utter, and to which you in your reverent patience will listen, that the last things can never be said about that baptism. Yet, let us listen to these words of Jesus because in them there is an unfolding of truth about the passion and the Cross which is full of value.

This fact of the coming Cross was perpetually present to the mind of Christ. He never told His disciples about His Cross until after Peter's great confession; but there are evidences in the early story that He knew of it, and that He was moving toward it, not as a victim, but as a Victor; not yielding Himself to an ultimate disaster because He was helpless, but moving with determination toward the ultimate process, and the final victory.

John tells us that at the commencement of His public ministry He entered the temple and cleansed it. They challenged Him; "What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" His answer was strange and mysterious. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They, materialized as they were, imagined that He was speaking of the temple in the midst of which men were still worshipping. In the days of Pentecostal illumination that speech of Jesus was understood by His disciples, and writing long afterwards in the light of the spiritual interpretation, John declared "He spake of the temple of His body." I look back at that scene and I see Him cleansing the temple; and find that when men asked Him what was His authority for so doing, He answered, not so that they could then understand, but out of His own consciousness, My authority for cleansing the temple, and restoring it to its true purpose is the authority of My coming Cross and My ultimate resurrection.

Again, sitting in the quietness of a starlit night upon the roof of an Eastern house, He conversed with Nicodemus. In honest and splendid perplexity, the inquirer asked, "How can these things be? How can a man be born when he is old?" Jesus, borrowing an illustration from the ancient literature of the religion to which this man belonged, said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." Nicodemus could not understand the answer then, but in effect the Master said, "You as Me, how a man can be born again, how he can receive new life which shall master and negative all his old life, and My reply is that only by the way of My death, only by My lifting up on the Cross shall I ever be able to communicate My life. You cannot see My life, without My dying. In its truth and grace and glory you never can share it save as I die." The Cross was in His heart when He talked with Nicodemus.

Passing over the earlier days, we come to the glorious scene on the mount of transfiguration; and the theme of His conversation with the heavenly visitors, Moses and Elijah, was that of the exodus which He should accomplish, His Cross and His resurrection.

When the Greeks found Him, and the disciples told Him, "The Greeks desire to see Thee," He said this strange and startling thing, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it bareth much fruit. He that loveth His life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." That is to say, He had declared that if the Greeks desired to see Him and enter into understanding of what He was they could never do so until He was dead and risen. In newness of life won out of death would they behold Him.

These are illustrations taken almost at haphazard from the ministry of Jesus showing that the Cross was ever present in His mind.

In this soliloquy He tells us why it was ever present, as He reveals His own estimate, first as to its necessity; and secondly, insofar as we are able to grasp it, as to its nature.

Let us notice first then the teaching of this word of Jesus concerning the necessity for His Cross. "I am straitened." The difficulty here is lest, in attempting exposition, by multiplicity of words one should darken counsel. I find many expositors teach that our Lord was here speaking of His own sorrows. The word "straitened," however, reveals the reason of the sorrows, which is infinitely more than a declaration of the fact. "I am straitened"; that is I am confined, imprisoned, shut up, limited; or as Dr. Weymouth has it "pent up."

It was a remarkable thing for Him to say. There He stood amid His disciples, a fair and perfect Example; there He stood, the final moral Teacher of all the centuries, and yet He said, "I am straitened"; I cannot do My work, I cannot complete My work; I am unable to communicate My life, the dynamic force that will enable men to obey the teaching, and to imitate the Example.

He was straitened in His teaching. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them yet." He was straitened in His work. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to My Father." There He stood in the midst of a world full of sorrow and sighing and sin, longing to cast that fire on the earth which should purify and energize and remake, yet unable to do it; quite able to teach, to present the ideal, but these were not the things for which He had finally come, for these are quite useless alone.

If I am told today that it is my business to preach the ethic of Jesus, and that is enough; if I am told that all the Christian preacher ought to do is to call men to imitation of the great Example, and that is sufficient; my reply can only be that such opinion is out of harmony with the opinion of Jesus Himself. He did here clearly affirm, that while He was a Teacher and an Example, and only these, He was straitened, unable to do the ultimate thing for which He had come, unable to accomplish the great work upon which His heart was set. He came, not merely to give men an example, not merely to enunciate an ethic, but to cast fire, the symbol of purity, the symbol of power; fire for cleansing, for energy; but He could not do so until He was baptized with His baptism. When He uttered these words, He was waiting for, setting His face stedfastly toward, that whelming in darkness, the inner and deepest mystery of which none of us can ever fathom or understand; and He said, "I cannot complete My work, cannot scatter this purifying, energizing fire, cannot open these blind eyes, touch these cold hearts, and remake these shrivelled powers, save by the way of My Cross." In these words we have revealed our Lord's sense of the necessity for the Cross.

More reverently still, and with softer footfall, let us examine the light which this soliloquy throws on the nature of the Cross. The passion baptism was to be a baptism through which it should be possible for Him to open those blind eyes, and unstop those deaf ears, to make these men understand the things He could not now make them understand. The word itself is suggestive, "I have a baptism." There is only one meaning for the word, and that is immersion or whelming. That toward which He was going was not an experience in which He would stand by the awful silence of a dead sea, and taste its brackish waters. That to which He was going was an hour in which He would fathom its depths, and enter into spiritual and profound fulfilment of that which had been written long before, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Apart from that whelming in death and in darkness, He could not complete His work; but by that way, He was able to scatter fire, and fulfil His purpose.

If, then, by way of that whelming He was able to fulfil His purpose, we know this much at least, that it was a baptism in which He was able, in some mystic mystery of Divine wisdom and power, to

deal with the forces that spoil humanity, to deal with that which, in the spiritual life of man, has produced blindness and inability.

There they stood about Him; His disciples looking at Him with wide open eyes of loving human affection, yet never seeing Him; listening to the words He said with reverent attention, and yet never hearing! The multitudes day by day listened to His teaching, watched Him healing, and imagined He had come to divide property! He said, "Only by the way of the Cross can I fulfil My mission, but by way of the Cross I will open these eyes that they may see, open these ears that they may hear, touch these hearts that they may understand the deep spiritual meaning of My mission. I have come for the remaking, not of accidentals, but of essentials; and through the remaking of the essentials for the remaking of the accidentals. I have not come to divide as between human inheritances, but to put men right with God, and right with each other, that so they may divide their inheritances upon a spiritual basis."

It was only by the way of the Cross, according to His own estimate, that He could accomplish that work. Fire, illuminative, energizing; clarifying the vision, making the pulses of the soul beat, and making eternity a reality; could only be given, said Christ, by the way of His Cross. Whatever we may think about the Cross, that is what He thought about it. It was only by His Cross; by His whelming in death; by His immersion in immeasurable and unutterable anguish and sorrow; that He could take hold of the poison which had spoiled humanity, and negate it, make it not to be, cancel it, destroy it, and so liberate the fire and remake humanity.

We cannot end with the text. Our Lord and Master is no longer saying in the midst of human history, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire? Would that it were already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

These are not the words of Jesus here and now. In reverence I change his words, as in His presence I utter them. He is saying now, "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and lo, it is kindled! I have cast it because I have been baptized with My baptism; and therefore, I am no longer straitened." We have not to do with the straitened Christ, but with the unstraitened Christ. We are not listening to the teaching of Christ under circumstances of limitation because the Cross was not accomplished. The teaching is the same; but we are dealing with Christ on the other side of the Cross, so that He is able not only to teach but to give power to obey. We have not to deal with a Christ, upon the wonder of Whose pure and strong and glorious life we look with amazement and then become conscious of our own inability to copy Him or be like Him. We have to do with a Christ Who brings to us an ideal that captures our admiration; and Who then touches us with power so that each of us says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Let us ever bring into our religious thinking the historic sense, and let us remember that our Lord passed to the passion baptism, was whelmed beneath the infinite mystery of those dark waters; and that He emerged from them in Resurrection, ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, and scattered the fire; and therefore, we may share that gift immediately, and so enter into all the fulness of the meaning of His mission. He is straitened no longer.

"He Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

"All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

He "giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

All that is the result of His passion-baptism. Christianity is not one perpetual agony of sorrow. Your Christianity is not witnessed to by the misery of your countenance. God has freely given us all things, and that to enjoy. All things are ours to enjoy because He went to His Cross. It is by way of the tree that the leaves of healing come. It is by the way of the Cross that the crown is placed upon our brows. It is by the way of passion-whelming, that the baptism comes to us which is the baptism of fire, of purity, and of energy.

Now let me make the final application. There is a sense in which this soliloquy of Jesus is one which we must make our own. If we would enter into life, we also have to say—and yet I pause again to interpolate this warning, let us be very careful of the sense in which this thing is said—"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

I take you back to the chapter we read in Mark. Jesus had His face set toward Jerusalem, toward the Cross and the suffering. He was telling His disciples that He must go to suffering, that He must be killed and the third day rise again, when there came to Him James and John—Matthew says their mother spoke for them—and asked Him to grant them whatever they wished. And He answered, "What is it that you would ask of Me?" Then they said this, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left, in Thy glory." He replied, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said, "We are able." Is not that the profoundest proof of the fact that Jesus was straitened and unable to make men understand? Think of that answer of James and John, "We are able."

Yet, what did He say? "The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." What did He mean? If what we have been saying is true, that He drank of the cup in unutterable loneliness, that His great passion-baptism was isolated and alone, a whelming in which none could possibly share, then what did He mean when He said this to these two men? It was the word of His Grace. It was the declaration that while He would tread the winepress alone, He would carry them with Him into the midst of the sorrow vicariously, and bring them into new life by standing in their place in death. Paul said, "We have been crucified with Him." Historically Paul's hands were not nailed to the Cross; but His hands were nailed to the Cross. Essentially, Paul never went out into the infinite and awful mystery of atoning death, nor could he, nor can I, nor can you; but Paul was crucified with Him. He had gathered Paul into His own personality and heart. He was infinitely more than Man in Himself, He was the sum total of the people He had gathered into His own personality, the sum total of humanity, and in that strange hour of His baptism there also was I baptized. In that strange hour in which He drank the cup, there also I, in Him, drank the cup. You shall drink of My cup, you shall be baptized with My baptism. You cannot drink the cup alone, you cannot be baptized alone or independently or separated from Me, but in Me you shall drink the cup and be baptized with the baptism.

It is as though He had said, "I am going into this baptism not for Myself but for you." The old terms of the theologians must be retained. His death was vicarious.

That is where you and I must begin to live if we would live at all in spiritual fulness. If I declare that there are senses in which we can and must say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished," I do not mean that by my identification with His Cross in self-surrender I find my way into life. There is a very subtle peril abroad in much of the finest devotional literature of the day; I hear men talking about their identification with Christ as though there were some value in it. There is no value in it. Everything must be of grace. I shall have to come on the last day of life to His Cross, saying, "Nothing in my hand I bring." Because I bear in my body brands that speak of suffering for Him, I am no more worthy of His salvation. Neither the brands I bear, nor the suffering I share, bring me nearer to God. When at last I lay my head on the pillow at the close of the one short day of work I can render to God, I shall die a sinner saved by grace, and in no other way shall I enter into life. Not by the merit of my service, not by self-denials, not by the cross I carry shall I ever enter heaven; but by His baptism and by His cup of sorrow drunk to the dregs. So only shall I ever come into life beyond, and so only can I ever enter into life here.

Those powers of which you boast yourself, those splendid capacities of your magnificent humanity—the anthems of them are being sung in every magazine today; but know this, that the dawning will darken to midnight unless you enter into life by the way of Christ's Cross.

There it stands in the midst of the centuries, the one and only hope of humanity, and only by taking my life from Him as a gift purchased in the mystery of His passion-whelming, can I ever find its fulfilment according to the purpose of God.

But this is the last word of all. The passion is accomplished, the victory is won, the fire is scattered. This is the day of Pentecost. Every man in this house can leave the sanctuary with fire which will enable him to say, to do, to be, to the glory of His name.

Luke 13:6-9. The Rights Of God.

Luke 13:6-9.

The Rights Of God.

He spake this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree, and find none: cut it dawn; why doth it also cumber the ground? And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.

Luke 13:6-9

The similarity between the song of Isaiah and the parable of Jesus is self-evident. In the song of Isaiah concerning the vineyard, the outstanding values may thus be stated; the Lord's vineyard, the Lord's plant, the Lord's expectation of fruit, the Lord's disappointment, and the Lord's judgment upon the vineyard. In the parable of Jesus the outstanding values may be stated in almost identical words; the Lord's vineyard, the Lord's fig-tree, the Lord's expectation, the Lord's disappointment. But there is a value in the parable which is absent from Isaiah's song, that of the intercession of the vinedresser. Judgment in the case of Isaiah was immediate because of failure. Judgment in the parable of Jesus is postponed because of the intercession of the vinedresser. It is, however, as certain in the one case as the other, if there yet be fruitlessness.

It is perfectly patent that the first application both of the parable of Jesus and the song of Isaiah was to the Hebrew nation. The principles have, however, a wider application.

The parable of Jesus was spoken in order to correct a false sense of safety. The earlier paragraph of this thirteenth chapter records that "there were some present at the very season which told Him of the Galilæans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." He reminded them also of others upon whom the tower of Siloam had fallen. The people to whom He spoke imagined that the judgment on the Galilæans, and that on the men of Siloam were evidences of exceeding sinfulness. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." He then uttered the words of this parable.

The peculiar value of the parable, therefore, is that in it we find the true standards for the measurement of human lives. Men are still imagining that there are degrees of sin, that the Galilæans are sinners above all, that men overtaken by some catastrophe must therefore have been the most guilty. Christ declares that we cannot so measure sin. "Except ye"—the men whom Pilate has not arrested, the men upon whom no tower has fallen—"except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish."

Life ended by the brutality of Pilate may not have perished. Perishing is not the ending of material life by the accident of a falling tower. Perishing is something profounder, more terrible. You may live out all your days, according to human thinking, and die in quietness and peace, and yet perish,

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

In face of so startling a statement, Jesus uttered the parable, and we will consider it carefully because it is one in which Jesus gives us the true standards for the measurement of human lives. Is not this what we supremely need? Is not this what we are supremely afraid of? Is there anything that we shrink more from than being measured by Divine standards? Are we not all in the habit of measuring ourselves by comparing ourselves as among ourselves? And when we do so we usually compare ourselves with those whom we know to be inferior to ourselves, and so we are uplifted in pride of heart, in satisfaction, in contentment.

The matter of supreme moment is not what neighbour or friend, or foe may think of us, but what God thinks of us. How can we find out? In the simplicity of this parable, Jesus has given us the standard of measurement, and the balances for weighing. Let us remit ourselves to Him for measurement and for weighing.

In order to do this, we must begin where we always must begin if we would understand or enter into the things of the Kingdom of heaven. We must listen to this parable as though we were children. This parable is indeed a picture of ordinary, everyday life; a picture of things with which we are all familiar. It is Eastern in colouring. The vineyard and the fig tree are peculiarly of the East; but you do no violence to the intention if you change the word vineyard to garden, and if you change the word fig tree to apple tree.

Three simple matters are suggested by the parable—

The rights of the proprietor.

The interference of the intercessor.

The position of the property.

The first right of the proprietor is the absolute right of possession. The plant was in his vineyard. It was his plant. He had the absolute right of ownership.

The second right grows out of the first. It was the moral right of expectation. He came seeking for fruit, and he had a perfect right to seek for fruit. What is a fig tree for? Ask a little child, and with magnificent abruptness, and with no waste of words the child will tell you, figs.

As I read on, I discover another right. He found no fruit; and he came years one, two, and three, and still found none. Then he said, "Cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?" He had a right so to say. His right to destroy was based first upon the failure of the tree to produce fruit; it was enhanced by his patience; but it was supreme because it cumbered the ground, that is, it took up space, soil, and strength which at the disposal of another tree would have produced fruit. That is the first phase of the picture.

Before proceeding to the others, let us inquire into the spiritual suggestions of this. They bring us face to face with the rights of God. This is a phrase which I sometimes think we are a little in danger of forgetting today, especially when we are dealing with human life. I hear a great deal about the rights of man. I do not hear very much in the common speech of today about the rights of God. I am not speaking about man's right in regard to his fellow man, but about man's rights in

regard to God; what a man has a right to expect from God. Some men have even been daring enough to write what they would do if they were God. The impertinent suggestion smacks of blasphemy; as though it were possible for a finite mind to come to final understanding of what the infinite Mind ought to do; as though it were possible for a being bounded by horizons that are not many miles away, or at most bounded by one small planet which is but as dust in the balances to the immensity of the universe, as though it were possible for such a being to imagine the things that he would do if he were God. Yet, that attitude of mind is being admired and worshipped today.

Let us attend to this teaching of our Lord in which in the simplest parable possible He has reminded humanity of the rights of God in regard to human life. To my own heart it is full of comfort, whilst full of fire.

The first truth is that of God's absolute right in all human lives. The sovereignty of God is based upon the fact that every man is the creation of God, and so the offspring of God. I am a thought of God. I am God-created; physically, mentally, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, volitionally; analyze as you will, but over all your analysis write the inclusive declaration, man in the image and likeness of God, made by God. I am the property of God. I like to begin there when I am preaching to men about eternal things. I like to look into the face of every man and say, "Thou art not the property of the devil; thou art not the result of the forces of dust. Thou art the property of God." There are senses in which man is the bonds slave of the devil; the bonds slave of sin; the servant of lust, passion; but in the deepest fact, the essential fact of his being, every man belongs to God. The absolute right of proprietorship is enhanced by the fact that all our lives are lived in God's world. It is said that this is a sad and wicked world. That is not true. It is a glad and beautiful world. When Bishop Heber sang his missionary hymn he sang a great truth,

Though every prospect pleases,

And only man is vile.

If there be a touch of evil upon the world, it is the touch of the human hand that has lost its cunning, because it has sold itself to the forces and resources of evil. This is God's world; His sunshine, His rain. Evil has never made a blade of grass; it has destroyed many. The devil never made anything; he has destroyed much. Evil is destructive, not constructive. It makes nothing, it only breaks. I am in God's world, a world that He has encompassed with a sky of blue, over which He scatters the clouds in a profusion of glory, gladdened by the setting or the rising sun, until I am appalled by the magnificence around me. It is God's world. All the forces of my life are forces which He has given me. I am in this world, of the world in measure, but not wholly and finally. God owns me in His world. His is the right of absolute proprietorship; a more wonderful right than any figure of speech can show forth. The man who owned the vineyard and planted the fig tree therein, did not make the fig tree; but God Who owns the world made it, and every man in it. His right of proprietorship is based upon His creation. What a revolution there will be when we can bring men back to this first, fundamental truth about human life; the right of God as proprietor.

The rights of God are also those of moral expectation. Have you ever noticed how constantly Jesus made the men to whom He spoke juries to decide upon their own actions and activities, and pass verdict upon themselves. I think He meant to do that when He uttered this parable. Do you differ from any of the things He said when He spoke these words? Have you not a right to expect

apples from an apple tree in your garden? No one will quarrel with that. Then apply the truth you admit in the higher realm. If man is God's creation; if all the forces of his being have come to him from God; if man is living his life in God's world in the midst of resources which God has provided; God has a right to expect fruit.

What fruit? What has God a right to expect from a man? Here again, be true to the simplicities of the parable and you will touch the sublimities. Ask a boy what a man has a right to expect from a fig tree, and he will say, figs. What have you a right to expect from an apple tree? Apples. Do not be afraid of the simplicity of our illustrations. What does God expect from a man? Manhood. That is all. What does God expect from a boy? Boyhood. From a girl? Girlhood. What does God expect from a woman? Womanhood. I shall thank God if the statement startles you into the frame of mind for consideration. God does not expect that you will ever be an angel; but he does expect that you should be a man. "Oh," but you say, "surely if you preach the gospel you will tell us that God expects us to worship, to pray, to give, to be religious." I decline to make use of those minor and partial terms of description. I will make use of that which includes them all. God requires from a man manhood. God is not seeking angels in London; and that not merely because He is not likely to find them there, but because to the heart of God, men and women are more than angels. When Father Taylor, the sailor preacher, lay dying, his daughter said, "You will soon see the angels." He replied, "Folks are better than angels." He spoke out of a great comradeship with God.

As God comes into His garden seeking for fruit, and examines the plant of my life, can He find the fruit He wants? That is the question. Can He find manhood? We can only answer that question by asking another, "What is manhood?" There is only one answer to that inquiry. The meaning of humanity has once been perfectly revealed in the Man of Nazareth. That is Manhood. We test our lives, as I have already said, by comparison with others; we stand in the public place of assembly still and say: "I thank Thee that I am not as other men, or even as this poor publican." We sing our way through life upon the basis of a satisfaction in the fact that there are many worse than ourselves. The measurements are false. What is a man? Behold the Man. I am to find out what I am by comparison with the life of Jesus; and when I use the word Jesus in this respect I am speaking of His humanity for the moment, the actual, positive, warm humanity with which we are familiar in the gospel stories. Behold the Man, and measure thy life by His. He was the revelation of God; and of man also. Has it ever occurred to you that we do not know the real meaning of our own lives until we have looked at Jesus? We are conscious of the contradictions of our own personality. We state the fact in differing ways. We say there is in us the angel and the beast, forever fighting. We speak of strange aspirations after high and noble things, and of grovelings amid low things. Oh yes, express it how you will, in the language of the new formula or philosophy the old truth abides, we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. We are engaged in a battle as between the forces of good and of evil. We are broken human beings from the start. I look at the Man of Nazareth and see man after God's own heart, the archetypal Man, a perfect revelation to me of the true meaning of my own nature. I cannot find the key to my own life in any other man. I have lost it entirely as within my own personality. Song and sigh, aspiration and groveling! What is man? I am unable to answer until I have looked at the Man of Nazareth. How can I tell the story of His Manhood? We are familiar with Him. I will only do it in briefest words. He was a Man homed in the will of God, absolutely at the service of His brother men. That is the Man of Nazareth. Hear the law from His own lips: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,

and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These things He did; but have I done them? As the measurement of that life is placed upon my life; as my life is put into the balances and weighed in the balances of the sanctuary against that life, the life that answered the impulse of the love to God and love to men, that in singing and by suffering served to help others; oh God, how I have failed!

Profane swearer! No, thou hast never been that, neither have I. Brought up in Christian homes you and I were graciously, tenderly sheltered from blatant, vulgar sins; pre-eminently satisfied with ourselves may we be, if we measure ourselves as among ourselves; but if Jesus is the standard then the Proprietor comes into the vineyard expecting fruit, and finds nothing but leaves. My life is a failure when measured by that standard.

Therefore, let it be stated carefully—not with anything of the tone of triumph in the fact, but with solemn consideration of it—because man has failed, God's right is established to destroy him; and not merely because man has failed, but also because God has had long patience with man.

Nothing but leaves! The Spirit grieves,

O'er years of wasted life.

No drunkenness, adultery, profanity; but no fruit that gladdens and satisfies the heart of God. No worship in the way of love to Him. No service in the way of helpfulness to my fellow men. And all this in spite of long patience. Every man who so lives cumberes the ground in that economy of God. It may be that you are not a cumberer of the ground in the economy of the British nation; but in the economy of God the man who is bearing no fruit cumberes the ground. Has it ever occurred to you that another man occupying your place in the office might exert an influence for the healing of humanity's wounds, and the bringing in of the Kingdom of God, which you are not exerting? I remember in earlier years walking through the streets of New York with my friend Albert Swift. He pointed out a great orphan institution in which hundreds of bairns were being cared for. I said, "What a sad thing it is to think of all those children without father or mother." I was startled by his reply; he said, "I don't know; I am not sure it is as sad as you think." I asked his meaning, and this was his answer; "In scores of instances those children only had their chance of life when father and mother were dead." It is appallingly true, and it is more true than we think. It is not merely true of the slum children in the gutter. It is true of the children in the suburbs. You feed your children, clothe them, educate them; but what chance have they of spiritual manhood with your example? Has it occurred to you, young man, that if another man sat at your desk in the office, the next man would have a better chance of purity than while you sit there? In the sanctuary, we see things from the standpoint of the sanctuary. We hear that searching word of Jesus, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and He that gathereth not with Me scattereth." There are only two moral, spiritual forces at work in the world, gathering and scattering; centripetal, and centrifugal forces. That is equally true in the spiritual world. The force of your life is gathering or scattering, hastening the Kingdom of God, or hindering it. The man who fails to be a man after the pattern of God's economy is cumbering the ground, wasting God's earth and sunshine, and all of God's resources. That is the solemnity of the parable. I am not standing in judgment upon this congregation. God knows I am before the judgment bar with you. It is by the words of Christ that we are to be judged, and we stand together before those words tonight. He comes to us with the revelation of the rights of God, the absolute right of proprietorship, the moral right of expectation; and after He has

measured us, and found us receiving God's resources, dwelling in His world, planted in His vineyard, but bringing Him no fruit, He has a right to cut down because of failure, because of His patience, because we cumber the ground.

Thank God there is yet another thing in this parable. It is the story of the intercessor. We will go back for two or three moments to the picture itself. What is this picture of the intercessor? Mark this simplest of things about it. What is the purpose in the heart of the vinedresser? If you say that his purpose is that of mercy upon the fig tree, it is not so! There is no word that speaks of mercy upon the fig tree. Is that astonishing? Look at it carefully. What is the underlying purpose of the vinedresser? Exactly the same as that of the proprietor, fruit. "Lord, let it alone this year also." What for? "Till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not thou shalt cut it down." There is no quarrel between the vinedresser and the proprietor. Let it reverently be affirmed, there is no quarrel between God and Christ about man. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to persuade God to have mercy upon the man who is going to be failure through eternity. Christ came into the world to produce in man the fruit for which God is seeking. There is no difference in the ultimate intention of God and Christ. I am constrained to say, out of profound and evergrowing conviction, that the evangelism which suggests to man that Christ has done something which is merely to provide a way of escape from penalty, is false evangelism. He does that, but how? By freeing men from the disastrous failure, by remaking them that they may be what God wants them to be. Jesus Christ the Lord is not leading into the dwellings of light and glory a vast multitude of failures, of incompetent men and women. If you want to know the kind of people He will introduce to His heaven at last, hear it in the words of inspiration, He will "set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy." If there is any man who names the name of Christ, sings the songs of the sanctuary, professes to be a member of the Church of Christ, and his life is still barren, he is not a Christian. Unless the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, unless that love is expressed in service to our fellow men we are not Christians. We may be Christianized pagans, with a creed upon our lips, wearing the livery of the sanctuary, but we are not Christians. Jesus Christ did not come to ask God to let off the man who refuses to bear fruit. He came, to use the figure of the garden, to dig about the tree, and dung it. He came to provoke it to fruit-bearing by introducing to it new life, and fruitful resources. He came to touch the tree with a new life which shall make it respond with fruit.

And if not, if after all His digging, and all His introduction of new forces, the tree is still barren, then He says, "Thou shalt cut it down." He is one with God in purpose. He is one with God in ultimate verdict and sentence. He is one with God in the desire for fruit, and in that operation whereby He seeks to perfect men to fruit-bearing.

The spiritual values are perfectly patent. What is it that Christ offers to do for me? Why is the judgment postponed upon my guilty soul? In order that he may bring new forces to me; a barren, fruitless, failing man! That I may become fruitful, abounding in fruit to the glory of God. That is the basis of appeal. He does not ask God to be pitiful, to excuse the fruitless tree. He asks God to let Him deal with the tree, to make it fruitful. No man is ever going to be admitted into the high and holy presence of the dwellings of the saints in the light of God, on the basis of pity but upon the basis of perfection. Let us make no mistake about the purpose of Christ.

The last matter may be dismissed in two or three sentences. What is the position of the tree in the vineyard? One word covers the whole story. Fruit! If at last there shall be fruit, then the tree will abide, it has fulfilled the purpose of its being. If at last there be fruit, then the demand of the proprietor has been met, and he will be satisfied. If at last there shall be fruit, the vinedresser will be repaid for all his patience and toil.

What is the first and final matter about my life, and thy life, my brother man? Fruitfulness according to pattern. That I become what God would have me be. That I become a man God-centered, God-governed; a man expressing my love for God in my love for my fellow-men, and my service to them. If that be produced, then my safety, my salvation is assured. If that shall be produced, God's requirement will be met, and He will be satisfied.

If that result be produced in me, then the Christ of the cross will see in me of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

In a very few moments the Sabbath evening service will be over. We shall be taking our way back to our homes, and if these transitory lives of ours be spared and tomorrow's sun dawn, we shall be away to the city, following our profession, in the midst of the daily avocation; but now we pause as in the very garden of God, and He is seeking fruit. What does He find? That is a question not to be answered by one man to another. I am asking no confession. It is a question to be answered by the preacher in the pulpit as in the presence of his God; by every man in the house as in that same great presence.

May all others be reverently patient while I say this final word. There are those who are saying, "If these be the standards, then we come short of the glory of God; if these be the balances, then weighed in the balances we are found wanting. Then what shall we do?" This is the hour of the Vinedresser, and He seeks at this moment to communicate to all who know their failure, the values of His own death and life; whereby failing men and women can be made fruitful; whereby those who fail because they are in the grip of the destructive forces of habit and of passion and of sin, can be made masters over all of them in the power of His indwelling life.

The most appalling and overwhelming thought of the hour is this, that in the magnificence of the dignity of human will you can, I can, refuse the ministry of the Christ, and choose the barrenness and the failure until the hour of doom and the day of judgment. But in that same magnificent dignity of human will, I can yield my life to Him, all bruised and battered, fruitless; and He will place at my disposal forces whereby it shall be remade, so that not only shall the fig tree in the vineyard flourish and blossom and bear fruit; but the very desert shall blossom as the rose.

In the presence of that Christ, and in the power of that Spirit, by those standards and measurements, found wanting; shall we not begin again by handing our lives over to Christ that He may produce in us the fruit that will glorify God?

Luke 14:15, 27. The Kingdom: The Oath Of Allegiance.

Luke 14:15, 27.

The Kingdom: The Oath Of Allegiance.

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:15; Luke 14:27

Our theme tonight is that of the demand which the King makes in respect of His own enterprises upon those who enter the Kingdom. That is the real signification of His words, spoken in answer to one of those who sat at meat with Him in the Pharisee's house.

By bringing these two verses together, I have desired to direct your attention for a moment, by way of introduction, to the matters which precede my text in this chapter. The complete story with which this chapter, and the following two, deal, is full of interest, and to read it quite simply and artlessly, as for the first time, is to discover the growth of the teaching. We, in company with His first disciples, are led on, and ever on, by our Lord in an ever growing understanding of His mission; and in the heart of this whole paragraph to which I have referred, the words occur, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple."

I am going to crave, and perhaps tax, your patience for a moment while we attempt to see all this narrative which surrounds the text, for by extensive examination we shall come to intensive application. In the fourteenth chapter, we have the story of how Jesus went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread, and in that connection the significant declaration is made, that, "they were watching Him." What immediately follows reveals the yet more interesting fact, that while they watched Him, He watched them. Somewhere on the outskirts of the crowd was a man afflicted with dropsy; and the Lord challenged them as to whether it was legal for Him to heal him on the Sabbath; and when they held their peace, He healed the man and let him go. Then He observed how they chose the chief seats, and in a parable rebuked them. According to the law of the Kingdom of God, if a man makes a feast, a dinner or a supper, he will not call his friends, nor his brethren, nor his kinsmen, nor his rich neighbor. Why not? Notice this very carefully, "Lest haply they bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee." I do not know a more caustic piece of satire than that upon the whole business of entertaining even as it obtains today. Do not ask your friends lest they ask you again! That is often the very reason why we do ask them. In that remarkable contrast between the ideal of Jesus, and the habit of our own age, there flashes into view the difference between the self-governed kingdom of the world, and the Kingdom of God. As one of the number listened to Him—and I am never quite sure and I quite frankly say so, whether he was impressed with the beauty of the ideal, or whether he was a cynic and laughed at its impossibility—but whether for that reason or the other, this man said to Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." In other words this man said, that is a counsel of perfection, surely it must be a vision of the Kingdom of God that a man shall be so forgetful of

himself as not to invite friends lest they should ask him again, but that instead he shall ask and entertain and show hospitality to men who cannot return it. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Whether satirically, or in admiration, he meant to say, "That will be a wonderful social order, blessed is the man that is in that Kingdom, blessed is the man that lives there." Then, catching up his own figure, that of eating bread in the Kingdom, Jesus said to him, "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many"; and went on to describe how all that were bidden made excuses; not one of them gave a reason, they made excuses. One said he had bought a piece of land and must needs go and see it—and either he was an extremely bad business man, or a very bad dissembler, for no sensible man will buy land until he has seen it. A second man had bought five yoke of oxen and must go and try them—and the same criticism applies to him as to the first. The third man said he had married a wife and therefore he could not come.

All these were excuses! "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," said the man; and Christ replied in effect, Men do not believe that; the supper is made, the invitations have been sent out, but the men invited will not come into the Kingdom, "they all with one consent began to make excuse"; because the bidden guests have refused, the master of the feast is now calling the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind; and because these do not fill the table, he is sending forth again to constrain all to come in. God is anxious for the coming of His Kingdom because of the blessing its coming brings to men. Man is not anxious for the coming of the Kingdom, he is not prepared to pay the price of the Kingdom.

Then multitudes followed Him, and He turned and said, "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Do you really think so? said Christ. Listen, the man that is going to help Me to bring in that Kingdom will have to do so through the process of suffering. The man that follows Me in the building and in the battle which issue in the coming of the Kingdom must be prepared to take up his cross and follow Me. Thus He explained the reason of the severity of His terms, and at the close I read, "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him for to hear Him. And both the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He then answered their criticism of His attitude by the threefold parable of the lost silver, the lost sheep, and the lost son.

This is the outline of the great paragraph. If we think of it in its entirety, if we take that extensive outlook, we see at once that the mind of Jesus, throughout the whole process, was occupied with the work He had to do in order to bring the Kingdom in. The man who sat at meat with Him had some glean of the social order. There came to him some conception of the beneficence of that Kingdom of God in which men should cease to be selfish and should care for their fellow men, and he exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." The mind of Christ was centered upon the ultimate, but it was conscious also of the process that leads to the ultimate; therefore, He sifted the crowds that followed Him in order to find amongst them men and women upon whom He could depend for cooperation in the work that lay before Him. My text, therefore, is Christ's enunciation of the oath of allegiance to be taken by all such as desire, not merely to be in

His Kingdom and of His Kingdom, but to be workers with Him for bringing it in, and establishing in the world the order which all men admire and which God desires; but to bring in which, all men are not prepared to suffer and toil.

I am profoundly anxious that before we give a little closer attention to the actual terms of this word of Jesus, we should definitely understand to whom it was spoken, and what it means in broad outline. Jesus Christ was not here laying down the terms upon which men may be saved. He was rather laying down the terms upon which men may become fellow-workers with Himself. We have on more than one occasion in dealing with this passage drawn attention to the fact that the figures which our Lord made use of, those of building a tower, and of conducting a war, are applicable not to the men to whom He spoke, but to Himself. I do not desire to stay with that at any length, only we must understand it. He said to them, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost... or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not first sit down and take counsel?" by which He did not mean, if you are coming after Me you had better count the cost, but rather, I am in the world to bring in that Kingdom which you admire; I am here for the building of that city. I must count the cost. I cannot associate with Myself in the work of building, or in the work of battle, any save those who take this oath of allegiance, those who are prepared to take up their cross and follow Me. Christ is the builder. He is the King, and He sifts the rank of the multitudes that admire Him, to find the souls that are willing to suffer with Him, and die with Him, in order to accomplish His purpose.

Accepting that interpretation of the meaning of our Lord, let us observe carefully how in this paragraph our Lord revealed His consciousness of what lay before Him ere that Kingdom of God could come which the man, sitting at the table with Him, had admired. I think the subject is a very pertinent one and a very immediate one. There are multitudes of men who are still saying, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." There never were so many men in the world as now, who admire the ideals of Jesus, His ultimate purposes for men, His great teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity, His great conceptions for human life manifested in such remarkable words as these, "One is your Master... and all ye are brethren." That is but a brief sentence but it is the unveiling of the perfect ideal; one master, and all others brethren. I say men by the thousand today are admiring those ideals. If not in the words of the man who sat at meat with Him, still in spirit with Him, they are saying the social ideal of Jesus is perfect. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

"Very well," says Christ, "if you mean it, are you prepared to go with Me along the road that I must travel in order to bring that Kingdom in? Between chaos and cosmos lies the Cross. Between the disorder that you lament, and the order that you admire, there is travail and bloodshedding and suffering. If you are coming with Me the way I am going, to the goal which you admire, you must take up your cross and follow Me."

Thus our contextual examination enables us to see what was Christ's consciousness of all that lay before Him. I turn again to words already referred to in order to discover that consciousness. He said, "Which of you, desiring to build a tower... what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war..." "To build a tower"; "to make war upon another king"; these are significant words as revealing Christ's consciousness of what it was necessary for Him to do in order to bring in the Kingdom. All of you who are students of the Bible—not merely of small portions of it, restricted

parts, but in the majesty of its sweep and the growth of its revelation—will at once recognize that when Jesus speaks of building a tower there is a remarkable suggestiveness in the illustration. The first occasion upon which we read anything of the building of a tower is in Genesis, in the account of the attempt at Babel. Why did men suggest the building of a tower, according to the Genesis story? I remember a Sunday-school teacher telling me years ago that they attempted to build a tower so high that if another flood came they could climb to the top and be safe! If you go back to the ancient story, you read "Let us make us a name." They said in effect, let us become confederate without God. There existed in their mind the passion of humanity for the solidarity of humanity, and they were trying to realize it, without God. They said, "Let us build a tower which shall be the symbol of our independence and our federation." Exactly the same thing men are still attempting, to confederate, and disarm the nations without putting God in the forefront; and they will never succeed. The passion is a Divine one. It is the method that is wrong. Go on through the Old Testament, and we read of building over and over again; sometimes it is a city, but constantly the passion for building, for construction is manifest; it is all material, and therefore doomed to ultimate failure. I track the movement from the Babel of Genesis to Babylon of Revelation, where I hear the strange and wonderful music, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great." When? When the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Christ came to build, to construct; to create the federation of men. He did not come into this world merely to save individual souls out of it; He did come to do that; but He came also to reconstruct human life, and the human order; and the mission of the King will never be complete, until the city is built, and the anthem rings through heaven and earth, and all the universe, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." Then there will be reconstructed human society, reconstructed national life; no longer kingdoms, but the Kingdom; no longer nations, but the nation; no longer peoples, but the people. Confederacy upon the basis of loyalty to God. Thus Christ took the old figure of the Old Testament, and said, "To build a tower; to realize the aspiration of humanity; to accomplish the purpose of God; to lead broken, battered, bruised peoples into unity about the throne of God and in relationship to the most high; that is My work."

Yes, but if the mission of Christ is building, and that is constructive, the mission of Jesus is therefore that of war, and that is destructive. "To make war against another king." He was in the world to make war against the king who offered Him, in sublime impertinence, all the kingdoms of the world if He would give him one moment's homage; against the one presiding over all the things that hurt and spoil humanity. Let us gain the light of another simple saying of Jesus upon this great subject. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." There are only two forces at work in the moral realm; the force that gathers, and the force that scatters. The prince of the force that scatters is the devil, and the force that scatters is evil, sin. The Prince of the force that gathers is the King of kings; and the force that gathers is the force of love and light and life. Said Jesus, "I am in the world to gather, to build; but in the process, I am in the world to fight, to destroy the works of the devil, to enter into conflict even unto death with all the things that harm and spoil, to enter into the '... one death-grapple in the darkness twixt old systems and the Word.'"

This is the mission of Jesus, to build and to fight. Which of you if you had a tower to build would not select with definiteness and precision those who would help you in your building? What king of whom you ever read in the pages of history, deserving that name, if he were about to make war

against another king did not count the cost, whether he could meet him who came with twenty thousand, himself only having ten thousand? In other words, said Jesus, "I need men upon whom I can depend. I am not in the world to give the world a spectacle. I am in the world to reconstruct, and I can only reconstruct as I destroy. I am a Builder, but I am a Waster too. I am here to fight in order that I may put an end to war, and lead humanity to God and so to peace." To build, and to battle. The coming of His Kingdom, of which we have spoken, can only be accomplished in this twofold way.

Nineteen centuries have passed away since He uttered these words, and the work is not yet accomplished. Nineteen centuries ago someone wrote the letter to the Hebrews, and in it these words occur, "We see not yet all things subjected to Him." The centuries have run their course, yet here and now I repeat the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews: "We see not yet all things subjected to Him." The tower is not built; the city of God is not established. The commonwealth does not perfectly exist; the warfare is not ended. The foes of God are in every land, and every city, and every village. I need only state that, you know it; and if you know anything of the ideal, I think you can say as much as this Pharisee long ago said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Yet that Kingdom is not perfectly come. The war is on; so is the building. The scaffolding is about the building; we have never yet seen all the beauty even of the outline. The enemies are all about the wall; and he who would have any share in the building must work with the sword and the trowel.

If, therefore, we are going to help Him we must take the oath of allegiance, and this is it, "Whosoever would come after Me, must take up his own cross and follow Me." In the days of Rome's greatness the Roman soldier took what was called the Sacramentum, which was an oath of allegiance, and when he did that he promised to obey his commander and not desert his standard. Our King says, "Those who would come after Me along this pathway of building and battle, toward that ultimate Kingdom, must take the Sacramentum, the oath of allegiance." What is it? Not a formula to be repeated. There is not a word sufficiently strong to express it; no vow that man can make can be depended upon in the day of crisis. The oath of allegiance is not a ceremony. Ceremony in itself forever fails, and there is none imposing and solemn enough to carry the meaning of the building and the meaning of the battle. The oath is an act, of which the Cross is the symbol. If the Cross is the symbol, what is the act? The silent, and actual surrender of the whole being to Christ. I do not know how to say this as it ought to be said! The thing I have said is a spacious thing if I did but know how to say it! If I could only utter it in the true tone, and with the right emphasis; if it could only ring as it ought to ring like a clarion call through this assembly, arresting us, startling us, there might be some hope. If I am to help to bring in the Kingdom of God, I must go after Him to building and to battle; but in order to do it I must take up my cross.

By the shores of the Galilean lake after His resurrection, He talked to Peter, and the last thing He said to him in the wonderful process of restoration from wandering to service, was this, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.... Follow Me." John adds in parenthesis, "This He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Yes, but He also spoke of the principle upon which Peter should live and serve. In that word of Jesus there is the most remarkable unveiling of the meaning of taking up the cross. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou

wouldest." So long as I am doing that, I cannot help Him to build and to fight. Soul of mine, art thou girding thyself and walking whither thou wouldest; is the underlying reason even of thy preaching the pleasing of thyself? Then thy preaching never helps Him to build or to fight. You may be very popular with your friends, but you cannot help Christ to build. But, when you stretch out your hands and let Him gird you, and let Him command you; when you will take that life of yours with all its powers and possibilities, and all its resources, and sincerely hand it over to Him; when you will take up your cross; then you will help Him to build, and you will help Him to fight; your blow will tell on the strongholds of evil, and the influence of your life will hasten the coming of the day of God.

"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." We all come as far as that. I think the whole audience comes as far as that. I do not believe there is a man or woman or child in this house who has seen anything of the vision of the Kingdom of God as revealed in Jesus, but would say, blessed is the man who lives there. Jesus saw the great multitudes; He sees them now; He holds us for the moment; let Him speak. Oh, that I could be silent and be hidden, and Christ only heard and seen! The pierced hands seem to me to be sifting amongst us tonight, beginning here in the pulpit. He is after men and women who will help Him to fight. Am I prepared? If any man will come after Me toward that Kingdom, he must come My way. If any man will help Me in the building and the battle, he must take up his own cross. That is the Sacramentum. Are we prepared to take the oath of allegiance? Presently, many of us will gather about the table which we call the sacrament; and in that sense it is well so named. Any man who sits at that table and takes that bread and fruit of the vine, who does not at the same time deny himself and realize his responsibility to the world and to Christ, is a traitor as he partakes. "This is My body broken, My blood shed, for you." Let a man examine himself, and eat. This is the sacramentum and the symbol of it. Not that the taking of the bread and wine is sufficient; but it is the outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible attitude. There may be men and women here who have never yet enlisted under the banner of Christ, who have never yet begun to follow Him even for their own soul's salvation; let such begin to follow Him tonight for His sake, for the sake of the world, for the sake of His battle and His building; and if you will do so, I invite you to this table. Tonight there is no after-meeting, no inquiry room where we can speak together; none is necessary. Sit at this table, as one who says, "Tonight I will take up my cross and follow Him." By such act you take the oath of allegiance. God grant that the King may tonight find some men and women for His building and His battle.

Luke 15:2. Jesus And Sinners.

Luke 15:2.

Jesus And Sinners.

This man receiveth sinners.

Luke 15:2

These words were uttered in condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth, and yet to us they contain an inclusive statement of the truth concerning Him as the Saviour of men. It is a very interesting thing to notice in the reading of the Gospel stories how the wonderful personality of Jesus transmuted things spoken in condemnation into declarations of commendation. Indeed, it may fairly be said that one might gather from these Gospel narratives a selection of passages which would constitute a fifth Gospel, and we might call that the Gospel according to the enemies of Jesus Christ. They said of Him, with disdain in every tone of their question, "Is not this the carpenter?" By which they meant, "We know all about Him. He is one of us. Who is He that He should set Himself up as a teacher in the Synagogue at Nazareth, where He has wrought at the carpenter's shop?" Today we are asking the same question about Him, in another tone, knowing that by the lowliness of the long years in the carpenter's shop He came into close comradeship with all toilers forevermore. They said of Him upon one occasion, "By Beelzebub the prince of the devils casteth He out devils," and thus came very near to the confines of unpardonable sin. Yet even that has come to be in some senses a truth, for He has overcome the prince of ill, and compels him into the service of perfecting the saints by testing. Said they of Him in that dark and overwhelming hour of His supreme agony, flinging the cruel taunt into His face when He was all alone in His sorrow, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." In that sentence, all unknowingly, they uttered the deepest truth about that death. Had He saved Himself He never could have saved others; but because He could not save Himself He is able still to save all who come unto God by Him. Among all these statements none is more wonderful, because none is more simple, than this statement of my text, "This Man receiveth sinners."

Let us endeavor to understand this criticism. First of all, I pray you mark that it is a criticism. The first word of this chapter links it, and indeed the great and glorious threefold parable which follows, with all that immediately preceded. Jesus had been saying some strange and hard things in the listening ears of the multitude. I do not hesitate to say that they were strange and hard things. I do not hesitate to declare that many of you who are children of God never read these words without somehow, in the deepest of you, half wishing He had never said them. I do not defend the wish. I know that when my heart rises in half rebellion against some of the words I have read tonight it is because of some evil thing that abides in my life. Even today, though nineteen centuries have demonstrated the imperial dignity of the Christ, and though this whole worshipping congregation is prepared to acknowledge His Lordship, still, when He stands confronting us and says to us that unless we hate father, mother, wife, brethren, sisters, and our own lives, we cannot be His

disciples, we are startled, we are afraid, we are half inclined to draw back from every attempt at discipleship. Yet Luke tells us of that strange thing, which has been repeated ever since, and is being repeated still, that when Christ said His severest things the greatest sinners crowded to Him. Severity which on other lips would have repelled, attracted, for there was something besides severity in the tone of His voice, something in Himself which, in spite of the fierce scorching fire of His severest word, drew men to Him. "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him for to hear Him." The Pharisees observed that when these people came to Him He received them, He received them in friendliness, He received them in the very spirit of comradeship. He did not stand aloof from them notwithstanding that He had said such severe things. He was even prepared to sit at the table and eat with them. "And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." This exclamation of criticism was a revelation of their sense that His action was not in keeping with His teaching. The severity of His ethic did not seem to harmonize, as they looked at Him, with the looseness of His friendship for these men.

I go one step further, and ask you to notice that what they said of Him was perfectly true, had He been such as they were. They meant to say that no man can take fire into his bosom and not be burned. They meant what some of you remember being told when you were children, You cannot touch pitch without being defiled. They meant, if this man becomes the friend, the comrade, the companion of sinners, he will be contaminated. I think there was a tone of genuine disappointment in their voices. They had hoped great things of Jesus—and that is no piece of imagination, for you cannot read these stories without seeing that at the commencement of His public ministry the rulers, the men in authority, the teachers, were interested in Him, followed Him, listened to Him, invited Him to their houses. As they watched Him receiving sinners they said to themselves, This man is going to spoil His career. He is going to cut the nerve of His influence. They were quite right, if He had been such as they were. There is a young man in this house, perchance, who quite recently came up to the great city. Show me his friends and I will tell you what he will be in half a dozen years. If he is making his first friendships with sinful men, he will be spoiled, ruined by his comradeships. He cannot escape it. I should say with keen and bitter disappointment of some young man, full of promise, who made his companionships among sinful men, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Yet nineteen centuries have passed away and a Christian congregation gathered together in the heart of this city hears this text, and to all such as know Christ it sings the one anthem that is worth singing. "This Man receiveth sinners." How are we to account for this fact?

The text is a great text, because the Person concerning Whom the statement was made was a great Person. The text has become an Evangel because of the unique personality of the Man at Whom the Pharisees were looking. They did not understand Him. They did not know how He stood at infinite distance from themselves and from all other men. They did not understand how when He received men to Himself, instead of being contaminated by the pollution which He received, the men were uplifted and healed by the purity which He communicated. It is by that distance which is yet nearness, and by that nearness which is yet distance that my text is made a great Evangel.

Let us, then, consider two matters: first, the Person referred to, and then the pronouncement.

Reverently, then, let us attempt first to see "This Man." I am going to speak of four things about Him; of two in which He is in close association with all of us, and of two in which He stands at infinite distance from us. Before naming these, let me say it is not by the things of identification that I am helped or saved, but by the things of separation is it made possible that I may come near to Him and find all the virtue and healing of His life made mine.

First, the two things in which He is identified with me; He was a man of probation, and He was a man of sorrows. Then the two things in which He stands far away from me. He was a man of victory, and He was a Man of atonement. If I find Him near to me as I think of the first two, I shall yet by the contemplation of what He was in these first two respects discover how unlike Him I am; the very likeness will reveal the unlikeness, the very nearness will create a sense of infinite distance. It is when I see Him in the twofold fact of His separation and distance that I shall begin to hope that I may indeed come into a fellowship with Him which is age-abiding.

A Man of probation. He was a Man Who lived His human life upon the same level on which I have to live mine. He was a Man of toil. He was a Man of temptation. He was a Man of trust.

He was a Man of toil. This is an old story, full of beauty, yet it is well for us to think of it for a passing moment. I do not think that in this particular Jesus Christ entered into limitation or suffering. Toil is the proper lot of humanity. God did not intend that any human being should live apart from toil. I know there are very many people who read the Genesis story, and imagine that man commenced to work after the fall. But that is not the Genesis story. The story of Genesis is that God put unfallen man into the garden "to dress it and to keep it." There are some very curious ideas about the garden of Eden. Half the things which men attack in Genesis are not in it. Some people have an idea that the garden of Eden was a garden something like those which we see as we travel through this beautiful land of ours, with flower beds carefully laid out. I do not so read my Bible. I think the garden of Eden was a mass of potentiality, waiting for development. The Lord God planted it, filled it with possibilities, and man was put into it to bring out what God had put in. It was a garden waiting for the touch of man's hand in order that there might come out of its russet commonplace the flaming beauties of all the flowers. Man was made for toil. This Man was a toiler. He knew what it was to have to face a day's work in order to win a day's bread. God have mercy upon the man who does not know what that is! I care not whether it be with sweat of brain or brawn, every man should earn his living, or cease to live. I want that some of the comfort of the contemplation should come to you. Some of you are almost sighing as you think of tomorrow morning. Remember this Man is your comrade tomorrow morning, just as much as He is your Lord here and now. When tomorrow morning comes, if your calling is an honorable and holy calling, you are in fellowship with Jesus just as much as you are in the holy place.

A Man of temptation, He felt the force of temptation keenly because of the perfection of His humanity. I think that is a statement with which some of you, at first, will be inclined to join issue. There is a popular conception in the world that the proportion in which a man is morally weak is the proportion in which he feels temptation. Not so. It is the strong man, physically, mentally, spiritually, morally, who feels the full force of temptation. A man weakened in his moral fiber by sin is weakened in his sensitiveness in the presence of temptation. No man has had anything to do with young life as it turns to Jesus Christ without having had this question asked, "How is it that since I gave myself to Christ and began the Christian life I have been more tempted than I was

before?" The answer is, You are not more tempted, but the very life of Christ in you, strengthening you, makes you keen, quick, sensitive to the force of temptation. In the perfect man temptation has a larger area of attack. The Perfect Man, "This Man" was a Man Who felt temptation as it came against Him through every vulnerable point of His being. The story of the temptation in the wilderness is not merely the story of one hour, one event, one lonely incident, it is a story which reveals the lines along which temptation always comes. Temptation is first directed against the physical, then against the spiritual, then against the vocational, and it has no other avenue of approach. In proportion as a man is physically strong he feels the force of material temptation. In proportion as a man is strong spiritually he feels the appeal of the spiritual assault. In proportion as a man sees clearly his vocation, and earnestly desires to fulfil it, he feels keenly the suggestion that he should reach it by a short cut and an easy road. He was a Man of temptation, and there is no temptation that assaults my soul but that He felt its force.

A Man of trust, He lived a life of dependence upon the highest. He received His messages, His words, and His life from Another. He was a Man Who lived so far the limited life of humanity that He could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.... I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things." He was a Man of probation, living upon my level, toiling, tempted, trusting.

Yet in some senses He comes nearer to us when I say that He was a Man of sorrows, entering into all the experiences of human suffering. The sorrow of poverty, the sorrow of loneliness, and that most terrible sorrow of all to sensitive souls, the sorrow born of sympathy.

The sorrow of poverty. I know there are those who very glibly tell us that poverty is a blessing. Who said so? Whoever said so, it is a lie. No one ever said so, it seems to me, save such as live apart from poverty, and contemplate it from a distance. I know perfectly well that there have been many souls who have been poor in this world's goods, who have recognized that God was overruling the pain of poverty for the making of character. That is quite another matter. He transmutes the base into the pure, but poverty is no part of God's provision for the race; it is a part of man's mismanagement of what God has provided for the race. This Man was poor. You can tell all the story of His human poverty in a very few sentences, tragic sentences. Chapter one, There was no room for Him in the inn. Chapter two, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Chapter three, What shall we do with Him? He is dead. Bury Him in a charity grave in a rich man's garden. Do not imagine that so keenly sensitive and fine a soul as that of Christ was not conscious of the limitations of poverty.

But there was the sorrow of loneliness. Think how lonely a Man He was. No one ever understood Him. The rulers were interested in Him, but they never understood Him, and at last became His enemies, hunting Him to death. His mother never understood Him. I for one am inclined to pause in the presence of that and think, for if a man's mother does not understand him, he is generally unutterably alone. I think we of the Protestant Church have made a great mistake in our neglect of the virgin mother. I believe that in very deed and truth she is to be held in high and holy honor. We will not worship her. That is sacrilege and blasphemy, but we will hold her in high honor, highly favored amongst women. Yet she never understood Him. Her misunderstanding was the misunderstanding of love, but it was misunderstanding. The souls who came into closest touch with Him were the souls of such as did the will of God first, last and always. Did they understand

Him? "They all forsook Him, and fled." His pathway became more and more lonely, until at last there was no eye to pity, no heart to sympathize. Moreover, He was a Man of sorrows in that final and most terrible way, of the keen sensitiveness of soul and spirit which gathers all the pain of others into its consciousness. I am now saying something in which perhaps you do not follow me or agree with me at once. I make my appeal to the fathers and mothers. Tell me, when do you suffer most, when you yourself are in physical pain, or when your child is in physical pain? If you have ever stood by the side of some suffering loved one, you have felt honestly that you could have sung for joy if you could have gathered that sorrow and pain into your own life and freed your loved one from it. Forgive that low level of illustration, and come into the presence of this Man of spirit so perfectly poised and so full of sensitiveness that every tear fell upon His heart like a storm. Among all the stories there is nothing which so beautifully illustrates this as the story of how He wept in the presence of the tears of Mary. There is something about that story very difficult of interpretation. Commentators—I make my apology to them—have been busy trying to account for the tears of Jesus. Read the story simply, and you will know why He wept. He wept out of sympathy with Mary's tears. But, you say, that can never be. He knew that within an hour he would unlock the tomb and give her brother back to her. There, again, you are measuring Him by yourself, as the Pharisees did. I am not criticizing you. I would say the same thing. If you were in great sorrow and I came to see you in your home, and knew that by some act I could remove the cause of your sorrow, I really do not believe I could weep with you in your sorrow, I should be so eager to bring you the joy. He will give to you, His trusting ones, heaven presently, but he weeps with you today in the midst of your sorrow. He knows perfectly well that out of all the darkness He is bringing light, but in every pang that rends the heart the Man of sorrows has His part. We read that little phrase, "He was moved with compassion," very carelessly. His whole inner life was shaken and swept as by a tempest in the presence of human need and human sorrow. What the ancient prophet said of Him long ago was literally true, "His visage was so marred more than any man." He was a Man of sorrows.

As we have contemplated the things of His nearness to us we have all been conscious that we are away from Him. A Man of toil. How have we failed in our toil! A Man of temptation. How have we yielded thereto! A Man of trust. How have we trembled in trust! A Man of sorrows! Oh, heart of mine, was there ever sorrow like His? He is near to me, and yet away from me in the very facts of His nearness.

So I come necessarily to other things. He was a Man of victory. There is the difference. I have already hinted at it, now I declare it. Along this way of the probationary life in the midst of these sorrows that have come to me, I have failed. I have failed in my toil and done it meanly, ah me, how often! I have failed in temptation, yielding to the seducing allurements of evil. I have failed in trust. But this Man never failed. This Man never failed in toil. When He made yokes in which the cattle should plow the plains of Bethshan, He made them perfectly. When He, the house-builder, erected a house upon the rock He knew, that which Michaelangelo learned from Him, that angels of God saw the hidden things, and they were perfectly wrought. I have failed: He never. In temptation He refused every seduction of evil and trod the lonely way of truth and uprightness, even though it was a way of suffering and of shame. He was a Man of victory. Victory over circumstances, victory over sin, victory over sorrow, victory over all the forces that were against Him, moving in quiet, kingly dignity against all difficulties, until at last He stood in the midst of a

group of men and said to them, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." Here is the difference between this Man and myself. It is not the ultimate difference. It is not the final distinction, it is only the first, but it is so great as to make me know that I am other than He, and He is other than I. He is the one Man in all the centuries Who by common consent of the Church, and of the world, so far as it has thought, is the sinless, Perfect, victorious Man, climbing to the throne of the mightiest, not upon the policy of cunning, or the force of arms, but upon integrity of character and perfection of ideal in thinking and speaking and doing. How far am I away from Him!

Finally, this Man became the Man of atonement, the One Who was able at last to ransom His brother, the One Who by dying entered into an experience which had no true place in the story of His life save as in it He was dying in the stead of another. This Man, and I cannot so end the story: I feel as you feel that when I approach this final fact I am in the presence of something which demands a new term, a new explanation. A Man, yea, verily, a Man of probation and of sorrow, yet a Man of victory, and of such victory that I am compelled to say that He is infinitely other than Man. A Man through Whose heart it is possible for God to outwork into human vision infinite and eternal things. A Man Who has become the perfect instrument of the Divine speech and of the Divine working, and of the Divine heart of Love. A Man into the presence of Whose death I come, and say with the old Roman centurion who saw more that day than he had ever seen before, "Truly this was the Son of God." This Man, ye Pharisees of old, ye have mis-measured Him, and ye philosophers of today, ye do not know Him. This Man, so near that I can touch His warm flesh and call Him Brother, so far that I cannot see the ultimate height of Him, or encompass the full blaze of His glory. This Man, if we see Him thus, of the race and apart from it; kin of it and King of it, near to it and far away from it, immanent, transcendent, then we shall hear the Gospel. "This Man receiveth sinners."

Now for a closing word concerning the pronouncement. What is this that they said of Him? Let us dismiss them. We have no more to do with the Pharisees. What is this that we are saying of Him? What is this the Spirit of God says of Him? What is this the Bride says of Him? "This Man receiveth sinners." "Receiveth" here means infinitely more than we sometimes mean by the word. I shall do no violence to the thought behind this word "receiveth" if I translate it thus, This Man receiveth unto Himself sinners. This Man does not patronize sinners. He takes them into His comradeship, makes familiar friends of them, takes them to His heart. That is the Gospel. He is not high seated on a throne bending down to you and offering you pardon if you will kiss His scepter. He is by you in the pew, He is close to you in your sin, and He will take you as you are, with the poison and the virus within you, put His arms about you, and press you into a great comradeship.

These men said, If He does this He will be contaminated. What was the fact? He received them, and never a dimming of His white purity, but rather an ending of their scarlet corruption. He took to Himself Mary of Magdala, possessed of seven devils, embittered, hot, worldly, evil in her temper and disposition, and she became the lone watcher through the night of His burial, the first preacher of the resurrection. Down in the quiet village outside Bedford is a tinker, and he swears and blasphemes so that even the low and the lewd are ashamed of him. "This Man receiveth sinners." He received this tinker, wrapped him to His heart, communicated to him His own purity, opened his eyes, and he became the celestial dreamer.

Those are far distant examples, and if I stay in the Gospel story you feel the distance. You are not sure even about Bunyan. Then there are witnesses here tonight. Here is a man who was a low-down, lost drunkard in New York streets, and was brought into the old Hippodrome in the days when Dwight Lyman Moody was preaching this Gospel there. "This Man" took him to His heart and the passion for drink died and the man was remade. Let the preacher tell his story, at least in such sentences as he may utter. "This Man" has received him also. Not yet is the work all done. Much is there yet to do, but I bear witness in your presence tonight that the tides of His life have quenched fires of passion, stilled tempests of upheaval, and are leading me out toward the ultimate. "This Man receiveth sinners." This is the Evangel. This is the Gospel. There is none other.

You never can be such as He in that respect. You never can be a Saviour, receiving other men, communicating your purity. You can share the fellowship of His sufferings, not as you bring men to yourself to save them, but as you lead them to Him that He may save them. "This Man receiveth sinners."

Luke 18:1. Prayer Or Fainting.

Luke 18:1.

Prayer Or Fainting.

They ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Luke 18:1

Such is Luke's interpretation of the meaning of the parable which Jesus uttered to His disciples concerning the uprighteous judge "which feared not God, and regarded not man," but who granted the request of the importunate widow from the purely selfish motive which he expressed graphically and accurately in the words, "lest she wear me out by her continual coming." This is one of the most remarkable things in some senses that the Bible says anywhere about the prayer life, "They ought always to pray, and not to faint." It is one of those statements that stagger, and in the presence of which Christian men and women are always in danger of indulging in some measure of that criticism which is the outcome of unbelief. The first objection raised is to the word "always." It is suggested that this does not quite mean what it says, that the evident intention is that we should be men and women of prayer, having our appointed times, and seasons, and habits of prayer; that believing in the power of prayer, we ought to take advantage of the great possibility whenever we are able so to do, whenever we are in need. That is not what the text says. That is not the interpretation placed upon the parable of Jesus by Luke. The text says, "always to pray." If this is one of the most remarkable things said concerning prayer, and one which does undoubtedly challenge the criticism of our unbelief, it does not stand alone in Scripture. There are other passages that indicate the same necessity. When he is closing his letter to the Thessalonians Paul utters in epigrammatic form great injunctions concerning the Christian life. One of them is, "Pray without ceasing." Of this it is also affirmed that he did not literally mean that we are to pray without ceasing. We are to pray every day, two or three times a day, as regularly as possible. We are to be men and women of prayer. But that is not what the apostle wrote. He wrote, "Pray without ceasing." You will not at all misunderstand these introductory words. I recognize the difficulty. You say, I have been too busy today with work for God to take time in prayer. I was so pressed with the business cares of last week that I had very little time for prayer. I prayed at morning, noon and night, and often in the midst of the city's rush and din, when some great need crowded on my heart I lifted that heart to God. I prayed often, but I did not pray always, I did not pray without ceasing. I quite recognize the difficulty; but I am so perfect a believer in the inspired infallibility of Scripture that I abide by the words of it, "always" "without ceasing." It behooves us, therefore, to ask very carefully what this really means. I submit to you immediately that this particular text of mine in which Luke gives the inspired interpretation of the meaning of the Master's parable lifts the whole subject of prayer on to a very high level, and reveals to us the fact that there is infinitely more in prayer than the offering of petitions, than the uttering of words, than the taking of time, than the attitude of the body or of the mind; that there are deeper depths and higher heights; and that if we would enter into the prayer life with all its fulness of virtue and of

victory we must discover what this really means, "They ought always to pray," "Pray without ceasing."

First of all, I would ask you to notice very carefully the slight change in the Revision which is an interesting and important one. The Authorized Version reads, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The Revised Version reads, "They ought always to pray, and not to faint." To whom was He speaking? If you go back to the previous chapter you will see how wonderful a chapter it is, full of solemn warnings and prophetic utterances, strange and mysterious many of them. At its twenty-second verse I find these words, "And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Then He continues His teaching of the disciples right on to the end of that chapter, and immediately and in that connection, whether uttered at that point or not is of no consequence, in that relationship, according to the placing of the story by Luke, He spoke the parable "unto them," that is to His own disciples, "that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." The distinction is an important one, and it is fundamental to our meditation. I am not for a moment suggesting that Jesus Christ had one philosophy of life for His disciples and another for men of the world. On the other hand, I affirm that He had one philosophy of life, and He called all men to accept it. Here, however, He is laying His instructions upon such as have heard His call, and having obeyed it, have become His disciples. They are such as are described in the letter to the Hebrews—which I believe Luke wrote, although the thinking is the thinking of Paul—"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." If a man do not believe these things He will never pray. If these things are indeed believed, if this is indeed the truth concerning God accepted by the heart and mind, then of such as believe, the Lord by His parable affirms that "They ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Having drawn attention to the fact that these words were spoken to disciples, to those who believe that God is and that He is a Rewarder, let us notice the circumstances of this discourse. He is talking to His disciples in view of the fact that the life of faith is a strenuous life, characterized by stress and strain and conflict and difficulty. Mark how He ends His exposition of His parable, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" In the previous chapter I find Him telling these men that to gain their life they must lose it, and to find the real value of eternal things they must turn themselves away from all the allurements of the material and the sensual. He is putting into contrast the life of faith with the life that is lived on the material level. I turn over the pages of the Gospel of Luke a little farther on and I find Him saying almost exactly the same thing. Speaking of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and of the fact that in those days men would faint for fear, He charged His own to watch and make supplication. So that the message of this parable and the declaration of this text have application to such as are His disciples, and declare to them the supreme truth concerning the secret of prevailing life in the midst of the stress and strain of discipleship. I need hardly stay to argue the fact that the Christian life is one of stress and strain. I am perfectly well aware that there are senses in which it is a life of peace, and ease, and quietness. I remember the great promises of Scripture concerning peace for the children of God. There is granted to the child of God the peace from God our Father. There is granted to the child of God the peace of God in the heart, and, moreover, the presence and comradeship of the God of peace. Yet these very facts create the strain and stress and difficulty. There is no man in this house who is attempting to live a godly life who does not know the absolute truth of this.

Surrounded every day by things material, in the midst of an age which in its outlook is as absolutely godless as any age which has preceded it, it is not easy to live the life of godliness. It is not easy to bear perpetual and prevailing testimony to the unseen things to the ordinary crowd of men and women with whom the man of faith comes into contact, living, as they do, as though there were no God, no hereafter, no spiritual verities. To live the life of godliness in the midst of this age is still to live the life of conflict. Because of the allied forces of godlessness, the Christian life is the strenuous life, and there are scores of men and women in this house to-night—perhaps the affirmation is a strong one, but I believe it to be true—who are weary in the midst of the Christian life, who are tired because of the pressure of the forces of the world upon them—fainting, filled with weariness. To these people Christ says, "They ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Before laying further emphasis upon the "always" let me take the terms of my text in order to understand Christ's philosophy of life for His own disciples. What is the real suggestiveness of this word "pray"? If you take it as to its first simplicity and intention, it means—and this is not complete but it will help us to reach the complete thought—to wish forward, to desire toward the ultimate; or if you will have that interpreted by the language of the apostle in one of his greatest epistles, that to the Colossians, it means the seeking of things which are above. That does not at all suggest that the Christian is forevermore to be sighing after heaven, and expressing his discontent with the present world, and longing to escape from it; but rather that the Christian is to seek the upper things, setting his mind upon them, and everywhere and everywhen he is to be hoping for, and endeavoring after, the ultimate. That is the simple meaning of prayer. Reaching forward, wishing forward, desiring forward, seeking the upper, the higher, the nobler. So that in prayer there is included, first, always first, the thought of worship and adoration, that content of the heart with the perfection and acceptability and goodness of the will of God which bows the soul in worship. That is the first attitude of prayer. To pray is forevermore to set the life in its inspiration and in all its endeavor toward that ultimate goal of the glory of God, "Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through Whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God." That is the first quantity of quality of prayer. The vision of the ultimate with a corresponding attitude of life toward it, which is that of perpetual endeavor after it. This means not merely that in the midst of battle and strife and din and smoke, and wounding and blood and tears, that we see a better day, a golden age, but that the soul, seeing that golden age as in the will of God, and realizing that the supreme fact of the vision is that of God Himself, the supreme attitude of the life becomes that of submission, and the supreme effort of the life is that of co-operation with God toward the ultimate upon which His heart is set. That is prayer. Prayer is not merely position of body, or of mind. Prayer is not merely asking for something in order that I may obtain it for myself. Prayer forevermore says when it asks for anything, "Not my will, but Thine be done," which means, if the thing I ask for, however much I desire it, however good it seems to me to be, will hinder or postpone, by a hair's breadth or a moment, the ultimate victory, will be denied to me. Those who know the real secret of the prayer life have discovered the fact that denial is over and over again the graciousness of overwhelming answer. To pray is to desire forward, to seek forward, to endeavor after. It is to have a new vision of God, and of the ways of God, to be overwhelmingly convinced of the perfection of God, of the perfection of all He does, of the certainty of His ultimate victory, and then to respond to the profound and tremendous conviction by petition, by praise, and by endeavor; and so men "ought always to pray" and to "pray without ceasing."

Now notice another term of our text, "to faint." This is our Lord's recognition of the strenuous nature of the life of the believing soul. What is this word, "to faint"? Quite simply, to be paralyzed, to be weak, to be worthless, to feel the force dying and the vigor passing, to be beaten, to be broken down and helpless. I need stay no longer with definition at that point.

We may now consider our Lord's philosophy of life. He puts these two things into opposition. He declares in effect that this is the alternative before every one of us, to pray or to faint. There is no suggestion of a middle course. To pray or to faint. According to this word, this inspired interpretation of the meaning of our Lord's parable and teaching, if men pray they do not faint. If men faint it is because they have ceased to pray. If men do not pray they faint. Men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." Interpret your prayer by the negation. Prayer is the opposite of fainting. Fainting is a sudden sense of inability and helplessness, the cessation of activity, weariness which is almost, and ultimately is, death. Pray, and do not faint. To pray is to have the vision clear, the virtue mighty, the victory assured. To pray is to "mount up with wings as eagles," to "run and not be weary," to "walk, and not faint." Suffer me one moment with that. Have you imagined that the great Isaiah at that point failed in his rhetorical method, and that having said the great thing, there was nothing greater to say, and therefore he climbed down, and there was an anticlimax, and perhaps something of bathos? It is not so. As a matter of fact, he began with the easiest thing of all to "mount up with wings as eagles." Then he took the next thing in the order of difficulty, to run, and the hardest thing last, to walk. In the day when you first caught your vision of God you mounted up with wings like eagles. I am not undervaluing that day. Thank God for the experience. We thank God for it whenever it returns. He gives us the vision ever and anon, and we "mount up with wings as eagles." A defeated and disappointed man once said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away and be at rest." What a mistake. A man with the wings of a dove could not fly away and be at rest. When the inspired seer speaks of a man flying, he says "wings as eagles." Mark the significance of it. The eagle is forevermore the symbol of Deity. To wait upon God is to use the pinions of Deity, and mount and soar away. Every young believer has those pinions and that great beginning, and God gives them to us ever and anon all the pilgrimage through. Presently, however, there comes a day when there are no wings and no mounting above; we must run through. Yet "they shall run, and not be weary." And yet there comes another day, some of you are in it now, it is almost night, so dark has it all become. You cannot run, the way is not clear enough, the enemies are too many, there are difficulties all about you—you must walk, "They shall walk, and not faint." Mark Isaiah's word and Christ's, "They shall walk, and not faint," "They ought always to pray, and not to faint." Prayer is the opposite of fainting. It is mounting with wings. It is running without weariness. It is walking the uphill, rough and rugged road, and never fainting. That is Christ's great philosophy of life. If men pray they do not faint. If men faint it is because they have forgotten to pray. "They ought always to pray, and not to faint."

How are we to do it? Take the parable and notice carefully one fact about it. It is an exposition of the philosophy of the prayer life by contrast, by contrast all the way through it. The moment you forget that, you miss the beauty and the glory of it. First, all that the judge was, God is not. The judge did not fear God, that is to say, he was not submitted to the highest authority. He did not regard men. He was absolutely careless, and you may sum up the whole thing in Christ's illuminative word, he was unrighteous. All that the judge was, God is not. God regards man. Mark the word of Jesus, "longsuffering over them." God is righteous. "He will avenge," and the word

"avenge" there is not the word "revenge." It means to do justice to. The widow came to the unrighteous judge and said to him, "Avenge me of mine adversary," Do me justice in connection with my adversary. He was an unjust judge, an unrighteous man. God is righteous and just and will do justice by all who come to Him. That is the first contrast. There is another contrast, and it is the second contrast that we often miss. In order to persuade the unjust judge importunity was necessary. Importunity is never necessary to persuade God. That is the point where we generally break down in this parable. We make the contrast between the unjust judge and God, but not between the consequent action of the widow and that of the Christian. This parable is constantly taken as teaching that we are to be importunate toward God. It teaches us rather that if we are always praying, importunity in the sense of begging is not necessary. The prayer life does not consist of perpetual repetition of petitions. The prayer life consists of life that is always upward, and onward, and Godward. The passion of the heart is for the Kingdom of God; the devotion of the mind is to His will; the attitude of the spirit is conformity thereto; and the higher we climb in the realm of prayer, the more unceasing will prayer be, and the fewer will be the petitions. It is the opposite of importunity that is taught here. The thought that Jesus gave of God is that of One compassionate, just, mighty, quick to respond to the forward wish of the weakest soul, so that in the midst of the stress and strain and struggle there need be no fainting. The life uplifted in prayer, the whole desire Godward, brings an answer, and there is no comparison equal to showing the celerity of that answer. Quicker than thought or the lightning flash. There is in one of the old prophets an illustration of this in one realm of prayer, where he speaks of God as "a God ready to pardon." This is only an illustration, but notice it. There is a man here tonight while I preach, God grant there may be, who is tired of his sin, broken-hearted on account of it, who determines that without any after-meeting he will seek the pardon of his God. Will he have to be importunate and wait and beg and beseech? No, "ready to pardon." Yonder is a great battleship, the decks are cleared for action, every man is at his post. At last, as the awful moment arrives, the commanding officer says, "Ready?" "Ready, aye ready!" comes back the answer, and he gives the order, "Fire!" You know what happens. That is slow work compared to God's answer. He is ready to pardon, ready to answer your prayer. The unjust judge did not regard God or man. He was selfish and self-centered. Because the widow went and went and went to him, to get rid of her, to save her bruising him, he gave her what she wanted. That is the picture by contrast. God is the opposite of that. Your method in prayer is the opposite of that. Therefore men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." Because of such a God, so full of compassion, so full of might, so full of infinite and strict integrity and justice, the forward wish of the weakest, feeblest, frailest soul brings an answer. He is a God ready to hear and to answer.

If all this be true, if this be what our Lord said to men, and if Luke's inspired interpretation of the meaning be correct, allow me for a moment to lay emphasis upon another word in the text, "They ought always to pray." It is a duty, not a privilege. Men ought. All omnipotence is at the disposal of the saint who prays. God is willing, then men ought to pray, which means, men ought not to faint. There ought to be no fainting. You will understand me, I am not preaching to you. I am talking in the presence of Christ's words with you. I have fainted and still do faint: I ought not. Men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." I have no right to faint. Oh, but how strenuous is the life! I know a little of it. Men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." How fierce the battle! I know something of the conflict, but I ought not to faint, because I can pray. All which means that in God there is resource equal to every demand that can be made upon the trusting soul. There is no hour so dark

but that if I will stay upon Him—once again to use Isaiah's fine language—I shall discover His readiness to support me as I stay. There is no battle so fierce but that if I pray I may not stand, "withstand,... and, having done all, to stand." No temptation so swift, so sudden or subtle, but that if I am always praying I may not find at once the wisdom and the might that enable me to overcome. Men ought not to faint, because men ought to pray.

The whole life of the believer should be prayer—and this is the summary and conclusion—every act, every word, every wish. The act that is not prayer in the ultimate, and the word which is not prayer in the last analysis, and the wish that is not prayer in the profoundest depth, are to be put away, they do not become the life of faith. They are things that produce fainting. How can every act be prayer? Ask yourself about your next act, why you are doing it. The Sabbath will soon be over, and we shall leave it behind, for it is the day of prayer. To-morrow morning you will face the calling of the day, in the shop, the office, the school; in professional life, in the Houses of Parliament, in whatever is your calling. What are you rising early and toiling all the day for? The answer of the average man will suit me for the moment. That answer will be, I am working for my living. Perfectly right, but what do you want to live for? Why should you endeavor to support your life and keep it? You have been overwhelmed with the stress and strain of actual physical and mental toil, and you are away to the mountains, to the sea for rest. Why are you going for rest? Why do you want rest? I ask. That I may regain my strength. For what? Cross-examine yourself and see the meaning of your activity. Analyze your own wishing and desire, and see what inspiration lies at the back of it. If by His infinite grace and by the indwelling of the Holy Christ Himself, at the back of all the activity and of all desire and all speech there is the perpetual aspiration, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," then every act, every thought, is prayer. "To labor is to pray" they say. That depends. If your labor is merely for the making of your own name and fortune, if your labor is to build up your own reputation and to gratify your own sensual desires, then to labor is not to pray. If the reason of this day's toil is the maintenance of a life that is God's, all the forces of which are at His disposal to work His will according to His own appointment, then that life is prayer, and the mountain climb, the rest day by the sea, the toil in the shop and office, the drudgery of professional routine, and the agony of life, all are prayer.

"They ought always to pray, and not to faint." If we do not pray always, we never pray. The man who makes prayer a scheme by which occasionally he tries to get something for himself has not learned the deep, profound secret of prayer. Prayer is life passionately wanting, wishing, desiring God's triumph. Prayer is life striving, toiling everywhere and everywhen for that ultimate victory. When men so pray they do not faint. They mount up with wings as eagles, they run without weariness, they tramp the hardest, roughest road, and do not faint.

My desire tonight has been to arrest irreverent and unintelligent prayer, to indicate a line of contrast which will reveal to men the fact that prayer is infinitely larger than we have often thought it to be. I charge upon you my comrades in this life of faith, do not degrade prayer to a low standard of experience, or make it that by which you attempt to gain things—and mark the startling language of Scripture—that you may spend them on your own lusts. "Ye have not because ye ask not," or "ye have not because ye ask amiss." What is it to ask amiss? To ask for things that I may spend them on my own desires. That is praying that is not answered. Men "ought always to pray, and not to faint." I have come near fainting often. I have fainted mentally, spiritually. The fault is mine. I pray that I may learn the infinite lesson of Jesus that God is other than the unjust judge,

and that my method with Him may be other than that of the importunate widow, and that if I do but know what prayer really is, I live homed in omnipotence, and I need never faint by the way. May this strength be ours.

Luke 18:14. Exaltation And Humbling.

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Exaltation And Humbling.

Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 18:14

This is Christ's application of His own parable. Whatever other suggestiveness it may have, it is quite certain that here we are at the heart of the teaching. Most of the local color has faded from the picture; the temple has gone, and therefore prayers therein have ceased; the Pharisee and the publican have changed their names. The principles revealed in the parable abide until this hour; the man who exalts himself is still among us, though the form of his prayer may be altered; the sin-stricken soul still humbles himself and uses the identical prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; and Christ still watches both, and pronounces exactly the same judgment, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The passion for perfection is in every life. Many men give up the search after it in despair. Many have wrong conceptions of what perfection is. Many others are seeking by false means to attain it. The passion for it, nevertheless, is found in every life.

The more conscious a man is of the strange and subtle forces within his own life; the more conscious he is of the complexity of his own nature; the more he is surprised by the dawning lights that break out of his own life, or by the shadows which reveal the possibilities of his own evil; the more he is conscious of the conflict within his own personality; the more that man is conscious also of the possibility of some high and noble destiny; the more that man hungers after realization. We all desire exaltation in the true sense of the word. None of us desires to come to the humbling of defeat, disaster, despair.

Listen to the voice within; the voice of your own life. It will startle you. It will inspire you. It will fill you with despair. It will sing the song of your possibilities. It will change the dirge of your helplessness. Such listening will make you desire the fulfilment of your life, the realization of possibilities that are within you. Then, this is the word of Christ to you, "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Whoso shall take the business of his own life into his own hands, and attempt to realize it according to his own way and his own wisdom, shall ruin it; but whoso shall recognize that his life is so wonderful a thing that he himself cannot know it, cannot legislate for it, cannot realize it, and shall humble himself according to the true law of that life, that man shall find it, that man shall come to life, not foreign to his own nature, but to the realization of what God meant him to be when God made him man.

What then is the supreme sin of all life? It is that of self-exaltation. All the sins of man's life are the issue of this sin; not lust, slavery to drink, or lying, or any of the specific sins which we so often denounce, these are not the sins for which a man is lost. They are the symptoms of a deeper sin, the evidences and activities of a profounder malady. What is that deeper sin, that profounder malady? Self-exaltation. The essence of sin is revealed in this phrase of Jesus; for remember, according to the perpetual teaching of Jesus, according to the whole message of revealed religion, self-exaltation means the exclusion of God; not necessarily intellectually, or not even necessarily emotionally, but volitionally so far as the actualities and activities of life are concerned; self-exaltation means the exiling of God, the dethronement of God, the forgetfulness of God, rebellion against God. That is the root sin. Self-exaltation is manifested in human life in different ways. It manifests itself in self-satisfaction. It manifests itself in a spirit of independence. It manifests itself in an attitude of definite and positive rebellion against religion. It manifests itself in a pride which fears to make confession of Christ and admit obedience to the law of God.

Self-exaltation, as self-satisfaction, is the peculiar sin of moral and respectable people. I do not want to be misunderstood. There is value in what the man of the world calls morality. When presently we have left the Sabbath day, and the sanctuary, and are back again in the market place, we must inevitably recognize the value of that lower level of morality which does not take into account the spirituality of human life, but which does avoid offence against human laws. That morality has its place, it has its value. But now we are in the presence of God; we are attempting to deal with things in the light of eternity; and as in the consciousness of that eternal and awe-inspiring presence we attempt to think of our lives, the moralities and respectabilities of common everyday life are out of sight, nay, they become in thousands of cases a severe and dangerous peril. Self-satisfaction is born of the fact that men have set up a standard of perfection lower than the Divine; and that the standard of perfection they have set up is the result of comparison of themselves with other men, and forgetfulness of the Divine purpose in their human life.

Of that attitude the pharisee is the supreme example. The expression of self-satisfaction is that of despising others, holding in contempt the man who has descended to the depths. You who were never drunk, look with profound contempt upon the man drunk in the gutter. That you would not do if you held the highest standard of morality. That you will never do again when you have seen what is God's purpose in your own life. That you will never do when you have come into living fellowship with the great ideal of life presented to men by this Lord Christ of ours. You hold in contempt the man who has descended to vulgarity because your own standard is a low, base, mean standard.

When we cease comparing ourselves with other men, and compare ourselves with God's meaning when He made us, then we begin to discover the unutterable failure of the life that can be satisfied with such morality, and has never attempted to enter into the spacious inheritance which includes eternity and God, the things that never pass and perish.

Self-exaltation is manifested also as independence. Independence is the peculiar sin of those who are gifted with physical strength and with mental acumen. It is the sin of the man who takes his way from Monday morning to Saturday night, makes his plans, carries them out, accomplishes his purpose and never gets tired. Is that an evil thing? By no means. Let every man remember that is something to be thankful for. Ah, but there is the sin!! The man I am referring to is not thankful. He

makes his boast that he has never been helped in his life, that he has had to carve his own way, that he is a self-made man. That attitude is born of that man's failure to recognize that God is the Author of all the possibilities and powers in human nature. That man's attitude is the result of the fact that he has forgotten God. Moses long ago warned the Hebrew people not to forget that the very strength of their right hand, and their wit and wisdom, were gifts bestowed upon them. These men forget that the very substance of their everyday life with which they are doing business and are successful in this world are gifts bestowed upon them from above.

The expression of such independence is the prayerless life. This man never prays. He may bend the knee in the service of the sanctuary, a great many men do that who never pray. There can be bending of the knee but no bowing of the spirit. There can be repetition of words but no prayer. That is a life of self-exaltation.

Again, self-exaltation manifests itself as definite rebellion. This is the peculiar sin of the licentious. It is born of antagonism to Divine interference in human will. It expresses itself in contempt for religion and in attacks made upon religion. I am not speaking of the attitude of the man who has come face to face with the spectres of the mind, who is honestly facing intellectual difficulty in the realm of faith. I am thinking of the man who attacks religion, who laughs at Christianity, who attempts to undermine the faith of other men by his ribaldry. Attacks upon morality are always evidences of immorality in those who make them. A man objects to religion because he is in revolt against restraint, and that because restraint demands that he shall not commit the sin he is committing.

Once again. There is a pride of heart which is of the very essence of self-exaltation. It is the peculiar sin of people who are perfectly familiar with the will of God, perfectly familiar with the requirements of Jesus Christ, who know the evangel and know the terms of human salvation, and not only know them but believe in them. In what sense can these people be charged with pride? In that while the gospel is to them a pleasant song, they have never obeyed its commands, they have never yielded themselves to its truth. Over and over again the reason is to be discovered in a pride of heart which is born of the fear of the opinions of other men; there are hundreds of young people in business houses who would be Christians but they dare not. There are scores of people in this West End who would be Christians, but they dare not. I would like to say in passing that I cannot understand that attitude of mind. I will try to be sympathetic with it. I will do my very best to urge men to abandon it, but I cannot understand it. The air is full of political strife, but there is no man who is a man who is ashamed, on the proper occasion, in the proper circumstances, in private or in public life, to avow his political conviction. In the name of God, what is it that makes a man ashamed to avow in private or in public that he is a Godly man, a Christian man? Wherein lies the explanation of this mystery? It is self-exaltation. To confess Christ is to share the reproach of Christ, for the offence of the Cross still abides. We have gilded the cross, we even wear it as an ornament—alas that we should, but we do—but we have not taken the offence away, the sting is still there. Of that men are afraid, and this pride keeps them from the Christ, and therefore from the fulfilment of the meaning of their own lives.

All such self-exaltation is followed by humbling; and in every case the humbling is the necessary outcome of the exaltation. The humbling is not a capricious act whereby God does punish a man as in any sense apart from the folly of his own choice and activity. The humbling is the necessary

outcome of that activity and of that attitude.

The humbling of the self-satisfied will consist in the discovery of self in the light of Divine requirement. The man that is perfectly satisfied with himself because he is no worse than other men comes then, when the light breaks upon him and he sees himself in the light of what God meant him to be, to the experience of humbling. It was Robbie Burns who said—

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us

To see oursels as ithers see us.

Oh would some power the giftie gie us, to see ourselves as God sees us. That is far more important. I do not mean now, although that also is true, that we might see our failure as God sees it, but that we might see our possibilities as God sees them. I sometimes feel I would sacrifice life itself if I could but give to my brothers a vision of the glory of their own lives in the purpose and economy of God. There are so many who do not understand the dignity of their own manhood, who never see that it is given to them to enter into fellowship in travail and pain with God for the redemption of the race and the remaking of the world! Oh the tragedy of it! When a man comes to see what God meant him to be, and puts by the side of it the things that have satisfied him, his morality, his respectability by the standards of men, he comes to the most terrible humbling.

The humbling of the independent comes in the discovery of failure resulting from refusal to seek Divine guidance. There are men here who understand that. There are men here who have come to that humbling, but thank God it has been their salvation. Do you remember that hour in which you came to see the unutterable failure of your life simply because you had not sought Divine wisdom? There are tragedies of pain and suffering that come to us mysteriously, and for which we can give no account; we believe these God overrules also; but how much tragedy there is in human life because men do not seek to know the will of God. Oh the tragedies in human lives because men do not ask God what He wants them to do, whether He wants them to be ministers or carpenters. There are tragedies in the ministry because men choose to enter it as a profession, and then find it to be hell, as every man does who enters for that reason. There are tragedies in the workshop, because men ought to have been preaching, or ought to have been on the distant field, and did not ask God. High dignity and noble fulfilment may be ours in the humblest walk of life. I read a life of Garfield once; a wonderful life, with a wretched title, "From Log Cabin to White House." That title suggested that there was something derogatory in the log cabin, and more of dignity in the White House. That is not so. We can fulfil the function of eternity in a log cabin if God means us to be there, but we cannot if He wants us in the White House. The trouble is we fail in the log cabin or the White House if we forget God. The humbling comes to a man when he says, "I have played the fool" because I forgot God, and thought that by my own wit I could carve out my own career and make a success of my own life.

The humbling of rebellion against God will come in the discovery of the disaster resulting from that rebellion. I need not pause to argue that. You know it. May God make you true to the knowledge. You know perfectly well that the sin which is the real reason of your attack upon religion is unmaking you. It is almost vulgarity to argue it; the hidden sin which makes you laugh at religion, is working paralysis and ruin in your life. You can tear our parable out, fling the New Testament away, shut the Bible, but you cannot escape from that. The humbling of the man who, through

continued sin, turns his back upon and opposes religion, comes in the discovery of the disaster that follows upon his own line of conduct. The humbling of pride will come in that dread and yet great hour when the Son of Man shall come in His own glory and in the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him," and then, in Christ's own words, "Whoso is ashamed of Me, of him will I be ashamed." The Son of Man is coming. I have no anxiety and no care to dispute now with you as to how or when He is coming. He is coming into His Kingdom, He is coming into His glory, He is coming to vindication, He is coming to triumph. If you are ashamed of Him while the conflict is one, He will be ashamed of you in that day. Not that He will indulge in reprisals and say, "Because you treated Me so I will treat you thus," but because your shame and fear of Him today will so undo you that He cannot recognize or receive you in the day of His ultimate triumph. You will be out of place in the society of righteousness and truth and loveliness; for you will be untrue, unrighteous, unlovely, if after having heard the winsome music of His call you decline to crown Him, and for fear and shame turn your back upon His high ideals, and upon the matchless music of His great evangel.

Now turn to the other side of the declaration for a closing word. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." What is self-humbling? This is it, "The publican... would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

That is first a taking of the right place, "God be merciful unto me." I draw your attention not to the petition. "Be merciful," not even to the description "a sinner," but to this revelation of the true relation of human life, God and me. There is no room for a third person there. There is no priest there, thank God. There is no prophet there. The preacher is not there. He is done and out of the way. The real business between the soul and God begins when I have finished; God and me! Every man who will come as far as that tonight will win his own life. That will correct all the false attitudes and outlooks; God and me! Whether you will have it so or not, it is so. You are quite alone with God. How I love to linger on this. I think it is a recent revelation to me, the fact that a man in a crowd is all by himself with God! Oh, the glory of it! I sometimes guess secrets through the windows of your eyes, but at last I cannot tell. Thank God He has secured the loneliness of every man with Himself.

Then follows the necessary confession of truth. I am a sinner. Measure yourself among your fellow men and you will stand erect. Compare yourself with the average man and you will proclaim your morality. But get alone with God, think of God, of His high holiness, His love—and there is nothing that brings conviction of sin to the heart as quickly as the real consciousness of the love of God—and you will say I am a sinner.

Then what? Praying the true prayer, "Be merciful unto me." No demanding from God your rights. I am weary to death of the men who tell me what they would do if they were God, and talk of their rights in the presence of God. What right has the barren fig tree to object if the proprietor should say, Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? "Be merciful to me" is the only plea.

One other thing. When a man gets there and is conscious of his sin and breathes that prayer, he is giving expression to faith. No man will ever say that to God, save as there is in his soul the activity of faith in God. You will never ask blind fate to be merciful to you. You will never ask a "double-faced somewhat," consisting of intelligence and power working in cooperation, to be merciful to you! It would be no use. You will never pray to dynamite to be merciful to you. When a

man says "Be merciful," he has heard the music of the Divine heart. Such a prayer is the expression of faith. That is the humbling for which Christ calls.

He says that if a man shall so humble himself, he shall be exalted. What is the exaltation? Christ gives it in the parable, and therefore I need no speculation. "I say unto you, This man," the publican, "went down to his house justified rather than the other." Do you say justification was a Pauline word? I ask you where he learned it. He learned it there. It is Christ's word! What is justification? God's answer to faith. What is that? The outflowing of mercy in reply to the cry of a man who claimed no morality but flung himself upon the compassion of his God. Justification, what is it? The sinner is a sinner no more; he is pardoned, cleansed, reinstated, remade! Justification, what is it? The realization of the position you assumed, God and me. The answer of God is, "Yes, you and I will have fellowship one with another!" Justification is the exaltation; forgiveness of sins, and the consciousness of that forgiveness in the soul, not by argument but by the direct touch of the Saviour God. Do you know it, my brother? If you do, it is a little difficult not to break out into song,

My God is reconciled,

His pardoning voice I hear,

He owns me for His child

I can no longer fear.

It is possible to stand outside that hymn and criticize it, laugh at it, philosophize concerning it, until you say there is no meaning in it; but you cannot take it out of my heart, out of my consciousness, you cannot take it out of my soul; the forgiveness of sins by the outflowing of infinite mercy, mercy that I know experimentally, and consequent fellowship with God. That is justification.

What then? Then the finding of my own life. When God made me by first creation—for He did make me in my first creation—He made me for some purpose and when I get back to Him He realizes it. "He that loseth his life shall find it."

Shall we not humble ourselves before God? Shall we not isolate ourselves with Him and let Him put upon us His measurement; and then yield ourselves to His mercy, casting ourselves upon His compassion. If we do, then all the strange mystery of our own life will be explained; not immediately, but progressively and gradually; through discipline and by patience, we shall work out our own salvation because it is God that worketh in us both to will and to work of His good pleasure.

May we find our way to Christ in humbling, and so to the crown and throne of realized life.

Luke 22:37; Hebrews 7:26 Christ And Sinners--Identified And Separate.

Luke 22:37; Hebrews 7:26

Christ And Sinners--Identified And Separate.

... He was reckoned with transgressors:...

Luke 22:37

... separated from sinners....

Hebrews 7:26

These two statements concerning Christ are not contradictory; they are complementary. To understand them correctly is to see that one is the necessary outcome of the other in the case of the Person, the imperial Person, concerning Whom they were both written. To appreciate their unity is to discover the very heart of the great gospel of the grace of God. The first words were spoken by the Lord Himself. He was making quotation from the ancient prophecy claiming the fulfilment of the prediction in Himself. The last words from the letter to the Hebrews constitute a statement made by one who was showing the superiority of the Priesthood of Jesus over all priesthoods which had preceded. The first statement "... He was reckoned with transgressors..." refers ultimately to His death. The second statement refers finally to His indestructible life. The first statement finds its fulness of meaning in the Cross. The second statement has its ultimate demonstration of truth in the Resurrection and the Ascension and the session in glory of the selfsame One Who was crucified. Taken together, they reveal the method by which Jesus Christ became the Saviour of men. "... reckoned with transgressors,..." but "... separated from sinners...."

I think perhaps the truth may thus be stated. Christ's separation from sinners in identification with them, made possible their separation from sin in identification with Him. "... reckoned with transgressors,..." He came into their midst but was always by infinite distances separated from them; but by the identification with them of the separated One, He made possible their separation from sin as He brings them into new and living identification with Himself.

Now, because that seems to me to be the very heart of the gospel of the grace of God for weary and sinning souls, let us reverently consider it. First, we will take these statements as declaring the truth about Him, Who was at once "... reckoned with transgressors..." and yet "... separated from sinners...." Then, we will consider them as revealing the relation creating the salvation which is at the disposal of man. Finally, we shall see that these two statements not merely indicate something true more than nineteen hundred years ago, but true here and now as they reveal the perpetual method of Jesus with men, that of identification with sinners in separation from them, that by such means He may bring them into separation from the thing that blights and spoils and ruins, by living identification with Himself.

First, then, let us take these two statements quite separately. "... He was reckoned with transgressors...." He was "... separated from sinners...."

"He was reckoned with transgressors..." in His place in the world. He was reckoned with transgressors in His own choice of companionships. And in the economy of the grace of God, He was reckoned with sinners even unto death.

"... He was reckoned with transgressors..." in His place in the world. Born of a woman, He so entered into the very life of man, coming into the currents of that life in personal and close and intimate identification. To use the very graphic phrase of a New Testament writer, He "took hold" upon our human nature, made it part of Himself, made Himself part of it.

Then even by the outward sign and symbol of human process of the Roman taxing and the imperial counting, He was reckoned, counted among sinners. There went out a decree from Caesar that all the world should be taxed. In the process of the Roman taxing and the imperial counting. He was in the world, one more added to the number of the Roman census, another life added to the great whole. He was one of the crowd, so small and insignificant that none knew of Him, or would have known of Him apart from heavenly revelation of His coming in songs of angels to the waiting shepherds and the shining of a star to men who sincerely gazed out into the heavens and attempted to unlock their great and profound secrets. Apart from these supernatural signs, He was One amongst the rest, reckoned amongst them. It is very wonderful how Jesus Christ has sanctified all life, even the taking of a census. There is no phase of human life, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand, but that the sanctifying touch of Jesus is upon it. It is such a prosaic thing, this taking of a census! Think on the morning when you write your name down that He "... was reckoned among transgressors,..." conformed to the economy of man, part of the great bulk of sinning, suffering, sorrowing souls; reckoned among sinners, even in the commonplace of His placing in the world.

He was reckoned among sinners strangely and wonderfully enough in the choice of His companions. Think of those boyhood days at Nazareth! Remember that He was reckoned among the children in Nazareth, and never believe the picture that shows you the boy Jesus with a halo. All such pictures misinterpret Him. He wore no halo other than the sweet halo of a disposition strong and gentle, heroic and tender. They loved Him in Nazareth. Until He began to preach, Nazareth never tried to fling Him from the brow of the hill into the valley. I read that He "increased... in favour with God and man"; He was one of them, just one of the children of Nazareth. They said later, "Is not this... the son of Joseph...?" It was a mistake, but they were to be excused, for "... He was reckoned among transgressors,..." one of themselves all the way through. One of themselves also, presently, when passing from youth into manhood, He worked for His living as a carpenter. There is infinite music in that statement to all who toil for their living. He was one of us, working, toiling, tempted, trusting; reckoned amongst us, reckoned amongst us by heaven's decree of infinite love, reckoned amongst us by earth's observation, reckoned amongst us by hell's attacks; one of us, "... reckoned with transgressors...."

But, presently, He left Nazareth, left the carpenter's shop, left the quietness and the seclusion and came into public life. Now, let us see His friends. Who are the men who were His companions and gathered about Him? Let me be careful here to use only the statements of Scripture. Who were the people that He received unto Himself? It is very difficult to translate the word. We talk today in

certain sections of society of "receiving." What is it to receive, according to the word here, according to its real meaning? We may read it, "He receiveth sinners to Himself"; that is, He takes them to His heart, He takes them to His secret love, He takes them to His confidence. That is the thing that startled and appalled the whited sepulchers who pretended to be teaching God's law and God's Kingdom. He received sinners; sat down at the table and ate with them. He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

Let me tell you what so eminent a scholar as Dr. Bruce once said about this. Speaking to Mr. Samuel Chadwick, he said, "You know, Chadwick, that word 'friend' is not good enough; it does not really catch the meaning of the word behind it." Mr. Chadwick looked at him and said, "What would you put there?" "Well," he said, "the face of the matter is, the only word that catches it is the word the boys use—'chum.'" He is the chum of publicans and sinners. I tell you who said that as you might object to it if I said it. He so lived and acted that these men who stood for righteousness—the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees—said, "That man is the companion, the chum, the intimate friend of publicans and sinners."

"... He was reckoned with sinners..." by His own deliberate choice. Oh, if we did but know Him, how surprised we would be! If we did but understand this radiant Son of God, how startled we should be if we watched Him! The scribes and Pharisees would have been more astonished if they had known Him better. Imperial mentally, He might have been the chosen companion of the savants of His time. Imperial artistically, He might have taught painters how to express in colors the visions which they saw. He might have whispered symphonies to waiting musicians as He has been doing ever since. But He passed the learned and the great and found the sinners and made friends of them. "... He was reckoned with transgressors...."

What did this identification with sinners finally mean? First, by way of incarnation He was reckoned in the human census as one of a crowd. Then by chosen companionships, so that He became the butt and scorn of the unrighteous and blind teachers by whom He was surrounded. We never understand all that means until we see Him at last on the rough Roman gibbet. With whom was He there? With political prisoners? No! With those guilty of first-class misdemeanors—what a curious phrase that is, as though there could be a first-class criminal!—No! Numbered with whom, then? Oh, my masters, would God we could see it, with robbers, thieves, or to take the wholly expressive word of our translation, "malefactors," evil-doers, numbered with them, in the midst of them, by His own choice! Listen to the gibe of the men in front of the Cross, to the cruel, devilish, cynical, self-satisfied sneer, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save...." Oh, how they lied! He could have saved Himself. He could have come down from the Cross. He could have called for ten legions of angels who would have swept the unholy mob that mocked Him into hell.

Yet, again, He could not, Why not? Because He had chosen to be "... reckoned with transgressors,..." and in His dying there was a sacramental symbolism in those hands outstretched between two men—the refuse of humanity, malefactors. He was reckoned with transgressors!

But He was "... separated from sinners,..." first in His character, therefore in His conduct, and finally, beyond the brutality of the Cross, in the marvel of the Resurrection.

"... separated from sinners..." first of all in His character. When He was coming into the world, in one of the wonderful New Testament songs concerning Him, it was said that God had visited and redeemed His people in order that they should serve God in holiness and righteousness before Him all their days. Mark those two words, "holiness and righteousness"—not two things but two manifestations of the same quality and quantity and fact. What is holiness? Rightness of character. What is righteousness? Rightness of conduct. Holiness refers to the inward, righteousness to the outward. Holiness is something internal. Righteousness is something external. They belong to each other. Apart from holiness there is no righteousness; apart from righteousness there is no holiness. That is to say, if a man sing to me of his holiness and I see no rightness in conduct, I deny the holiness he claims. These two things are always together, and we have perfectly learned their meaning in human history from this Man.

In these facts He was separated from sinners—reckoned with them but always separated from them. Separated in that character of holiness, separated from them because He was a Man of true conceptions, of pure desires. These are the two things that underlie all life: the conception which is intellectual, the desire which is emotional. These are the things that create the volitional, drive the will, and help it to make its choices. If I can only find out what your conception of anything is, if I can only find out what your desire is, then I know which way you will choose. That is the revelation of your character. I can only learn it as I wait for the activity. I trace back from the external activity to the internal character, and there in the making of the character I have the conception, the desire, the choosing. That has been the trouble in my life, has it not in yours? My conceptions have been false, my thought of things has been wrong. I wish I could put this into one sentence. Every sin committed externally is the outcome of a sin committed internally. Whatever I do that is wrong in conduct is due to the fact that I am wrong in my underlying conception of things.

But this Man sat down at the table with men of impure conceptions, of untrue thinking, and He was of true thinking and pure conception. He saw everything in its true relationship to everything else. There was nothing distorted in His outlook, nothing out of place. True in His thinking, in His conception, and pure therefore in all His desires and so separated infinite distances from the men whom He made His friends, from the men among whom He sat and with whom He ate. Reckoned amongst them for He sat with them at the board; separated from them by the distance between high heaven and deep hell.

Thus He was not only apart in character, which is holiness, but also in conduct, which is righteousness. Never deceiving, never oppressing, never taking advantage of weakness. I will not argue it. We know it.

But my text having all that as supposition, yet in absolute fact, makes a statement that goes infinitely beyond all. Now for one moment let us look at the context. "For such a high priest became us, holy,..." that is the first thing; "... guileless,..." that is, without deceit, without crookedness; "... undefiled,..." that is, not taking into His character any defilement by which He was surrounded in other people. Now, hear this, and mark the continuity, "... separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." What, then, is the real meaning of this passage, "... separated from sinners..."? Not separate, but separated. The final thought is of the Resurrection. He Who had been reckoned among transgressors unto death, and yet had been separated from transgressors in all His life, was at last separated from sinners by the act of God, when He took

Him out of the midst of them, out of the grave into which they had put Him, separated Him from them and made Him higher than the heavens. That is the final fact in Christ's separation from sinners.

The Resurrection of Jesus in some senses is the severest, the profoundest condemnation of the sinner. In some senses, when God raised Jesus, He said to the listening race, "this is the Man of My choice. This is the Man Who satisfies My heart. This is the Man Who has accomplished My purpose. This is the Man I choose to come back to Me out of death. I separate Him from sinners and make Him higher than the Heavens."

Reckoned with transgressors by the stoop of the incarnation, by the reckoning of human governments, by the choice of His own free will in friendship, by the mystery of His passion in the economy of God. Separated from sinners in the purity of His character, in the rectitude of His conduct, and therefore in the splendor of His crowning.

And now, I pray you notice how these two things create the gospel. The gospel at once smites me with condemnation and heals me with salvation. The gospel makes me know my sin as the law by Moses never did. The gospel frees me from sin as the law by Moses never could. This paradox and contradiction of the great Evangel only has its explanation as we see that both these things are true concerning Jesus. Because of His separation from sinners He was powerful; because of His identification with sinners He brought that power into touch with the sinner; and wherever the sinner consents to unification with Him, He communicates to the sinner the power which is His by separation from the sinner.

Separation is the cause of power. Identification is the contact of power. Unification is the communication of power.

Separation is the cause of power. We must come down from the Son of God who is infinite—and consider finite things if we would understand. Tennyson sang about Sir Galahad:

His strength was as the strength of ten,

Because his heart was pure.

Look through that little window of poetry and imagination and see this tremendous truth flaming in letters of fire. Purity from sin is that which creates power to help men beaten by sin. Look at it in your own life. If you want to help a sinning man, the measure of your ability to help him is the measure in which you do not sin yourself. We know perfectly well it is utterly useless for us to say, "Be pure," to a man if there be impurity in our own heart. Fathers—God Almighty say it to me!—it is no use telling your boy to be pure if you are impure. Power to make other people pure consists in personal purity. Now we are all agreed. Separate from sinners so that no taint of impurity was on Him, blessed, holy, perfect Man of Nazareth, and in that purity which man misinterpreted and hated lay the power by which He lifts men. Said the Pharisees, "This Man receiveth sinners...." Now, do let us be fair, even to Pharisees, though it is very hard. What did they mean? They meant, "You cannot touch pitch without being defiled." They meant, "If this Man is going to make a friend of sinners, He Himself will become a sinner." The Pharisees were quite right, they were perfectly correct, if I had been the one they were talking about, or you. If I make a companion of sinning men, I shall be contaminated. Young man, you have just come up to the great city. You have been

a month in the city. Tell me, who are your friends. If your friends are impure, for God's sake and your soul's sake, quit them now. They will make you impure.

But there is a difference in this Man. Why is it if I make a friend of sinners, I shall become contaminated? Because in me there is sin, there is that to which sin appeals; there is corruption calling to corruption and answering back to corruption. But in Jesus purity was not negative. It was positive, and so it was power, and when He took a poor, wretched sinner to His heart, and sat and ate with him, instead of the defilement of the sinner spoiling Him, the virtue of His purity lifted the sinner. "... reckoned with transgressors,..." but, Hallelujah!—separated from them! In that infinite separation of His purity lay the dynamic by which He was able by contact to lift the man who was impure.

That leads to the next thing. If He had not been "... reckoned with transgressors...", His separation from them could never have saved them. His purity cannot save a man until He identifies Himself with that man. You may be pure as the snow, and if you stay on the mountain top where pure snows are, you will never make pure some loathsome thing that lies in the valley. You may be pure, but if you shut yourself up within convent walls and never touch the sinning masses without, you cannot help to make them pure. The greatest saint is not the person who cultivates his or her own life within such convent walls by severe austerity. The greatest saint is the slum sister in the Salvation Army who puts her sweet womanhood against the surging sorrows of her fallen sisters. Where did we learn this lesson? From the Man separated by the distance of the infinite snows, Who came down and lived among sinning men, made friends of them—yes, I will say it, made chums of them. He took them to His heart in an embrace of tenderness and brotherhood and so helped them to feel the tides of His purity and to sob out upon His dear and wounded heart the sorrows of all their sin. "... reckoned with,..." and therefore by such contact able to bring the power of His purity into touch with men.

Yet He could only finish that great work which He began in life by dying. How far must He go with me if He is to correct my impurity by His purity? He must go all the way. He must go on and on until in His soul He fulfils the prophetic word that was always so mysterious, "... the pains of hell gat hold upon Me..." May God have mercy on us if we lose sight of that Cross and its deepest meaning. Oh, brutal Cross of Calvary, oh, hateful Cross; but it is my Cross—that is the place of my sin. This selfish heart of mine ought to be transfixed with wounds. These evil hands of mine ought to be nailed there. These unholy feet of mine, swift to run in the ways of evil, ought to be there.

In my place condemned He stood,

Sealed my pardon with His blood,

Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

"Reckoned" with me there when the pains of hell enwrapped the soul, and the darkness of the hiding of the face of God broke upon the spirit; reckoned with me there! That is the mystery of salvation, and because of that, if I come to that Cross, and coming to it say,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee!

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save me from its guilt and power,

then by such reckoning with me in the power of His infinite separation from me, He takes my guilt and gives me His purity; or in the far finer and more majestic and wonderful language of Scripture, "... He was made to be sin on our behalf: that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The last thing I want to say is this—that was not merely His method historically; it is His method now; it is His method here. Then what? He received sinners, He ate with sinners, He was the friend of sinners, He was without sin. And tonight, what? Are you a sinner? I will leave the whole congregation now, except the man who says, "Yes." I have no gospel if you say, "No." I am not here except to preach to the people who are sinners, because I have been ordained by the One Who said, "... I came not to call the righteous but sinners." I have no message for the righteous man. Are you a sinner? Is the burden of it on your soul? Is the filth of it on your character? Is the poison of it in your blood? God help you, my brother! Did you creep in here tonight thankful that nobody knew all about you? Are you sitting somewhere in the midst of these people, a leper, and conscious of it? He is by your side. If there should happen to be in this house a hundred righteous people who need no repentance, He is not with them, He is with you. These are not distant things that have passed, these are present living realities. He is down there by the man who is an outcast from his own self-respect, by the side of the man abhorring himself, loathing himself, and yet sinning.

He is calling to you. Oh, He is unlike you, absolutely unlike you, pure as the white light in which God dwells. Oh yes, you say, "I am afraid of the white light." My brother, the white light in which God dwells is the red, passionate love of His heart, and if the light of God enwrap you until you are afraid as it burns to save, the Man is with you tonight—this Man, Christ, God-Man, mysterious and wonderful, calls to you, but He is unlike you.

Now, what will you do? Will you turn from all His pure presence reproves, and will you yield to all His pure presence approves? That is the final question. You know your sin as you have never known it before. Will you turn from it?

To what shall I turn?

To Him.

To what in Him?

To His purity. Will you choose it?

Ah me, but that is the one thing I cannot do!

Behold Him again,

In His feet and hands are wound-prints,

And His side;

and know this, that as you turn from the impurity His separateness reproves to the purity that separateness approves; because He was "... reckoned with transgressors,..." because He still is near to every sinning heart, by the mystery of His death He will blot out your transgressions like a thick cloud, He will cleanse your inner life of the very forces that have ruined it, and He will make you like Himself.

Will you let Him? More marvelous, more mysterious, more overwhelming than anything else is this final fact to which we ever have to come. He stands and waits and asks, and you can say "No!" I beseech you as though God did beseech you. I pray you in Christ's stead, "... be ye reconciled to God," and be reconciled to God by yielding your life to Christ, Who was "... reckoned with transgressors...", "... separated from sinners...", and therefore is the supreme and perfect Saviour of sinning men.

Luke 24:32. The Burning Of Heart.

Luke 24:32.

The Burning Of Heart.

Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the scriptures?

Luke 24:32

Burning of heart. That, I take it, is the supreme need of the Church today. We have principles, but we very largely lack passion. I believe that our understanding of Jesus Christ is more spacious and correct than ever before in the history of the Christian Church. I do not mean to say that we are not still making mistakes concerning Him, for let it be remembered that He can be appreciated only by that whole Church of the firstborn of which He is the Head. No man can ever know all there is to be known concerning Christ, and no age will ever be able perfectly to comprehend the height and breadth and length and depth of the riches of His grace and His glory.

Yet, in spite of all the failure of the Christian Church, there has been slow and sure progress in her understanding of Christ. I repeat, therefore, that we have more spacious and more correct comprehension of Him than ever before. Yet sometimes I am afraid that our sense of emotion and fire was never less. We are afraid of anything in the form of passionate enthusiasm, lest we should hear some cynical grumbler on the outside edge of the crowd murmur the dreaded word "fanaticism." I am sometimes inclined to think that the "Jesus, Lover of my soul," of whom we so often sing, is standing in the midst of His people sighing after their lost first love. I am not pleading for anything like an attempt to manufacture passion which is not real. Painted fire never warms anyone. There may be a great deal of noise, which is not significant of power. There may be a great deal of protestation of love, while the overwhelming and majestic passion is absent. I am not suggesting that a single person in this audience should go away to talk more of love for Jesus Christ. I do say that the Church sadly lacks burning of heart, fire, fervor, passion, devotion.

The story which I read to you, and from the midst of which my text is taken, is most interesting, and I venture to think most suggestive in the light of these opening words. It is one of the post-resurrection stories, and we are still living in post-resurrection times. Christ as He appeared to these men was the same as before His crucifixion, and yet utterly and forever different. We are the followers of that selfsame Christ in the identity and disparity which characterized His relation to men after the cross. Such a story as this has a very great value for us, because these men were exactly in the condition which I have just described. They had lost their devotion—not their love altogether, not their faith, save in some senses, but their devotion—their passion, their fervor, and their fire.

I shall ask you to think with me first of what this story reveals to us of these two men as to their possession and their lack. I shall then ask you to look with me at the Christ, as to His quest, His

method, and His victory, all of which is not merely that we may contemplate an old story, but that we may find its new, present, living application to our own souls.

Looking back, then, to the road that leads to Emmaus, and to the two men, one named Cleopas, the other a nameless disciple, I ask you carefully to observe what they still possessed. They still loved their Lord. They still believed in Him. Jesus had said to Peter not very long before His crucifixion, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat"—that is, the whole of you, for there the pronoun is plural—"but I made supplication for thee,"—and though this pronoun is singular, no one imagines that all the rest were outside the prayer of Jesus—"that thy faith fail not." I am bold to say that that prayer of Jesus was answered. Peter's faith never failed. The faith of none of these men failed; I mean that peculiar quality of faith which saves a man. Their faith in Jesus did not fail. Their journey to Emmaus was not one of forgetfulness. They were still talking about Him and the things which had happened. Amid bitterness and disappointment, amid the darkness of disgrace, they still spoke a kind word for Him. When Jesus joined Himself to them they did not know Him, they did not suppose but that He was a stranger journeying the same way. He entered into conversation with them, and asked them what they were talking about, because they looked so sad; and they answered: "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And He said, with that fine art which characterized Him, in order to draw them out to confession, "What things?" Listen to their answer, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word."

That is their testimony to Him. They had not lost their faith in Him. They had not lost their love for Him, and even though He had been beaten, crucified, and is dead, they loved Him. They loved His memory. They believed that He meant well, that He did good, that His ministry was a blessed ministry, and they were journeying toward Emmaus with faith in Him and love for Him still in their hearts.

Yet listen to them for another moment, and you will discover what they lacked. They had lost their hope, and they had lost their confidence in His ability to do what they thought He was going to do. Their attitude toward Jesus was the attitude of men who should say, "Oh, we believe in Him, we love Him, He meant well, but He has not succeeded." "We had hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." I pray you mark carefully the past tense. Their hope was gone. He meant to redeem Israel. He meant well, but He has been defeated. He tried but He failed. The hope which had been burning like a beacon before them in the days when He was still amongst them had died out into gray ashes; but they will not say anything unkind about Him. They love Him still, and still speak a tender word for Him. "He had tried to do something He could not. He was a good man, a loving man. He was a prophet mighty in deed and word, but there were things to which He was not equal. We had hoped that He would break the chain of our oppression and lift us back, out of our ruin, and redeem Israel and set up the Kingdom. We hoped—but it is all gone. We have lost our hope."

Consequently, there was a cooling of enthusiasm, and instead of tarrying in Jerusalem they had started for Emmaus, and there was sadness upon their faces, a lack of gladness in their tone. The fire was burning low. There was no passion, no vision, no virtue, no victory, no force, no fervor.

That is the picture of these men as they set their faces toward Emmaus, and it is largely the position of the Church today, as it seems to me. Personal loyalty to Jesus Christ is undoubted. It is impossible to meet with assemblies of God's people, or to meet with individuals anywhere, without finding men who still believe in Him personally, and yet there is manifest a very widespread cooling of the Church's passion, and a dying down upon the altar of the fires which blaze in the day of the conflict which makes for victory. We are not quite confident in His ability to do what we thought He was going to do. The movement seems so slow. The chariot wheels are tarrying, and the victory does not come. We are inwardly, if not confessedly, pessimistic, and this pessimism manifests itself in the prevalent consent to compare Him with others. We hang his name on the wall beside the names of others. We put some picture of Him in our galleries beside the pictures of other men, and we say, "Of course, He was easily first. We love Him. We admire His ethic. We admire His ideal, but He was sadly mistaken, and He took His way in semidarkness toward failure." We are comparing Him with others. We are modifying our conceptions of His victories. We are even allowing ourselves to read and discuss magazine articles which suggest that perhaps, after all, the religion of Buddha is more suited to Eastern lands than the religion of Jesus Christ. We are discussing the possibility of His ultimate triumph, and are asking whether, after all, the victories in Japan recently did not prove that another and a finer ethic is finding its way into the thinking of our age. And all unconsciously the fire of the Church is cooling. She is not so passionate as she used to be in her endeavor. She does not break into song so often, or sob in tears in the presence of the world's agony.

This attitude is born, not of the fact that we are individually less loyal to Jesus Christ, but of the fact that we are not quite sure whether the ancient psalmists were right who sang of His Kingdom extending to the ends of the earth. We are not sure, and are not perfectly at rest. He is so near to us, and yet we do not see Him. He is walking with us along the shadowy pathway, but our eyes are holden. There is today an appalling lack of the clear vision of the Christ which makes the step elastic and the spirit buoyant, and the outlook spacious, and the heart burn with fire and fervor and passion.

How does Christ deal with these men? For, after all, I have said we shall have to reduce this to individual application. We go back again to our story. If I am surprised, looking back over these centuries, at the attitude of the men, I freely confess I am far more surprised at Jesus. I am surprised at the wonder of His coming to these men. I know my confession of surprise is a revelation of the fact that I have not perfectly learned the lesson of His love. I know it, and yet I am surprised. If I may turn aside from the main line of my argument I would like to say to you, Be very much afraid of yourself if Jesus Christ is ceasing to surprise you. If you are losing that sense of amazement that startled you in the olden days there is something wrong in your life. He is always surprising us if we will but follow Him simply. He surprises us now by the fact that He comes to these men. Listen to His own estimate of them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe." That is not my criticism of them. That is His estimate of them, and He knew them. O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe; and yet He comes to them and joins Himself to them, and walks at their side, and deals with their foolishness, and stirs up the slow heart until it burns and flames. That is the grace of God, and I am amazed. It is a radiant revelation of the tenderness of His heart and of the strength of His love for us.

Why does He come? He comes because He is seeking love. It is there in those doubt-shadowed hearts, and He knows it, and He will come and renew it. He always seeks the beautiful. Christ always sees the beautiful, and therefore seeks it where you and I would never look for it. There is an old legend about Jesus. I really do not know whether it is true. But suppose it is not true, still there is a principle involved which is true. They tell how that one day He was passing out through the gates of Jerusalem, and there lay on the roadway a dead dog, the horror of all the Hebrew people, to be held in supreme and bitter contempt. As one and another of the teachers and scribes and rabbis, and the ordinary people passed by, they but kicked it farther away with contempt. But Jesus, as He passed, stopped and looked down on it, and said, "Behold the pearly whiteness of its teeth." You are quite at liberty to reject that legend, but do not give away the truth which underlies it. Jesus can always see something of beauty and glory which other eyes cannot see. Perhaps a few of you do not know what I am driving at. Some do. I have lost the fire in my life, my passion and my fervor. I want to say here—out of place if you like—that Christ sees the little that remains, and will say to me today, "I have come to seek that. Strengthen the things that remain." In the case of these men He saw personal loyalty underneath the hope abandoned and the confidence shaken, and He went and joined Himself to them in order that He might fan to flame the fire which was dying out upon the altar of their hearts.

How did He do it? Mark His method. He made their hearts burn by giving them a new interpretation of familiar things. I would like so to say the next thing that you remember it if you forget everything else. In the memory of it you will have the very heart of the message I bring to you. He made their hearts burn by talking to them. Their hearts did not burn within them while they talked to him, or while they talked about him. Their hearts burned within them when He talked to them. That puts everything I want to say into a few words. Not in their questioning concerning Him was the fire rekindled. Not in their pouring out of complaint to Him did it burn, but when they had ceased talking to, or about Him; when they were silent and listened, then the fire burned. "Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way?"

What were the things that He said? Nothing new. I am increasingly impressed with this. He did not bring to them any new message. It was the old, so said as they had never heard it said before. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets He interpreted to them in the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Have you not felt as I have, that you would have given almost everything to have walked to Emmaus and heard Him interpret the Scriptures? It did not take Him very long. It was not a long journey, and they had done a good deal of talking before He commenced. He talked of the Scriptures with which they were perfectly familiar, of Moses, of the ancient history and the law, of the prophetic writings in which they had been instructed from childhood, and tracked for them all the pathways that culminated in the Man Whose loss they were mourning, Who had been crucified. He showed them how all the prophets gave witness to Him, and all the symbols of the ancient ritual found their fulfillment in the work that He had done. They did not know the Man talking to them was the One of Whom He was talking. They did see a new meaning in their own Scriptures concerning their long-hoped-for Messiah and His relation to the cross. They began to see a new light and glory flashing back upon the cross where their hopes had been blighted, and the fire seemed to have been put out. He interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. I have often felt that it would have been worth a whole lifetime to have walked with Him and heard Him tell how the shadow of the Mosaic economy found its fulfillment in Him.

Then when He took their prophets one by one, how wonderful to hear Him explain, and how marvelous the rapture of their heart as they heard Him tell how all the prophets led up to the Messiah Who died just as they had seen that Man die, of Whom they had been speaking so kindly. As they listened to Him they would find out that He was David's King, "fairer than the children of men"; and in the days of Solomon's well-doing He it was that was "altogether lovely." He was Isaiah's child—king, with a shoulder strong enough to bear the government, and a name Emmanuel gathering within itself all excellencies. He was Jeremiah's "Branch of Righteousness, executing judgment and righteousness in the land"; Ezekiel's "Plant of renown," giving shade and shedding fragrance; Daniel's stone cut without hands, smiting the image, becoming a mountain, and filling the whole earth; the ideal Israel of Hosea "growing as the lily," "casting out his roots as Lebanon"; to Joel "the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel"; the usherer in of the great vision of Amos of "the plowman overtaking the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed"; and of Obadiah the "deliverance upon Mount Zion and holiness"; the fulfillment of that of which Jonah was but a sign; the "turning again" of God of which Micah spoke; the One Whom Nahum saw upon the mountains publishing peace; the Anointed of Whom Habakkuk sang as "going forth for salvation"; He Who brought to the people the pure language of Zephaniah's message, the true Zerubbabel of Haggai's word rebuilding forever the house and the city of God; Himself the dawn of the day when "holiness unto the Lord shall be upon the bells of the horses" as Zechariah foretold; He the "refiner's fire," "the fuller's soap," "The Sun of righteousness" of Malachi's vision. All these things passed in rapid survey as He talked. He was taking their own prophets and unlocking them, flinging back the shutters and letting the light stream in. He talked to them, and they were silent; and there broke upon them a new vision of the truth, a new understanding of things with which they were perfectly familiar, and in this new vision they found new understanding of all the things which they long had known.

Their burning heart, what was it? The thrill of a new discovery of their Lord and the shame of the past failure to appreciate Him, and the passion of a new endeavor which should set their feet in the pathway which led to ultimate victory.

All this came when they listened, not when they spoke to Him, or of Him, but when He spoke to them. Here, then, as it seems to me, is the supreme need of the hour, that we should "strengthen the things that remain"—the doctrines which we hold as true, the ordinances of the Church which we observe with painful regularity lacking passion, the service to which our hands are placed, which so often becomes dull as mere routine duty. We need that these things should flame with a new meaning, that the doctrine that we hold as true, and about which sometimes we fight, should flame into passionate vision, driving us into actual service. A man may talk generalities for half an hour and get no further. What did I mean by the doctrine we hold as true, driving us? Let me give you one small quotation from Jesus' last words. He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." We have recited it, we have sung it, and once or twice we have felt it burn; but in the majority of days we do not feel it burning, driving us. That declaration of Jesus that He was always with His disciples was made in connection with His command, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." If you want to know why we are not moved with the fire and fervor of the promise, it is because we have been attempting to appropriate the promise without fulfilling the condition, because we have not sat still and let Him tell us His deepest meaning about this thing. If once we sit in His presence and listen quietly we shall feel moving in our heart His own great

passion for the nations of the earth, and we shall hear His "Go," and then we shall know that the supreme thing to hear is, "Lo, I am with you alway." When He whispers it, it will be to us as the driving force of God sending us out upon the pathway. We have not listened. These things have become so familiar that we are not at all familiar with them in their actual power. The cooling of our passion is due to the fact that we have attempted to spell these things out for ourselves, to explain them by our own philosophy instead of sitting down while He talks to us.

What, then, is the message I bring to you today? It is this. In the midst of your discussion, I beseech you, at all cost, make time to sit still while He speaks to you. I think I am safe from the possibility of misunderstanding when I say we supremely need a little more sitting still, a little more silence, a little more time of listening to the voice of Jesus. I am speaking as much to my own heart as to the heart of anyone in this house. There is a terrible danger that in our attempt to discuss Jesus Christ, and in our attempt to serve Him, we should fail to remember that no discussion can ever place Him finally. He defies the grasp of the intellect merely as such. We may discuss Him in our colleges and theological halls, and all the while we discuss Him the fire burns low. That is the peril of the age in which we live. We may be so busy running on His errands and attempting to do His work as never to sit still and look into His face.

I do not want that application to evaporate as a mere generality. I pray you test it by any day in your life, and test it by asking yourself, How long have I taken today to listen to Him? Someone will ask, "Do you really mean this? Are you practical, or are you indulging in some kind of sentimental talk? Are we really to listen to Him, listen for Him? Men do not hear Him today as they did of old." Shall I make your statement from another standpoint. It is not true that men cannot hear Him as they did of old. Men do not wait to hear Him as they did of old. In this present age they do not listen enough. Listen in the morning, listen amid the babel of other voices, listen at eventide for Him. In the Scriptures, those selfsame Scriptures through which He spoke to men of old, listen for Him. The study of the Bible will curse us in the next ten years if we are not careful. Men will tabulate and analyze, and think they know everything. Man, listen, for, unless as a result of your study of the Bible you hear the imperial tone, the voice of the living Christ talking in your inmost soul, your Bible knowledge is a mere technique that will burn you and ruin you within the next ten years. Listen, listen for His voice. Cease petition sometimes, cease praise sometimes, cease your questioning every now and then, and listen. No man or woman, young man or young woman, youth or maiden, will cultivate the habit of waiting to listen for the direct message of the Christ and be disappointed. Then your Bible will be a new book. Then your organization will throb with the propulsion of a new power. Then the missionary fire will blaze and drive you out upon the path of service.

There must be more burning of heart. We are in danger of being overwhelmed with our principle and our machinery. My plea today is that we take time to listen, that by His interpretation of the meaning of the things we have, they may flame with light and with fire, and create in us that holy passion which sings and sobs, which serves and waits, which travails and makes His Kingdom come. May God give us all the opened ear that we may hear what He says to us, for His Name's sake.

Luke 24:50. Led Out--Led In.

Luke 24:50.

Led Out--Led In.

He led them out until they were over against Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.

Luke 24:50

After His Resurrection from the dead, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ lingered on the earth for forty days, as though He were almost reluctant to leave it. He lingered, as we have no doubt, for very special purposes of revelation and manifestation, lingered in order to bridge over for His own first disciples the difficult period of the early days, when they would no longer have Him with them in bodily sight, and when it would be necessary, therefore, for the high faculty of the soul, faith, to be called into full play. He lingered for forty days, occasionally appearing and disappearing. The second part of the statement seems as though it were unnecessary, but, as a matter of fact, the disappearances were as important as the appearances, in both their manner and their purpose. He appeared to them sometimes when gathered together peculiarly as disciples, and sometimes to individuals. Coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon them, baffling them by the method of His coming, He yet always unveiled before their eyes some new wonder and glory of His own Personality and His own work. Then, with equal suddenness and strangeness of method, He vanished. This lasted, as I say, for forty days.

In the verse that I have taken as text we have the account of the very last act of Jesus before His Ascension. This was His last appearance, as the last disappearance was the Ascension itself. We are now to consider what these men saw in Him on this occasion: "He led them out as far as Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

This Person, lifting His hands in blessing, is One who has been rejected in a threefold rejection: rejected by the priesthood of the time, rejected by the earthly government which was in the ascendancy at the time, rejected by the people on their own vote and claim. I am not now proposing to stay to discuss the reason of the priestly rejection, or the governmental rejection, or the democratic rejection. I simply face the fact as we look at this last appearing of Jesus. He was rejected.

Rejected, in the first place, by the priests of His time, and, consequently, by priestcraft. Here we pause for a moment to consider this question of priesthood in the light of Biblical revelation. In the divine economy as therein revealed, priesthood was really an accommodation to human weakness, and never a divine intention or provision. The history of the priesthood emerges in the most startling way. In the eighteenth chapter of Exodus we discover that when God emancipated a people from slavery and led them out with a high hand and outstretched arm into a large place, He brought them unto Himself, and the words that Moses was commissioned to speak to them were

practically words of the New Testament, which came with greater meaning in the fulness of time: "I have chosen you to be unto Me, a kingdom of priests." In that declaration there is not the slightest suggestion of the creation of a caste of priests in the divine economy and purpose, but rather the creation of a nation in which every individual was to be a priest. I will make you unto Me a kingdom of priests, that was the divine original ideal for Israel. The people shrank from the high and awful function, were filled with fear in the presence of Jehovah, and naturally so: they were so filled with fear because of the consciousness of their sinfulness and inability. Then the principle obtained that runs through all the Divine dealings with men, accommodation to human weakness. Because the people were not able to rise to the high level of realizing their personal priesthood, a caste was created for a while to fulfil the function of priesthood on behalf of the people.

Through the centuries the story of priesthood runs on, and from beginning to end it is the story of failure, from beginning to end it is the story of corruption, of partial light eclipsed in darkness, of movement toward a higher forever falling to a lower, until the last act of priesthood was the inspiration that resulted in the murder of the Son of God. As I look at Him standing on Olivet's slope I see One Whom priesthood had cast out.

I also see here One Who had been cast out by government, by monarchy. Monarchy in Judea at that time was a poor and insignificant thing struggling to make its power great when, really, it was entirely paralyzed. Herod and those associated with him in the governing authority of the tetrarchies were under the mastery of Rome, that brutal bully in human history that for once subdued the world by brute force, and initiated the Pax Romana, which was but the pause of palsied inertia resulting from war. When Jesus was born, He was born into that peace, a peace not worth the name, and which happily was disturbed by war ere it had long continued.

But let me interpret this fact of government Biblically. What do we find concerning monarchy in the Bible? It was originally an accommodation to human weakness, just as was priesthood. I go back to this one nation that God chose, not in order that He might have a pet on whom to lavish His love, but to be the illustration of His Kingdom in the world for the uplifting of the nations. He said to them: "I have called you unto Myself." In the first glimpse of the history of the people, who were in many senses rude, almost barbaric, there shines a glory such as the world had never seen elsewhere. It is the glory of a theocracy, of a people governed by God, having no other king, and no other form of government. The history runs on for a little while, until there came a day in which this people said: "Give us a king like the nations." Then Samuel, brokenhearted by their failure, cried to God in complaint, and the answer of God, in the soul of Samuel, was this: "They have not rejected thee; they have rejected Me from being king. Therefore, go thou and anoint Saul, and give them what they ask." That was an accommodation to human weakness. Then followed the rapid exaltation and tragic fall of Saul, a king like the nations; the story of David, one gleam of light as to what kingship might be ending in black failure; then that of Solomon, the most disastrous failure in the Old Testament. Next, the kingdom was disrupted, and entered on a long period of conflict, until we see the people once again, a remnant weak and small, and Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah setting them in order, after which they were locked up to law, until Christ. Thus government by monarchy in the Bible is marked as being a necessary accommodation to human weakness, a story of ghastly failure and loss which resulted in the crucifixion of the Lord of Life and Glory.

And what of the people? Christ was rejected by the people also. The people entirely failed; they submitted to the dominion of false rulership, so that they themselves caught up the cries of the false rulers, and hissed between closed teeth, "Crucify! Crucify!" The people! May God deliver us from a democracy which is not first a theocracy.

What is the history of the people according to the Bible? Their failure antedated that of priest or king. Babel is the first chapter of the federation of the people in order that they may manage themselves, and make themselves a great name in the world. From that first chapter the movement runs on through all your Biblical literature until, thank God, the day is coming, which is not yet come, when the supreme anthem of earth's emancipation will take the form: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ."

I look, then, at this Man, with the little group gathered about Him on the slopes of Olivet. Priesthood has rejected Him, government has flung Him out, the people have given their vote, consenting to the self-same rejection.

Then I look at Him again, and what do I see? I see the one Priest of humanity, the great High Priest of the race, fulfilling the function of priesthood by the mystery of His Person as it could not possibly be fulfilled in any human being. Jesus could never have been the High Priest of humanity merely in His human nature. By oneness with God, and identification with man, He can be that which Job in his agony sighed for—and in that cry the sigh for priesthood is found, perhaps as nowhere else. Would that there were a daysman who might lay his hand on God and on me. That was the great cry of a soul for the meditation of one who is in himself in true fellowship with God, and in himself in perfect identification with humanity.

As I look I see that Jesus as the One human Priest, the power of Whose Priesthood was created, as the Writer of the Letter to the Hebrews said, by the power of an endless life, which is more than a human life, but which is human in its qualification also. By His oneness with God and identification with man He is the One Priest of humanity.

I look again, and I see Him as the one and only Governor and King of humanity, the One on Whose shoulder the Government is to rest, the one King Whose kingship is based on His eternal authority and His temporal associations—I did not say, "temporary." I used my word with care. I referred to associations that have to do with time. We have to do with time, and we shall always have to do with time. There is a sense in which we are not eternal nor can be. We have eternal life. We come into an atmosphere that keeps, and sustains, and enlarges; but we are not without beginning. To be eternal there must be no beginning. God is eternal. King is One Whose authority is eternal, Who comes out of eternity, out of the necessity of things, out of the infinite wisdom that lies at the back of everything; the One Who initiates a law for a race, a nation, a man; which is not a law resulting from the manipulation of things as they seem, but which is a law resulting from the perfect knowledge of things as they are. This King's authority is based on that. His authority is based also on temporal association. He Who is the Logos, the eternal, has been made flesh, has brought the eternal into the compass of the observation of the temporal. His Kingship is based now and forevermore, first, on that eternal authority, and, second, on the fact that He tabernacled in the flesh, and walked the ways of men. God came into no closer sympathy with man by incarnation; but by incarnation God did reveal Himself in the exquisite tenderness and eternal strength of His

sympathy. God, apart from incarnation, is an abstract idea, vast, terrific; but there is no warmth in it, there is no life in it, there is no inspiration in it. But when I go to a King, and I know His word is the word of eternal authority, and yet hear it stated in the words that my mother taught me and that I lisped when I was a baby, lo, I have found my King! I see Him, outside of the government of the world, but God's appointed Governor.

I see Him again as the ensign of the people, according to the prophetic word concerning Him: "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." It was but a little group about Him on Olivet, but think how many are gathered about Him today. Yes, let us think of that sometimes even today, when, it may be, we are tempted almost to imagine that the whole Christian ideal is being blotted out in blood. He is still the rejected One, but He is also the Crowned. He is even yet cast out of the councils of the nations. Ah! but He is considered and obeyed by a vast sacramental host, a sacramental host the extent of which we cannot measure by our Church statistics. His sacramental host includes the membership of churches, but runs far out beyond that membership, gathering into its ranks all souls pledged to name the Name and live according to His law. He gathers the people to Himself, for the realization of a democracy under the reign of the one King, a democracy great because it is a theocracy. So He stands on Olivet's slopes, rejected by the priests, the governors, the people. There He stands, the One Priest, the One King, the One to Whom the gathering of the peoples shall be.

Having thus looked at the principal matter, the Person, let us consider the statement, "He led them out." He took them towards Bethany. There were tender associations there. It was at Bethany that He found what was nearer to a home in His experience than any other place. There Lazarus lived, and Martha, and Mary, whom He loved. There He had often tarried; There He had spent those last tragic nights of the last terrific week. He led them that way. There was no temple there, no kingly palace. It was not the place where crowds ordinarily assembled. He led them out to Olivet, to some slope from which Bethany could be seen. He led them out from the temple, and the priests' ministrations. He led them out from the government, and its protection. He led them out from the people, and their permissions. They would have to run counter to all these things in the coming days, as He Himself had done. The priests would seek to destroy them and their testimony as they had sought to destroy Him. The governors would be against them, and would even declare that they were seditious; and ere very long a corrupt emperor-master of the world would amuse himself and his licentious profligate friends by watching them burn. All these things He knew, and that leading out signified that He appealed to none of these things to protect His disciples when He was gone. By that leading out, He suggested to His own disciples that they were not to look for help in their propaganda from priests or governors or people. He led them out into association with Himself, in testimony to all that which He had set up, and which He came to make possible in human history.

He led them out from the temple and the priests; He led them into the true temple through a rent veil, where they might exercise their priesthood as appearing in the presence of God on behalf of humanity, and then passing out to appear in the presence of humanity on behalf of God.

He led them out from the protection of human governments; but He led them into the protection of His own Government, underneath His own sway and kingship and power.

He led them out from the promises and the voting of the populace; but He led them into association with the new democracy, consisting of all souls yielded to the Kingship of God, through Whom, at last, the Kingdom shall be established.

That leading out was thus, indeed, a leading in. As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says: He went outside the camp to suffer, to die; we must go after Him, bearing His reproach. But the writer of the letter to the Hebrews also says: The veil was rent, and He opened the way into the holiest of all; we may go in with boldness. The people around Him are people led out to be led in, led out from the false into the true, led out from failure to the place of assured victory, led out from all the forces that disintegrate and break up humanity and into association with all the forces that construct and build up humanity. So He led them out, and so He led them in.

From that day to this, He has been leading out and leading in. In proportion as we understand the occasion of that last appearing, we shall discover that the Church of God must never depend on priesthood, or governments, or democracies for her strength or protection. Every form and fashion of religion, every form and fashion of government, and all the hopes of the peoples, are centered in Him to Whom we have come, and in Whose Name we go with gladness, and singing, and hope, back to every form of religion, not to destroy it, but to fulfil the essential truth within it, and purge it of its dross; back to governments, not to proclaim anarchy, but to declare that every form of government must be finally related to the government through Whom it may realize its high ideals; back to the people, not to descend to the devilish barbarity of men who speak of them as canaille, but to love them, serve them, giving our own life blood to lift them into the great Kingdom of our God. He led them out, not for their sakes alone, but, in the infinite mystery of His marvelous work, for the sake of the very things from which He led them out.

His last act was to give a blessing. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. In those Hands were arguments, scars of battle, stigmata of pain, the insignia of royalty. It was the High Priestly act. It declared that sin was atoned for, that death was vanquished, that sorrow was commandeered, captured, in order that, finally, it may do duty for the Kingdom of God. Henceforth sorrow is the most powerful agent in the sanctification of human life, in the deliverance of nations from their perils, and of individuals from their foolishness. That High Priestly act of blessing was the act of One Who had grappled with the darkness of sin, and mastered it, Who "death by dying slew"; and He had apprehended sorrow and taken it into His own control, that henceforth it might be the minister of His will in a gracious and infinite mystery. In the uplifting of those hands was no act of forgiveness, no act of intercession. Those acts also lie within the priestly function; but that was the uplifting of hands in blessing, and blessing means bestowment. He uplifted His hands on men whom He had led out from all the forces that seemed great in the world, denying to these men the protection of these forces, but He lifted up His hands, and blessed them; and as He did so He gave them fulness of life, He gave them fellowship with God, He gave them perfect confidence for all the service that He was about to appoint to them.

Christ is thus seen to be the fulfilment, and, therefore, the center of priesthood, of government, of humanity.

When He leads men out from things that seem so necessary it is always to lead them into the possession of the real things. No man loses anything in his individual life; no society loses anything in the true passion that creates it a society; no nation loses anything of the underlying

nobility of its national life by being obedient to Christ. He fulfils. He is always leading out from things effete to Himself. Things effete are not necessarily things evil. They have become effete, but they were not in the first case things evil. Things effete are things that have done their work. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second. Yes, but He established the first. Yea, verily, but when it has done its work He takes it away that He might establish the second. Sacrifice and offerings Thou wouldst not! But He appointed sacrifices and He appointed offerings! Yea! verily; but when they had fulfilled their work, He destroyed them. That is the perpetual method of Christ. If, when they have done their work, we cling to things that were necessary, perchance for us in our individual lives as Christians at the beginning, they will destroy the life they helped to make. Grave clothes are necessary for a dead man; but when he lives, loose him, and let him go! The law written on tables of stone was necessary in the first period of religious revelation; but when the Spirit of God through the infinite mystery of the atoning work of Jesus comes into the life and writes with the Finger of God on the table of the heart, then I do not want tables of stone. When I put myself in bondage to a table of stone written with the finger of God two to four millenniums ago, then I am in bondage to a thing effete.

Christ ever leads men out. One of the greatest troubles of the Christian Church has been that she so clings to things that were necessary yesterday, forgetting that Christ ever leads forward into something greater and grander. He led men out from things which in themselves had been necessary and had their place, a place made necessary by the bitter necessity of accommodation; but when these things had done their work He led the men out. The meaning of what He did that day had been revealed in His teaching previously. He said to a woman in Samaria:"...Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father." The day is coming when you will not need a temple, but wherever the soul is in need it may find access to God.

Christ's last attitude, the last appearing, the last manifestation of Himself in these days of appearing and disappearing, was in the attitude of blessing, the attitude, not of the Aaronic priesthood, but of Melchizedec. He is a Priest forever, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedec. We find Melchizedec in the first book of the Bible. Melchizedec met Abram when Abram was weary from a warfare that he had conducted in answer to a demand for righteousness. Melchizedec brought forth bread and wine for Abram, and ministered to his need. Melchizedec blessed Abram, and then passed out of sight, and Abram confronted the king of Sodom. The king offered him part of the booty. In possession of that spiritual blessing which had come to new consciousness in his soul by the ministry of Melchizedec, Abram declined to take a hoof of anything that the king offered. Then God spoke to his soul: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Jesus lifts up His hands in blessing on the souls who dare to follow Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. He is the High Priest Who brings bread and wine to refresh and renew us in our weariness. He is the High Priest who brings the consciousness, who steadies our faith in God, who enables us to say to every bribe that may be offered us: Not a hoof of anything. We have all we need in God.

John 1:4. Light And Darkness.

John 1:4.

Light And Darkness.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:4

The text consists of two statements:

First, "In Him was life."

Second, "The life was the light of men."

These are related to a group of ten, with which the seer opens his writing:

"In the beginning was the Word."

"The Word was with God."

"The Word was God."

"The same was in the beginning with God."

"All things were made by Him."

"Without Him was not anything made that hath been made."

"In Him was life."

"The life was the light of men."

"The light shineth in darkness."

"The darkness apprehended it not."

These are not arguments, but affirmations. I do not propose to discuss them, but to proceed on the assumption that they are true.

In the two which I have selected two principal values arrest the attention: first, the Person referred to, and second, the proclamation.

As to the Person referred to, the first demand on honesty is that we should interpret the writer's reference by his own presentation. By that I do not mean that we begin at the mystic distance where he begins. The inclusion of that will be necessary ere we have done with the writing. At first it is enough that we recognize the Person as those who saw Him, who were, in company with the writer, familiar with Him.

This Person, then, is first named in the account of the ministry of John the Baptist, in which the writer declares, "On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This in itself is an interesting introduction, revealing as it does the human personality—"Jesus"; the Divine relation—"the Lamb of God"; and the avowed mission—"which taketh away the sin of the world."

Adhering closely to the simplest method of observation, this Person is seen as a Man of natural thought, and speech, and habit; Who in the course of His public ministry wrought signs of a supernatural order, and uttered words of stupendous meaning; and Who was brutally murdered, but by resurrection from the dead gave the company of His disciples a new understanding of the meaning of His life and of the nature of His death.

It is perfectly evident that the wonder of that resurrection gave the writer a new conception of the Person, and the prologue of his treatise is assuredly the result of his certainty of that fact.

This leads us to the proclamation of our text. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The demonstration of the first of these was the resurrection. By that it was made certain that in some way Jesus had the power of an endless life. Being so demonstrated, the proclamation is in itself the most stupendous of claims, and can be interpreted only by what has preceded it; that He was the Creator, of which claim it is undoubtedly part, and the final and inclusive affirmation.

The second proclamation reveals the application of this supreme truth to the case of man as the crowning glory of creation. Presently the writer, with his gaze fixed on the Person as visible to the eyes of men, said of Him, "There was the true Light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world." By that affirmation he declares that every man has light, that light being the peculiar and distinguishing quality in human life, separating it from all lower forms. In the Person under observation this universally present light came into visibility.

In order to comprehend the light, the whole Person as presented must be seen, and that can be done only as He is observed in all the activities of His life and death as interpreted by His resurrection.

That revelation is unique, stupendous, overwhelming, and affords the one and only explanation of the missionary enterprise of the Church. In the early days of clear, if imperfect, vision, the Church was missionary. Every new unveiling of Christ has been the occasion of new missionary devotion. A supreme illustration is that of the Evangelical Revival, in which the London Missionary Society and nearly all the other great Societies now at work were born. To-day we are in the midst of a process not unmixed with conflict, out of which is coming a yet clearer and more spacious conception of this light, and new missionary enthusiasm and activity are already manifesting themselves.

May we then in reverence, and yet with confidence, attempt to see in broadest outlines the missionary enterprise as explained by this Person and this proclamation?

I propose three lines of consideration of that enterprise as interpreted by the light of the Person of Jesus:—

First, the fundamental conceptions; the ideal-Righteousness.

Second, the impelling motives; the actual-Sin.

Third, the commanding evangel; the possible-Salvation.

I

We begin with the fundamental conceptions of the missionary enterprise. These are created by the light Christ has given us concerning God, and man, and the law of the universe. They may be briefly summarized as conceptions of the unity of God, of the unity of humanity, and of the unity of law. Each of these deserves attention in turn. However, let it be recognized at once that simple and self-evident as these things appear to us today, they are so as the result of Christ's revelation, and of His revelation only. In the Hebrew religion there had been insistence on the idea of the unity of God. Its foundation word was, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one." Yet the mass of the people had been slow to learn the lesson, as a study of their history reveals. The idea of one humanity was totally foreign to humanity, for Judaism had emphasized separation rather than unity. The unity of law was unknown, as is evidenced by the fact that the interpreters of the highest system of law known had divided as between less and greater laws.

As the result of the light which came by Jesus, we now know the one living and eternal God. We know Him as transcendent, that is, as being infinitely greater than any creature or the sum total of creation. We know Him as immanent, that is, as being near to, and interested in every creature, and the sum total of creation. We know Him as operative, that is, as actually working through all history and all life toward a "far-off Divine event."

This conception of the unity of God has been at once the grandest and most gracious possible. We have not yet discovered all its meaning. Its acceptance has always meant the canceling of terms which, apart from it, are in constant use. To believe it is to cease to know great and small as opposed or unlike; for the smallest is kin of the greatest, and the greatest is co-operative with the smallest. The near and the distant are no longer far removed, for all are held in one consciousness, and upheld by one power. The high and the low are not opposite, and antagonistic; but related parts of the one whole, which lives and moves and has its being in God.

This vision of God is the rock foundation of the thought of those who have come to know Him through Christ.

Closely related to this conception is the conception of humanity which has resulted from the light of the Person of Christ. There is no subject more full of fascination than that of the universality of Jesus. In humanity, apart from Him, different races have had different qualities, and different nations different ideals. In Him all peoples have found the finest fulfilment of all that was best in their peculiar qualities and ideals. Thus, in the very simplicity of His humanity He has brought to light the underlying unity of the race. In Him all the separated notes merge into the one perfect harmony, and therefore in Him there cannot be Jew or Gentile, bond or free. The Man of Nazareth has become the rallying center of men of all races, and thus we have come to recognize that beneath all diversities of race or color or position, humanity is of one blood and one spirit.

This conception of the unity of humanity is awe-inspiring in itself, and in its creation of human interrelationship is most remarkable. To believe it is to be forever unable to be patriotic with the patriotism that thinks only of one's own country; or parochial with the parochialism which has no

fellowship with the next parish. It is to see in every man and woman a blood relation, however far they may be separated from us by distance, or temperament, or position. It is to feel a new joy in the infinite variety which is, after all, but the evidence of the richness of the underlying unity.

These two conceptions create a third, which the light given by Christ does moreover directly reveal, that, namely, of the unity of law. To grant that unity is at once to recognize law as being love-inspired. There is no other motive for law which holds within itself all the qualities which make for the present realization of order among the members of the one humanity under the government of the one God. This unifying inspiration of law was, moreover, the supreme fact revealed by Christ. His message was delivered, in the figurative language of John, from "the bosom of the Father," and His summary of the true and all-sufficient law of human life was, "Thou shalt love."

This law of love is the severest possible; that is to say, its requirements are most minute and mighty. It can never deny itself by allowing activity which harms and hurts to continue. It makes the standard of action, not what weak and incomplete things are able to enforce in a struggle against strong and complete things; but what strong and complete things are able to do, to ensure the strengthening and perfecting of the weakest and most incomplete. Therefore this law of love is, in its keeping, the condition of perfect joy. Love ever finds its greatest delight in the well-being of all. The mightiest find greatest joy in the measure in which, in love, they care for and make joyful those who are weaker. The weakest find chief joy in the gladness they give to those who in love help them when in love's response to love they gain strength.

All this is but to touch in barest and roughest outline on the great conceptions created by Christ. The application in detail must be left. Nevertheless, these are the fundamental conceptions of the missionary enterprise. They create an impulse which is irresistible under certain conditions. Those conditions are next to be looked at. It is well to remember that these conceptions do not in themselves call for missionary activity. These are the facts of the ultimate order, of heaven set up on earth. When that final goal is reached, missions will cease. The triumphs of Christianity constitute the measure in which missionary operations cease, because these conceptions are realized. The difference between darkness and light is the difference between ignorance of these truths and life lived in obedience to them. When these conceptions have won their ultimate victory in human history our missionary activity will be at an end. Until that hour come, they constitute the deepest reason, and create the most abiding passion for missions.

II

We now turn to the impelling motives of missionary enterprise. These result from that consciousness of the existing darkness, created by the epiphany of light. The apostolic outlook, as revealed in the New Testament writings, was characterized by an almost overwhelming sense of the darkness in which men lived, apart from Christ. Paul wrote of "the works of darkness," "the hidden things of darkness," "the world rulers of this darkness," "the power of darkness." Peter affirmed that the elect race was called "out of darkness." John declared of the loveless man, "The darkness hath blinded his eyes." These men having seen the light were made conscious of the conditions in the midst of which they lived. The contrast was sharp and appalling. Their joy in the light created their agony in the presence of the darkness. Their absolute rest in the perfection of the ideal order was the inspiration of their ceaseless unrest in the midst of the chaos. Thus it has ever been, and thus it continues to be. To walk in the light is to know the darkness. Conditions

which are eminently satisfactory to those who have never seen the light are appalling, heart-breaking, disastrous, to the children of light.

The darkness may best be described by contrast with the light. In Christ we have found the One God. In the world we find humanity living without God, having lost its vision of Him. In Christ we have discovered the oneness of humanity. In the world we find humanity broken up and in perpetual conflict. In Christ the one law of love is revealed. In the world we see the mastery of selfishness producing suffering everywhere.

That humanity has lost its vision of God is demonstrated as we watch it at its worship. That there is a light, lighting every man, is evidenced by the fact that the instinct for worship is universal. No human being has been found so degraded that the sense of forces outside the material is wholly absent. We may speak of superstition, and barbarism, but the man with a fetish does by his thought of it demonstrate this sense of the spiritual, and recognize some relation to it. Yet how awfully the light that is in him is darkness. The highest conceptions of God, when held in the light of His manifestation in Christ, are dark indeed. They postulate a being, or a number of beings, hard, cold, distant, relentless, capricious. Descending in the scale, gods of selfishness, of greed, of corrupt, and degrading passions are worshiped, until at last the conception of deity is that of antagonistic devils, who are worshiped by being persuaded not to hurt. Darkness in very deed, but we have come to know it only because we have seen the light.

This lost vision of God has produced everywhere the break up of humanity. We have already referred to the fundamental word of ideal Hebraism as being, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one." The immediate outcome of that declaration was the command, "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This is significant in that it suggests that the recognition of One God makes for the unification of every individual life by the one law of love, and thus makes possible the true social order. The words of the Preacher, "Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint," are demonstrated true in all human history. All anarchy is the outcome of atheism. National strife and bloodshed, social conflict and cruelty, individual bitterness and brutality, alike result from lack of the knowledge of God, which is life and not death, light and not darkness, love and not hatred. Yet these are the conditions in which the greater part of men are still living.

The absence of love as the law of life issues in the mastery of selfishness, and this is the secret of all individual sin, and the source of all the woes and wounds and weariness of the peoples.

That these are the conditions we need not stay to argue. Eyes lifted from the contemplation of the Light of the World, in which have been seen the facts of the unity of God, the oneness of humanity, and the perfection of the law of love, and turned to the great lands in which the families of the earth are dwelling, see with awful distinctness the darkness of the lost vision of God, of the consequent tearing and agony of humanity, and of the cruel and blasting tyranny of the mastery of selfishness.

It is this vision of the darkness as seen by the light which is the impelling motive of missionary enterprise, consuming, and driving like a fire in its almost terrific passion for the passing of the darkness and the victory of the light.

Yet we have not so far found the real secret of the victories won, or the most compelling cause for continued toil. The case is hopeless indeed if there be nothing more to be said. The problems are

but suggested by the vision of the ideal, and the consciousness of the actual. How is the actual to be changed into the ideal? That is the supreme question, and all missionary endeavor has been the result of the possession by the Church of the one and only answer. To that we finally turn.

III

The superlative factor in missionary enterprise is its great evangel. That evangel is infinitely more than a revelation of truth about God and man. It is the declaration of an activity of God which is in harmony with His nature, and through which man, notwithstanding his failure, may be restored so completely that all the highest ideals revealed in the Person of the Christ may be perfectly realized. As we said at the commencement, the light of men which came into the world with the coming of Jesus needs the whole of His life and mission through death, if it is to be perfectly understood.

The perfect ideal is not the complete evangel. Indeed, in itself it is not an evangel. It is a glorious presentation of the magnificent and beneficent purpose of God; but if the only light is that of such revelation, then man learns from it only how far he is falling short. But when there is superadded to that unveiling of an ideal the story—awe-inspiring and full of mystery—of a death which is the ultimate of all human woe and anguish, which, nevertheless, merges in a resurrection of unquestioned triumph; and in the claim of the risen One to all authority in heaven and on earth, and in His command to His disciples to proclaim the evangel, then hope springs in the heart, for we realize that through that Person a work has been wrought which makes possible the correction of the false and the establishment of the true.

The truth is the great deposit of the Church, possessing which, she is in debt to every land, and people, and age, until hearing and obeying, the darkness pass and the perfect light of the true order is the brightness and joy of human life in its individual, social, national, and racial experience. Every land where His light is unknown is a reproach to the Church. All the peoples who, sitting in darkness, still sin and suffer, are by their sinning and suffering calling to the children of light to be honest and pay the debt they owe.

May we, then, reverently inquire what are the essential notes of this great evangel? In attempting to name them I shall studiously avoid making any statement in the realm of those unfathomed secrets of the methods of God which are forever beyond human understanding. The things revealed are for us and our children.

Taking, then, the whole fact of the Christ—His Being, His teaching, His death, and His resurrection—we find that three declarations constitute the evangel. It may be well, first, to state them in all brevity. They are:

First, that God cannot deny Himself, and therefore obeys His own law of love at infinite and amazing cost.

Second, that humanity must return to that same law by accepting the grace provided at such cost.

Third, that because of God's action, wherever man makes such return the past can be blotted out, and the highest and most glorious ideal be fully realized.

I am almost painfully aware of how each of these assertions opens the way for very much elaboration, and nothing would be more delightful than to be able to carry it out. That is, however, made impossible by the fact that we are still straitened by the limitations of time. Moreover, it is not absolutely necessary to the present intention, which is that of examination of a great theme in broadest outline. We must content ourselves therefore for the moment with a few brief sentences in each case.

As to the first. By incarnation God did not actually come nearer to man. Neither was the death of Jesus of Nazareth a point of new departure on the part of God. Incarnation was the method by which God revealed to men who had lost their vision of Him the fact of His perpetual nearness, and the nature of His Being. By the death of Jesus of Nazareth He wrought out into visibility, so far as that was possible, an attitude of His nature, and an activity of His grace, whereby, and alone whereby, man could be saved. The eternal and still finally incomprehensible facts are those of the existence and nature of God, and of that suffering of the infinite Love, whereby the very guilt of sin is canceled, and its power broken. In order to have right relation with these facts it was necessary that they should be manifested, and therefore the life and death of Jesus were necessary. The first note of the Gospel is the absolute certainty that God can and does forgive sin and break its power.

As to the second. The messenger of the evangel must ever be true to the statement of necessity on the part of those to whom the message is delivered. He cannot be true to the message of the Divine pain if he tells men that sin does not matter, or that it is merely part of a process toward its opposite. He forever declares that it is all wrong, and that its ultimate is the distance and the disaster which its direction indicates. The conditions of restoration are those of return to obedience. Here, however, is the matchless beauty and surpassing loveliness of our evangel. God has made the method of return to His law that of accepting as a gift of His grace the forgiveness of sins, and all the resources necessary to the remaking of the broken life. That gift of grace is not a cloak for sin, but a cleansing from it, not an excuse for unfitness, but an energy for fitness. To refuse it is to choose sin and ruin. Thus if the first note of the evangel be that of the grace of God, the second is ever that of the responsibility of man.

As to the third. Far be it from me to seem, by any words now to be uttered, to minimize the value and importance of the things already spoken. They are the profoundest and mightiest, the things rooted in God, and thrilling with His power. Yet this last note is so full of delight that in it one exults, and is constrained to perpetual song. Because of God's action in grace, wherever man obeys, the best can be realized in spite of all the worst.

In the return of man to God through Christ the true God is known, and all the false ones are swept away. It is when God is so found that every wilful and sinful Ephraim exclaims, "What have I to do any more with idols?" When man sees the one Lord, and exercises in Him the one faith of submission, and is baptized into life and light and love by the one Spirit, he finds the one God and Father of all, Who is over all, transcendent; and through all, operative; and in all, immanent. In that moment he finds the one humanity, and in that moment self is smitten to the death, and love enthroned. Then begins the healing. Bitterness passes from the heart like a pestilential vapor driven forth before the rush of the wind from the snow-capped mountains. Round the new center of love-governed life all the circles of family, of society, of nation, and of race feel the thrill: and hastened is the day of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is

our evangel. Its notes are Love, the love of God; Faith, the answer of man; Hope, the certainty of victory. This evangel is not parochial, national. It is Divine, and therefore humane, and wherever it is proclaimed man finds it in very deed the one and only Gospel.

Brethren, my theme is inexhaustible, but my time is not. Those of you who know the Light most perfectly are most conscious of how human expositions of it are ever in danger of dimming its effulgence. For that in this message which has obscured the one Light of life I most sincerely pray the pardon of my gracious Lord. But if in any measure I have been able to speak, so as to be understood, the things that are deepest and most awe-inspiring in my own life, I thank God. Let us remember at least the great text, and so much of the suggestions made as will help us to clearer understanding of the unique and lonely splendor of our evangel.

In Christ to have found God, and man, and the law of Love, is to have become awfully conscious of the gross darkness that covers the people.

In Christ to have found the grace of God, the way of human salvation, and the assurance of the ultimate victory of Love; is to be filled with a passion for the proclamation of the glad good news to all lands and peoples for the glory of God, the healing of man, and the establishment of the Kingdom.

The Vision creates the passion; the passion compels the mission. If we lack missionary devotion it is because we lack passion, and if we lack passion it is because we lack vision.

John 1:11, 13. The Coming Of The Word.

John 1:11, 13.

The Coming Of The Word.

Rejected or Received?

He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:11; John 1:13

Perhaps one of the outstanding characteristics of Scripture is the simplicity with which the sublimest things are stated. There are times when one wonders whether we have not allowed the simplicity of this statement to rob us of the sense of awe which ought to possess us in the presence of the truth which it declares. In some senses the whole fact of the mission of our Lord by way of incarnation and all related thereto is perfectly and finally declared.

In this paragraph we have the third stage of one declaration; and all that which has preceded it is necessary to the full understanding of the sublimity and grandeur of these words of our text.

This prologue of the gospel of John opens with what I think I may without irreverence characterize as the most sublime and stupendous statement of the whole of the Divine library, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," a statement suddenly bringing us into the presence of matters that far transcend the possibility of human understanding, or interpretation. I venture to say in regard to this wonderful word at the opening of the gospel that one of the purposes of the Spirit in writing these sentences through John was to remind men that behind the fact of Christ are mysteries too sublime for their comprehension or final explanation, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That is an eternal fact, and therefore spiritual; and it is forever beyond the perfect comprehension of the finite mind.

Then follows a great parenthesis, in which John describes for us facts growing out of the eternal. In the opening word we have the statement of eternal facts concerning our Lord and Master, and immediately following we have the statement of temporal facts, that is, facts related to time. Time is but a term of human and finite life. There is a sense in which it would be accurate to say that in the being of God time is not. "The same was in the beginning with God," and in those words we are carried far down from the sublime, stupendous height of the first verse; for this beginning is the beginning of Genesis, of creation. Yet we see the same Person present when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy in the presence of the wonder of primal creation.

The apostle continues, and declares that the One Who was there has continued through all the processes of that which He originally created; nothing has been created subsequently, or by any development, or by new intrusion of power, apart from this selfsame Person. Then he inclusively affirms that He is the fountain of all life, in the words "In Him was life." Life in man became light as it is in no other part of the creation. Nothing in creation apart from man has light in that sense. Nothing in creation looks back into the face of the Creator and is capable of knowing the Creator.

Coming still further down in the order of statement, the apostle tells us that this selfsame One, the Word, the Light, has ever been in the world, even though the world has not known Him.

Then, at last, having made these statements concerning the far-flung splendors of the age-abiding past, and concerning the mystic, mighty processes of all creation, he declares that He, the One from Whom all things came, "came unto His own." The whole tragedy of human sin, if we can but understand it, is packed into the next word, "They that were His own received Him not." The whole glory of infinite grace sings its anthem into the word immediately following, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God."

Now let us try to fix our attention on the last fact. Leaving behind us all the mystery and glory of the eternal fact that He was with God and was God, leaving behind us from this moment all the mystery and glory of the process of creation, and that through all time He was in the world though the world knew Him not, we come to that central fact of human history, that He came, and that He came to His own.

In order to have a clear understanding of the teaching, we need to distinguish carefully between the two phrases which in our versions and in our translations appear to be identical, "His own." The phrase is twice repeated, "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." As a matter of fact, there is a very clear distinction between these two phrases, as all those familiar with the Greek New Testament, or the Vulgate, where the difference has been most carefully maintained, will recognize. "He came unto His own"—there the word is neuter—"and they that were His own"—there the word is masculine—"received Him not." I draw attention to the distinction in order that we may see how inclusive and comprehensive a declaration that is. "He came unto His own"—there the reference is not to people but to place. There are those who suggest that this should read, He came unto His own land. Bishop Westcott suggests that it should read, "He came unto His own home." I feel that neither is quite final, or quite satisfactory. Perhaps I have no right to say this, because I cannot supply the word that seems to be necessary. "He came unto His own"; why not leave it there? Or perhaps we take it as having application to the Creation, His own creation.

"And they that were His own received Him not"; there the masculine form stands for people, and is most certainly used in reference to that peculiar and separated people in the midst of human history which had been created a people for the purposes of God in reaching the world, and witnessing to Himself; and ultimately for the coming of Messiah, Who should be the Saviour of the world, the One for Whom the salvation of Jacob and the calling back of Israel was too light a thing according to Isaiah, and Who should be set for the proclamation of salvation to the ends of the earth.

He came unto His own land, if you will, home if you will; or, in the larger sense which reveals the economy and purpose of God, to His own creation; and His own people—in the midst of His own creation, those to whom after the flesh He did belong, those who constituted God's elect people for the purpose of revelation and who had so disastrously failed—received Him not. He came, the Messiah, Shiloh, the Branch, infinitely more than any prophet had dreamed or known. He came descended from David, according to Jewish genealogy, to exercise His ministry among His own, these people chosen for the purposes of the Divine economy. He spoke in the Jewish synagogues, He referred to the children's bread being given to the dogs; and He lived in the midst of degeneration, and in circumstances of limitation, but in perfect harmony with God in His own life. With what result? "His own received Him not." They tried to entangle Him in His talk, and His very own, the men of Nazareth, would fain have thrust Him headlong down the hill and destroyed him; and, at last, to make the whole tragedy brief in reverent statement, they delivered Him to Roman rule, and clamored for His blood. The end, on the human side, of that which we celebrate today, the coming into human history of the Child Who lay in a manger, was the Cross.

I know the difficulty and imperfection of that survey. No man in this house is more conscious of it than I am. The infinite past—to us past, but to God ever present—the beginning; and the word suggests our limitation, for there is no beginning with Him and no end; but therein the infinite mystery of the Person. Then creation, the stars singing, or if we did but dare to translate the Hebrew literally and accurately, the stars vibrating, and the angels singing, and presiding over all the mystic, majestic processes, this same Person. At last, because of human failure, and human sin, He came in circumstances of such lowliness that you may tell the whole tragedy of His human life in brief, brutal chapters. Chapter one, No room in the inn! Chapter two, The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head! Chapter three, Crucify Him! Chapter four, A borrowed grave in a rich man's garden! If we could come to these things as we ought, and see them as they are, in the light of all the infinite glory with which John's gospel opens, then we should know what sin is, and how far humanity has sunk, and how profound and appalling is the ruin of human nature. "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not."

Was His coming, then, a failure? Were all those years of toil for nought? Was that unveiling of Light, by its veiling, of no avail? Let us go again reverently to the culmination of it all, and behold the Man, despised, rejected, bruised, dead! "His own received Him not!"

But there were some who received Him. There were some who believed in His name. There were those who turned and followed Him imperfectly, but they followed; falteringly, but they followed; unworthily, but they followed! What of them? "To them gave He the right to become children of God." Some of us this morning meditated the anthem of the angels over the new race,

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased,

that is, among the children of God who result from the presence in the world of this One, those who have the new life. Again, above the glory of the declaration of His coming, and the tragedy of the story of human refusal, we listen to the gospel. Here it is, singing to us even out of the wonders of John's prologue, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of

God." Let us endeavor to understand this better by considering the privileges and responsibilities of children.

What are the privileges of children? Is my word the best one here? I hardly think so in relation to the first fact, for something deeper than privilege is the first note. Children are such as partake of their father's nature. That is the infinite, profound mystery of the thing resulting from the coming of our Lord. He gave men the right to become children of God. He made those to whom He gave that right, partakers—and do not be afraid of the word, it is Peter's word in his letter—partakers of the Divine nature. Adoption is a word of the New Testament, a great and gracious word, but it is not exhaustive if we attempt to interpret it by what we know of adoption. In very love you may adopt a child which is not your own, you may give it all the things it would have had, had it been your own child; but you cannot give it your nature. So far as that is true, your adoption fails to describe the new relation resulting when a man receives the rejected Saviour, which is that He gives that one the right, not to call himself, but to become, a child of God.

Let us think of this. Are you a child of God? Then already you are a partaker of His nature. I state it so because it is an amazing declaration. Sometimes the heart is tempted to be fearful and afraid in the presence of such revelations or statements of Scripture because we are so conscious of being unlike God. Think again, and always think patiently of your own life as a believer, with God's patience. What is the Divine nature? It is essentially love. It is therefore holiness. It is also infinite wisdom. Every child of God partakes of these facts of the Divine nature. Every child of God becomes in measure love-centered, in measure holy, in measure wise with the wisdom of eternity. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Let that principle be remembered by all such as tremble in the presence of the great revelation.

Think again. A man who becomes a son of God, a woman who becomes a daughter of God; men and women who become children of God, immediately share His nature of love. Here is something that has often been pointed out, and it cannot be too often repeated. The first movement of the communicated life of the nature of God to the soul of a human being is a love movement; the first true consciousness of the Divine nature in the soul of a man is one that negatives self and reaches out in strong desire to help another. Children of God, sharers of the Divine nature, primarily, fundamentally, are men and women first of all in whom love becomes the central fact.

It is equally true that the child of God has as desire, as impulse, as the central inspiration, a passion for holiness; but, oh, how we fail, how we sin, those of us who bear His name! But God understands—and it is true—that we do not want to sin. That is the life of God within us, the holy seed that cannot sin, that within us which is against sin. In all the complexity of our personalities that is the deepest thing. We sin against it, violate it, wander into bypaths; but that passion for holiness, the strong, urgent desire after purity, is the sharing of the Divine nature, and it is the result of having become a child of God, because we have received the rejected Christ.

We share also the wisdom of God. This I need not stay to argue, but I ask you to remember it in this way: the moment a man shares His life, becomes a son of God, in that very moment he knows things which before he did not know, he has an absolute assurance and certainty of things which before he wondered about. That is why, if you are not a Christian man, you cannot understand the quietness and peace of the man who is a Christian. I do not say that the truly Christian man has no intellectual difficulty, no problem of the mind; but I do say that no argument can shake his

confidence, or remove his trust. It is sharing the nature that brings new wisdom, new comprehension, new certainty.

The child is a partaker of the father's nature. The love of God becomes the central fact in the life of the child of God; His life creates the passion for holiness, and the wisdom of God is communicated to the soul, so that it enters into absolute assurance of things not seen and which never can be demonstrated by the processes of the logician, or be made certain by the argument of the senses. These are some of the first and fundamental values of this great word of John.

But children—and these are the implications of the text—are the recipients of the father's love and especial care. They are the special treasure of the Father, God's treasures. We have sometimes said that God condescends to take our name, "father," in order to teach us what He is. There is an element of truth in it; but I do not think that is the profoundest way to state the truth. I would rather say that God lent us His name, "Father," in order to teach us what we ought to be to our children. Yet it is perfectly fair to take the argument in the other way. If tonight, buffeted, bruised, storm-tossed, lonely man or woman, you want to know what your Father feels toward you, if you are a father or a mother, remember that your care for your child, your thought for your child, your patience with your child, your undying, unquenchable love for your child, all is but the faint shadow of God's love for you. He never forgets us, never abandons us, never gives us up.

Another implication is that children of God are heirs of their Father. That is stated explicitly in Scripture, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All His treasures are ours and are at our disposal so far as we are able to use them. He has treasures He will not give us yet because we do not know their value or use, and therefore possession would but harm us. He withholds nothing from us which would be for our healing, helping, and happiness. He Who spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us, shall He not with His Son freely give us all things? The world with its store of wonders untold is ours. We enter into the treasure-house of snow and ice, and all the wealth of creation. He Who was and is the Word, the Son of God, God the Son through Whom creation came, has brought us into the same relationship to His Father as He Himself is bearing, and we have entered into all the riches of God.

Again, children have a right to the Father's home. One does not often dwell on this fact, perhaps not enough. The saintly Rutherford said, We dwell too much in the wilderness, and lift our eyes too little to the city to which we go. It is good sometimes to enter the city, walk its streets in imagination, and examine the dwelling places, and become familiar with the habits of the home that lies beyond. His home is ours. Homeless the children of God can never be.

A tent or a cottage, what need I care?

They are building a palace for me over there.

He is preparing a place, but it is in one of the Father's many places, and all the home of God is ours.

Such privileges bring corresponding responsibilities. The first responsibility of the child to the father is that of the obedience of perfect love. Put it that way, think of it in that way. Think no longer of Him only as King, though King He is; think of Him no longer merely as Judge, though Judge He surely is; think no more of Him solely as Lawgiver, though Lawgiver He certainly is; but remember

He is Father, and that interprets the government of the King, and explains the method of the Judge, and unlocks the secret of the law. Therefore, as His child, let me hasten in the way of His commandments and let the answer of my life be the obedience of my love.

We have another responsibility for a little while, not only that of the obedience of personal relationship, but that of the honor of His name and character in the presence of His enemies. As the son of a famous house will move out to the ends of the earth and never forget the name he bears, so surely we who bear His name, and share this nature, must remember that upon us depends the honor of the name we bear, as we move among the sons of men, as children of God.

Now hear this final word. "He gave the right to become children of God." The word suggests man's helplessness. The word reveals the fact that having come to His own and being rejected by His own, and being rejected of the whole world, all those who had rejected Him, by that very rejection had manifested the fact of their distance from God. The word, then, first implies man's utter helplessness. How far away man is from God!

The word next implies Christ's power to communicate. "To them gave He the right to become children of God." How? The next verse is the full and final answer to that inquiry, "which were begotten, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There we are face to face with the mystic, central miracle of Christianity, which defies all analysis and explains all Christian phenomena; that is the central thing, begotten of God, that which cannot be seen in its happening, but which is demonstrated by the results it produces. The rejected Son of God is received by that man, believed on by that man, and that man is there and then not by his own act or will, but by the answer of omnipotent power, begotten. That is the central secret. This right to become children of God is not merely sentimental; it is not merely a covenant made between two; it is a vital fact.

Some man listening to this word, meditating the word here in the sanctuary, will come to the hour of decision, will receive the Saviour, and even though there be no lightning flash, no roll of reverberating thunder, that man will be begotten, born again, touched in the inner deep mystery of His life with the life of God, changed in his very nature. This is the mystic miracle of Christianity, Christ's power to communicate life.

Wherein lies His power to communicate life? Not in the fact of His eternal nature. Not in the fact of His creative ability. But in the fact of His Cross! Let Him interpret Himself, and let Him do it through this gospel of John, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." What for? To give it to the sheep, for that is the setting of this declaration, to communicate His very life to others.

What word shall I use? Suffer me this, it is very imperfect, but I know no perfect word, to liberate it through the mystery and tragedy of His death, that He might give it to men, and that they might share it, and come by the Cross and by the Cross alone into living union with Himself, and thus become children of God by virtue of the fact that they have His life, the life of the only begotten Son of God. He gave them, who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the will of God, the right to become the children of God.

That implies our authority, nay, declares it, to be children of God. It is a right based on power, on life, on identification. Unless I share Christ's life I am not a Christian. Though I sing the songs,

though I make a great profession, unless I share Christ's life, I am not a child of God.

What, then, is the final word of this meditation? What are the conditions on which a man, a member of the rebelling, refusing, sinning race may become a child of God? "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." Then, in order that there may be no mistake—I am thankful always for this interpretation—"even to them that believe on His name." Take the two phrases and use the one which helps you most, to receive Him, or to believe on His name. What is it to believe on His name? To receive Him. What is it to receive Him? To believe on His name. Avail yourself of that which helps you most, now at this moment. Receive Him, for He is rejected today. We sometimes read, If Christ came to Chicago—If Christ came to London. I do not like the suggestion, for it is false. He is in Chicago; He is in London. Yet let me borrow the idea for a brief moment. If He came what would London do with Him? London would not crucify Him in the way they did of old; but it would get rid of Him! Christ is rejected today. The human heart is still in enmity against God. Man is still fast bound in sin and nature's night, in spite of all his progress and intellectual advancement. Christ is rejected. We know it. There are whole circles of what we call cultured and refined society which, alas, and alas for the blasphemy of it, are celebrating Christmas who will have none of Christ. His very name is taboo, not to be mentioned! He is the rejected One.

Will you receive Him? Will you find room in your heart and life for the One for Whom there was no room in the inn of old? Will you crown Him Lord of your life? Will you yield all your being, bruised and battered and broken by your sin, incapable of finding God by your own wit and wisdom? Will you crown Him? Then to you He will give the right to become a child of God! And mark the spaciousness of it, whatever your theory may be, whatever your doctrine about sovereignty, elections, reprobations—all of which are true if you understand them—"as many as received Him!" Rich or poor, bond or free, black or white, these are incidental things that matter nothing; but a sharp dividing line is running through this audience tonight in the eyes of God between the man who has received Him and the man who has refused Him. Where are you? "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." If you passed into this place tonight, reverent, interested, but nothing more, will you now receive Him, believe on His name and all the name stands for? Will you give Him your life and let Him come into your life and master it? Then, when you pass from this building and walk the streets, you will be a child of God.

What is the application of all this? The first application is to the children of God. Let us answer by unqualified surrender. What is the application of this to those who are His, but are wandering away, backsliding, if I may use the word that we all know? It is this. He is waiting to receive you again. His word to you is, "I have somewhat against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." But this also, "Repent, and do the first works." Come back as you came at the beginning; and the word of gracious promise is, "I will heal all thy backsliding, and love thee freely."

The last word is to the man, the woman, young or old, in this house, who never yet has received Him. You have heard the Christmas bells again, and the Christmas carols, and you are entering into all the merriment of Christmas which may have in it much of blasphemy; but will you open the door of your heart and let Him in? Then He will keep Christmas with you, and you with Him, in the fellowship of the one life, He the Son of God, and you the child of God.

John 1:13. Regeneration.

John 1:13.

Regeneration.

Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:13

The principal and inclusive thought of the text is contained in the phrase "begotten... of God." By this phrase we are ushered into the presence of the central miracle of Christianity, the first, fundamental work of the Holy Spirit. All the powers and the wonders of Christianity proceed from this center. The new social order which ought to be established within the limits of the Christian Church, the influence on the world which the Church exerts, its message to men—of all these the power ultimately results from this initial, central, and fundamental miracle of the new birth of the individual soul. The dynamic in each case is that of the new life in the individual. That new life, mutually related in the Church, becomes the heavenly nation, and enables that nation to show forth "the excellencies of Him who called them out of the darkness into His marvellous light." That new life in the sacramental host creates the force of the Church's aggression in the world.

Therefore, although it is indeed the old, old story, and a theme most familiar in many of its aspects, it is perennially new; and the application of it can never be exhausted nor its consideration ever be out of place.

In order that we may think intelligently on all that is suggested by the phrase, I shall ask you to notice with me with some amount of care the interpolated negatives of this text, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." I shall ask you, in the second place, to consider the immediate statement in all its sublime brevity, recognizing the mystery but insisting on the fact, "begotten... of God." I shall ask you, finally, to consider the instructive context, for in some senses my text is wrested from its context, not in order to forget it, but to return to it.

In the first place, then, we turn to what I have described as the interpolated negatives. A threefold negative statement breaks in on the general phrase and demands attention by the centrality of its position. These words sweep away all false ideas concerning the nature of personal Christianity, and leave the mind clear for contemplating the sublime fact itself. The theme is that of the origin of life. Christianity here is looked on properly and necessarily as life, something infinitely more than creed, something infinitely more than a cult; life, ultimately perfected in the whole Body of Christ, which is the Church; life, fundamentally realized in the individual soul. The subject is the origin of that life. In the whole text I find the answer to a question of Nicodemus. He said to Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old?" People who criticize Nicodemus for that question, and think that it was flippant, have surely never understood the deep agony of soul out of which it proceeded. This question men must always ask when they come to any sense of God, of themselves, of sin. It is a question that suggests impossibility: "How can a man be born when he is

old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" How can a man start anew untrammelled by the past? How can a man escape from the insistent, haunting pressure of the things that lie behind him in his own life? How can a man be born anew? The answer is in my text; he can be "begotten... of God." Now all the difficulties are really suggested by these negatives: "Not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." In these three phrases we have a revelation of the only methods of which any man could think when he began to consider the possibility of a new beginning in his life. All man's theories concerning the origin of life are suggested by these phrases. Not of bloods, which is to say that the new, peculiar life of the Christian cannot be accounted for by the combination of anything that is material. If I may borrow a very modern phrase, this life cannot be accounted for by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms—"not of bloods." "Nor of the will of the flesh"; this life is not generated naturally, in any sense of the word. "Nor of the will of man"; its origin is not even in the rationality of humanity. That threefold line covers the whole ground of philosophic discussions on the origin of life. Within the three phrases of the inspired Word lie all the suggestions that have ever been made on the origin of any form of life. The apostolic word sweeps them all away and says, This life is not so to be accounted for.

In my text, in these negatives, I find, however, recognition of spiritual conceptions. I believe here is the answer of inspiration to sincere souls who are earnestly desiring, as was Nicodemus, something higher, nobler, earnestly desiring to escape from the bondage of the past and the paralysis of the present. How can a man be born again? Here are three ways in which it is impossible.

"Not of bloods," that is, by no mere process of nature. In that statement lie at least two suggestions: not by descent from our forebears after the flesh, and not by the evolution of anything that is homed within the material. A man begins his life again in the power of an entirely new life. In the first place, these gospels were written by Hebrews and undoubtedly were largely studied by Hebrews, and it was necessary that they should understand that this new, mystic, Christian life could not be begotten in the soul of a man by the fact of his relationship to what lay behind him, by descent, for instance, from Abraham. The truth abides. I am not a Christian because my father was a Christian. I cannot transmit my Christianity to my children. "Not of bloods." We may make our boast in our blood, and may even name it by certain colors, which seem to suggest some kind of aristocracy, but there is nothing in any blood inherently of the spirit-life, and there is nothing in any blood which secures to the man in whose veins it runs the possibility of the new birth and the new beginning.

Again, "nor of the will of the flesh." This suggests the sincere and passionate desire after the better, which expresses itself in personal effort, so that here we are taught that the new birth does not result from the determined throwing off of the evil that is within or from the persistent imitation of the good that lies without. Not by any natural force can a man enter into the new life. I am not undervaluing the attempt a man may make in his loneliness, apart from the revelation of the gospel, to master evil forces; I am not undervaluing the attempt a man may make to imitate that which is high and noble. In the final dealing of God with men I have no doubt whatever that the heathen who has never heard our gospel and has never walked in our light, but has answered the light within him, fighting against the beast within himself and climbing after the higher ideal, will have a far better chance than the man who names the name of Christ and sings the songs of the sanctuary and is content with some orthodoxy of the intellect, but has no response within his own

soul and no obedience in his own character. Not thus, however, can a man be born anew.

Once again, "nor of the will of man." No decision of man generates life. Even though Christ is presented to me, and I will to believe in Him and honestly do so, it is not of my willing that I am born again. The act of my will is not that which generates new life in me. Neither can any man bestow by life on man. These negatives completely sweep everything false from beneath us, and leave us face to face with the one and only method by which the soul can be born anew and enter into the Christian life. The gateway into the Church is the gateway of a life which never comes through blood, through effort, or as the result of rational and intellectual activity; which never comes by the soul's own effort.

So we come necessarily to the central fact itself: "Begotten... of God"! We have no explanation of the process of the mystery. We must not be deterred from the consideration because that admission is properly made. That is true of all life. The methods of the generation of life are absolutely hidden. The secret of life in every realm is unfathomed today, and in spite of all scientific investigation. Life eludes analysis and definition. The mystery of the budding and blossoming flower is as profound as the mystery of the new birth of an immortal soul. Involved within your personality as you know it, apart from spiritual things, there is a mystery which is as profound as the mystery which you have to face when you hear the central Christian doctrine of the necessity for the new birth. The phrase of my text speaks of the Agent, God; and of the begetting and the beginning of new life. It is for us to consider what the phrase suggests, remembering here also that "the secret things belong unto God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The communication of life is from God; it is new life, different in quality from the life which we have lived until we receive it; but it is life as definite and positive as any life, finding its demonstration in the results that follow its possession. The mystery of its coming none can explain. When Nicodemus asked his question, the Lord employed the simple symbol of the wind to help him to understand that he could not understand: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The thought of the text taken in its simplicity is that the life bestowed is of a new quality, different from any other life, the very life that is needed if a man is to begin again and is to realize all that in which he has previously failed. In the discourse contained in the tenth chapter of this gospel our Lord made this declaration: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." In the course of the same address He said: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again." His argument and teaching is that His life was laid down in order that that very life might be communicated to others. Again, the mystery of the process abides; but here is the declaration of the fact, and the demonstration of its accuracy to be found in the results produced. Peter, James, and John were never born again until the day of Pentecost. Until then they were disciples, the Hebrew disciples of a Hebrew Messiah, following His teaching, obeying His commands so far as they had light, naturally shrinking from His cross as the natural man forever shrinks from the cross—but pressing after Him with fine loyalty though with much trembling. In the strict sense of the word they were disciples only. They never shared His life while He was among them. They never saw with His eyes, though they saw His eyes and the love light shining from them. They never heard with His ears, though they heard His speech and were astonished. They never felt with His heart, though they loved Him and knew the warmth of His affection. There was no

identification with Him in those early days. They were never born anew, until on the day of Pentecost there came the Holy Spirit, by which they were baptized into union with Christ. This union was not of a common sentiment, not a union born of a common admiration; it was a definite, positive, real, though mystical, union in life. From that baptism of the Spirit they began to live one life with Jesus Christ; He, now ascended, glorified, Man of their humanity, at the right hand of the Father; and they, on the earth, in the world, in the midst of its temptations and its sins and sorrows, burdens and responsibilities; but their life was His life, His life was their life. They were living one life with Him.

You say that is theory. No, it is a fact, demonstrated by the change in the men. Look at these disciples in the gospels, and then look at them in the Acts of the Apostles: the change is radical, and marvelous. They were changed from men, struggling, climbing, endeavoring, failing, to men newborn, living one life with Christ, mastered by love, illumined by light, doing exploits in the power of the dynamic actually communicated to them, of which they were devoid until that time. I look at them before Pentecost, and I hear them saying in the presence of the Cross and passion, the shame and suffering, Not that, Lord; that be far from Thee! I find them almost immediately after, their backs waled with rods, bruised and bleeding, and I read that they were "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name." They were newborn men, men mastered no longer by their own lives according to their first birth, but by this mystic life which did not destroy the capacities of the first birth, but fulfilled them, glorified them, ennobled them. This being born of God is the communication to the soul of the very life of Christ which is at once human and divine. The newborn soul is one who has received into his humanity the humanity of Christ in its perfection and the Deity of Christ in its fellowship, and so that soul has become, to use Peter's illuminative word, a partaker of the Divine nature. That new life never comes of bloods, or of effort of the flesh, or of rational, intellectual struggle. It comes directly from God.

This new life means renewal of the dead. Here is its supreme wonder. The Christ-life, given to the individual, shared by the Church aggressive in the world, is always life bestowed on those who were dead. This Christ-life God bestows not on sinless beings but on sinners, so that the great and marvelous fact is that the new birth, the new creation, is life out of death.

The new creation is after the pattern of the story we find in the book of Genesis. In the first verse I read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That is a complete story in itself, there is nothing else to be said. Then what? "And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." That is not how God made it. Isaiah declares, "He made it not waste and void." Between verses one and two in Genesis, something happened, some cataclysm, some catastrophe, some upheaval. God has not revealed to us what happened. It may be that this very earth of ours was the place which angels first inhabited, where their probation was spent. I do not know. Between the original creation of God and the picture of the second verse it is certain that there was a cataclysm. Perhaps some day, in the fuller light, we shall discover that back there is the solution of the problem of evil and the genesis of it. What next? "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." In all that remains of that chapter we find, not creation, but restoration; a new creation out of a dead creation, the bringing forth of cosmos out of chaos. Things did not begin with chaos. God is not the God of confusion. Chaos never originates with God. It is held in His grasp and never allowed to escape that grasp; but the first thing is cosmos, order, beauty. Then, somehow, chaos; and then what? A

new creation, restoration; the brooding Spirit of God, the uttered word of God and the first fiat, "Let there be light."

That is a perfect picture of the new birth of a soul. This Christ-life, with all its glories of grace and truth, its final, absolute, wondrous perfections, is not bestowed on perfect souls. God is not gathering into His heaven essentially new creations, having formed them in the likeness of Christ, without relation to past failure; He is bestowing this mystic, wondrous life on souls that may be described as waste and void, in darkness; on which souls He comes by the Holy Spirit, brooding on them, touching them with new life; communicating it to them, so that they rise to the realization of all that which in themselves was waste and void, to the fulfilment of all that which lay in chaotic disaster. The new birth is for finding and fulfilling every distinct capacity created by God in the first birth. To the individual soul born of God is communicated the very life of Christ, which, being possessed, takes hold of that life to which it comes, cleansing it, purging it, renewing it, energizing it, enabling it to rise to the fulfilment of that which lay within it, but in destruction; and, higher yet, to a range of being which is far beyond anything possible to humanity apart from sin, and apart from the redeeming work of Christ. The great possibility of that birth was that for which God became flesh and tabernacled among men. To make that birth possible He granted the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The first thing in the Christian fact is the new life of a soul; it is also the fundamental thing in the Christian witness in power by the Church in the world.

In the third place, and finally, let us notice the instructive context. The previous statement is linked to the text by the word "which," "which were born." Who are they that are thus born? Let us read. "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." In that declaration we have the whole account of the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by those who were His own, and there is a sense in which all men were His own, all races were His own. As presently all things are to be summed up in Him because all things proceed from Him, then all were His own. The verdict against Him was the verdict of humanity. It was the angry refusal of chaos to crown the King of order. It was the hot, rebellious refusal of the human soul, generically in revolt, to give Him His right of way. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." Preliminary to the birth, then, is the reception of the Christ. The people who received Him were born of God. There is a parenthetical word which interprets this: "Even to them that believe on His name." We may take for the illumination of our own souls whichever of these words does most profoundly appeal to us, for they are mutually interpretative. Believe on Him—what is that? Receive Him. Receive Him—what is that? Believe on Him. Only we must understand that belief here is not mere intellectual assent, it is reception of Him. All this is theory, not therefore untrue, but perhaps not powerfully appealing. Let us go back to the picture suggested by these words of John: "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." Of that rejection the Cross was the ultimate expression. The rulers have said: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Will no one receive Him? Yes, there is one soul who will receive Him. A dying malefactor, nailed to the cross, in extremis, there and then came to faith, than which there is no more wonderful faith in the whole of the New Testament or the Bible itself. Illuminated in his dying, he saw the Crucified coming into a Kingdom. Can anything be more impossible than that? Can a crucified peasant ascend a throne? Can a murdered reformer ever come to the imperial purple? The only crown He wears is one of thorns, the only throne He has is a Roman gibbet, the only purple is that of His own blood as it flows from His wounds. He is the despised and rejected of

men. But one soul crowned Him: "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." That is believing on Him; that is receiving Him. With infinite, majestic dignity, and all supreme authority, the answer came from the dying One to the man who received Him: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." He opens the Kingdom of heaven to all believers! In answer to that act of faith, by which that soul did receive this Christ, that soul received the gift of life. Presently the King was dead to all human appearance, and then in all probability they broke the legs of the malefactor that he might die swiftly; and now He was dead. So the world looks on, and goes its blind and ignorant way, measuring reality by the transient and trivial things that appear on the surface. Just out of sight the King meets the malefactor, and they are together in Paradise. And not to that dying malefactor only, but to others, and yet others; and on down through the ages the mystic wonder runs, and the sacramental host of God has been multiplied:

Part of His host hath crossed the flood,

And part is crossing now;

and the great, holy Catholic Church of the first-born grows into the holy temple of the Lord, always by the gift of life to individual souls who were dead, and always by the communication of the dynamic of infinite order and beauty to souls that were ruined and in chaos. It seems to me that heaven must be silent with wonder, and the angels forget to sing in silent adoration, as they watch the wonder of the process by which the Church grows to its finality, as individual souls are born again.

All this is worth while only when it becomes personal. If our Christianity falls short of that experience, then remember we are not Christian in the New Testament sense of the word. We may be admirers of the teaching of Jesus, we may most sincerely hold that His example was perfect, we may even be trying in our own strength to obey His teaching and imitate His example; but nothing short of new life creates the Christian soul.

To any who are asking the question sincerely, not with the flippancy born of intellectual arrogance, but with the earnestness begotten of spiritual agony, How can I be born again? my message is this: There is new life for you which God alone can bestow. That life He does bestow without favor on all souls who crown His Son Lord and Master of their lives, and trust to Him their destiny, and yield to Him their weakness, resting wholly on His merit, confiding only in His mercy, going forward alone in His might. So may it be ours, all of us, to know this life which is begotten of God.

John 1:14. The Word Became Flesh.

John 1:14.

The Word Became Flesh.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Whatever, in the complexity of present-day thought, may be our view of the method of the advent, it is impossible to deny that nigh two thousand years ago that happened which has absolutely and completely revolutionized human thinking and human life. The student of history is always interested in tracing great streams to their sources. The rise and fall of dynasties, great discoveries, revolutions, all of them are important and interesting, and yet in some senses all these things are related directly or indirectly to the one event described in the mystic language of this text.

In this advent of Jesus there was both a crowning and a comprehension of all that was excellent in the past; and the conception and initiation of all the ideas and movements which are lifting humanity ever nearer to God.

We come to this statement of John the mystic in order to consider what it teaches concerning the fact of the advent, concerning the revelation resulting from that fact, and, finally, concerning the values resulting from the revelation.

In order that we may see the simplicity of the statement, I have omitted the parenthesis. It is important. It states a truth concerning the Person Whom we are to consider from a slightly different standpoint. It lies in the heart of this verse by way of explanation and exposition, and yet it may be omitted without doing any violence to the thought. We consider, then, this simple and sublime statement, "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us... full of grace and truth."

The statement of fact which this verse contains can be understood only as we remember that in this prologue of the Gospel of John the verse in which the text occurs is intimately connected by way of declaration with the first verse of the chapter. The intervening verses constitute a parenthesis. Consequently we bring these two verses together in order that we may understand the facts declared in our text. I will read them in intimate connection. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us... full of grace and truth." This is one continuous statement, and the fact that there is a great descent from the first statements to the second demonstrates the wisdom of inserting the parenthesis, for this helps us to see how great is the descent.

While the first and second statements present one complete declaration, they nevertheless constitute a perfect balance. The first three statements must be borne in mind as we consider the second three, for the second three need the first three.

There are three first statements: "In the beginning was the Word"; "the Word was with God"; and "the Word was God." There are three second statements: "The Word became flesh"; "and dwelt, pitched His tent among us"; and "full of grace and truth." Now, if we take these two series and bring them together, not exactly as one continued statement, but part to part, we shall see that the whole declaration tells how infinite and hidden mysteries came into the realm of finite and revealed things. "In the beginning was the Word"... "The Word became flesh." "The Word was with God"... "and pitched His tent among us." "The Word was God"... "full of grace and truth." Let us attempt an examination of these three couplets.

Taking the first half of the first, every phrase defies us. Every word is beyond our comprehension. "In the beginning"! We may at once reverently declare that the thought transcends the possibility of our understanding. It is one of those matchless sweeps of inspiration that go beyond all the thinking of man. "In the beginning." I lay my hand on anything in this world, and I begin to ask questions concerning its origin. I begin to track it through long and tedious processes back to the point of its initiation. No man has ever been able to do this successfully. We have never been able to say the final thing concerning origins by the processes of investigation and discovery, but we are always attempting to find them, and rightly so. Man has more than once formulated a philosophy, has more than once suggested a solution, but as surely as he has done so, within a decade, or quarter of a century, his philosophy has passed away, and his solution is found to be false. This phrase takes us behind all the processes, behind the fact of the initiation of all things material and mental, behind all the things of which man can be conscious, and we bow in the presence of the statement, and reverently declare that it transcends us.

Or if I take the other expression, "the Word," I am equally conscious of disability to comprehend its final meaning. I am personally inclined to think we get to the sublimest meaning as we take the simplest, and remember that a word is an expression. A word is that by which one person expresses his thought to another, so that the other may be able to understand it. A word spoken by one person to another is the revelation of something in the mind of the one that the other did not know, and could know only through that word. A word is a revelation made, a thought communicated. "The Word was in the beginning," a method of manifestation, a method of speech, that in and of God by which He made something of Himself known to those without Himself, apart from Himself, beyond Himself.

You inquire whether the Word was a Person, and I reply, What do you mean by a person? Until you have defined your term "person"—which, by the way, never occurs in Scripture—I cannot answer you. If you tell me that man is a person, I say, Yes, undoubtedly he is; but he is finite. Now, a finite person is an incomplete person, and therefore not a perfect revelation of what a person is. A perfect Person must be infinite also.

This at least is declared, that in the beginning there was an expression of Deity. But that is not helpful to us, for it was beyond our finite comprehension. "The Word became flesh," that is where the help begins. When the infinite Person—and I do not quite know what that means—becomes a finite Person Whom I can understand, I do pass into some new appreciation of the character and the value, and the fact of the infinite that transcends me, "In the beginning was the Word.... And the Word became flesh."

A few words only are necessary concerning the second of these couplets, "And the Word was with God." That which was the method of Divine speech and manifestation was with God, and again I freely confess to you here are terms, finite terms struggling to express infinite meaning, and failing even though they be the words of inspiration. Then I read, "He pitched His tent among men"; and the thing that has baffled me and perplexed me, and overwhelmed me in the realm of Deity, which is beyond my comprehension, becomes something I can look at within the realm of human life: "He tabernacled among men."

And then, finally, when I read in the great introductory word, "the Word was God," both with God, and God; both method of Divine expression, and that which expresses itself, again I am overwhelmed, I cannot understand. Again I feel that I have read a simple sentence that is so full of mystery as absolutely to defy my explanation. Then I read "full of grace and truth," and I have an unveiling of the nature of God, though perhaps no explanation of the method. I have seen One Who is flesh, and pitches His tent by my side in the valleys where I dwell, upon the mountains to which I climb, in the midst of the life I live; and in the life of this One grace and truth flash and flame in glory. I am told that that is God, and I feel, not that I have been able to encompass all the mystery of Deity by revelation, but that I have been taken through a wicket gate, and my eyes are gazing out upon light such as I had never seen. I have at least been able to look through a veil at that which unveiled would have blinded me: "In the beginning was the Word," and I do not understand it. "The Word became flesh," and it has come within the reach of my hand. "The Word was with God," and I cannot comprehend the meaning of the statement, but the Word "tabernacled among us," pitched His tent near us, and I at least may draw near and behold. "And the Word was God," and there is no more in the statement than there was in all the other things that men had said long before. But "full of grace and truth," and here are two essential facts concerning God which will help me.

Pass over this ground with me again. "In the beginning was the Word"... "the Word became flesh." What does this signify? Eternity, the ageless age, coming into time; expressing itself in the language of time, manifesting itself in the method of time. "In the beginning was the Word," the utterance of God; not letters, or syllables or words merely; not a literature which I can commence here, and finish presently, but the Word of God. Not only that which fills the whole fact of space so far as I can imagine it; but "the Word became flesh," that is, came to a locality; it came to a place to which I can travel; it came to a place to which coming, I can see.

"The Word was in the beginning," the infinite, but it became flesh, the finite. "In the beginning was the Word," the infinite Wisdom, the all-encompassing Wisdom, the Wisdom that lies at the back of all manifestation, the Wisdom of which the preacher sang long ago in the Proverbs. But "the Word became flesh," that is, Wisdom began to spell itself out in an alphabet. We sometimes quote the words of Jesus uttered to John in Patmos as though they were full of dignity. So they were, but they have another tone also. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last." There is some sense in which in God there is no first, no last; and, consequently, that is not a figure of completeness intended only to create amazement and wonder. It is the symbol of simplicity, it is the figure of the alphabet. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," the alphabet which the little child may learn. Yet remember that all literature lies within the compass of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Do not talk to your children about a thing being as easy as A B C. It is the hardest thing we have to learn. You have forgotten the task, but it was such. You did not know it, but in that task

you were beginning to climb up to that literature which you love, and all its vast reaches lay before you. So when the Word became flesh infinite Wisdom expressed itself in an alphabet. That began nineteen centuries ago. There had been attempts before, hieroglyphics before, but at last the mysterious hieroglyphics of the past found the key of interpretation in Alpha and Omega—the Alphabet. We must be little children to begin; but we never arrive at the infinite literature to which it introduces us until we have learned it. The Word, the infinite Wisdom, dwelt with God, and was the mighty Workman at His right hand when He created, by whatever process I care nothing. That Wisdom became an alphabet when a baby Boy lay upon His mother's breast in the Judean country.

But notice the next couplet of contrast. "The Word was with God." There are those who can explain it to me. I cannot. I make no attempt to do it. But I will attempt the next. He "tabernacled among us." This Person Who defies definition—for I do not know the meaning of "person," as I have already said—this Person "tabernacled among us," and John of the mystic vision had looked at Him, and warm-hearted Peter had gazed upon Him, and all the rest had seen Him. He "tabernacled among us." Now for the parenthesis a moment. "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." "We beheld," we saw that which was with God, and the statement overwhelms us. I love the other rendering of that, not accurate translation perhaps, but certainly correct interpretation. He pitched His tent by us, and came to live where we lived. He pitched His tent down by the side of my tent. It is the figure of the Arab nation, and of one who is going to take the same journey with me and be under the same rule with me. He "tabernacled among us." We are pilgrims through the world, coming out of darkness, and passing toward the darkness. He "tabernacled among us," put His tent down by the side of our tent.

Yet that is not all, and we must interpret this word "tabernacled" by the religious thinking of the man who wrote the words, by John's religious conviction and upbringing. If you do that you will see that this word "tabernacled" has its explanation in the religious mysteries of the past. I go back again to the kindergarten days of religion, to the hieroglyphics of the past, and I find the Tabernacle. You remember how in the Old Testament that word "Tabernacle" is written descriptively in two ways. Sometimes it is called the Tabernacle of witness, and sometimes it is called the Tabernacle of the congregation, and both are faulty. May I take the same ideas, and express them in other words? The Tent of meeting rather than the Tabernacle of the congregation. The Tent of testimony, rather than the Tabernacle of witness. That is to say, when in your Old Testament you read that the Tabernacle was the Tabernacle of the congregation, it does not mean that it was the place where men congregated for worship, but that it was the place where God and man met for fellowship. The Tabernacle of meeting was the place, God-appointed, where He met with man, and to which man came to meet with Him.

It was the Tent of testimony, which did not mean that it was the place where men proclaimed the truth of God. The Tent of testimony was the place where God spoke to men, and men listened. Now, wrote John, who had been brought up in that religion, and to whom that symbolism was always luminous, the Word pitched His tent among us. That was the Tabernacle for which we had been waiting, toward which we had been looking. He became at once Tent of meeting between God and man, and Tent of testimony through which God spoke to man. And so in this Word, the infinite and incomprehensible mystery of the eternities, Who became finite and comprehensible in time, by becoming flesh, I find my tent of meeting with God. He is all I am, but He is all God is. And

when I lay this hand of mine upon His hand, I have touched the hand of a man such as I am; but I have taken hold of the might of God. And when I look into the eyes of the Man Who pitched His tent among Galilean fishermen I have looked into human eyes all brimming with love, but through them I have looked out into the very heart of the Infinite God. He is the Tent of meeting. I find God in Christ, as nowhere else. I cannot find Him in Nature. I see His goings; I hear the thunder of His power; I mark the matchless beauty of the delicate touch of His pencil on the petals of the flowers; but I cannot find Him, I cannot reach Him. But here, as God is my witness, I come to the Christ—warm, sweet, tender, even yet:

A present help is He:

And faith has still its Olivet,

And love its Galilee.

I feel in my spirit the consciousness of the human Christ; but enwrapping me all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And because He pitched His tent by me, and pitches it by me still in all sympathy, I have found God, and if you take that away I have lost God. "He tabernacled among us," He pitched His tent by us. It was the Tent of meeting, and it was the Tent of testimony. Through that life God spoke so that I might hear; and to explain that I must use terms that seem to be contradictory, but the relation of which I am sure you will see. In Christ, the long, long silence became speech. But in Christ the thunder became a whisper. Silence became speech. Men had been waiting and longing and listening, climbing mountains for stillness, getting into loneliness to hear. They had heard, but they had never heard. They had heard the thunder of His power, but they had never heard all that they needed to hear. But in Him Who pitched His tent by the side of the fishermen, they heard. And the long silence and all the loneliness became the sweet speech for which men had waited; and all the thunder that had reverberated around the rocky fastnesses of Sinai became love whispers in the ears of listening individuals when He became flesh. "The Word became flesh, and pitched His tent among us."

"And the Word was God," and again I remit the mystery, "full of grace and truth." All that men saw and heard in Jesus was an unveiling of Deity. The attractiveness of His grace, the awfulness of His truth, were revelations to men of God.

If that is the fact of the incarnation, what is this inclusive revelation that it has brought to us? "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth." Grace. You may express that in another way, in another phrase, in another sentence, of this selfsame writer. "God is love," "full of grace." Truth. You may express that also in another way. "God is light," "full of truth." Out of the grace came the redemption. Out of the truth was manifest the righteousness. The supreme revelation that Jesus made to men was not a revelation first of grace, or only of grace; not a revelation first of truth, or only of truth; but a revelation of the relation between "grace" and "truth."

Look at them in separation. Do not rob this word "grace" of its beauty by reading into it merely the ideas of a human system of theology. We behold him "full of grace," full of tenderness, full of gentleness, full of pity, full of all that winsomeness and attractiveness that made Him dear to children, and to needy men, and to sinning souls. We behold Him full of grace, full of grace to children, gathering them into His arms, putting them into the midst of His disciples; full of grace toward the afflicted, forevermore moved with compassion in the presence of any limitation. No

cripple ever crossed the vision of Christ without Christ feeling the pain of all the cripple's limitation. Full of grace toward sinners. Take the New Testament and read it once more, and see if you can find one harsh thing He said to a sinner. Harsh things to oppressors and to sinners in that particular respect; but to someone taken in an act of sin, overwhelmed with the burden of sin, never an angry word. Full of grace, full of winsomeness, full of beauty. That is human. I am not dealing with all the infinite values of the word "grace," but with the simplicity of it as manifested in the life of this Man.

But "full of truth," capable of anger, capable of severity, capable of cursing as well as of blessing, with lips that could frame a "Woe" of unutterable terror as well as a "Blessed" of unutterable tenderness. Truth, and truth manifesting itself in anger against all selfishness, all tyranny, all sin. Grace acting in truth because it is grace. Truth acting in grace because it is truth. Here is the revelation that surprises. We have put these into two compartments. We often still speak of the grace of God and the righteousness of God as though they were poles asunder. They are never separated. They cannot be separated, and in the moment in which you deny truth, you deny grace. If there be no severity in God He is incapable of tenderness. Because there is love there is light, and it is love that will make no peace with the thing that spoils and harms and ruins. Grace and truth always go together. I have referred to His grace as manifested in His welcoming of the children. I have declared that truth could be manifest in anger, and these two things were operating at the same moment. When He said the most beautiful thing that men ever heard concerning little children, there was the tone of anger in His voice. The voice which was brimful of tenderness was vibrant with thunder. The disciples would have kept the children away. Why should He be angry for a small thing like that? It is not a small thing to keep a child away from Christ. It is a misunderstanding of God and the child; and the man who misunderstands God and the child is a curse to society, find him where you will. Jesus was angry, and through the tenderness of the welcome to the bairns throbbed the anger of truth against a false idea of dignity that excluded bairns. That is but illustration of grace and truth acting together, as they did from beginning to end. This was the revelation that came to the world.

So, finally, we see the values of this incarnation, truth concerning God and man, and grace joining men to God. In Jesus man found God. In Him man finds himself. These were the two things that men had lost, their knowledge of God and their knowledge of themselves. The great and final word of the teaching of one of the greatest Greek masters, Socrates, was, "Man, know thyself"; but men could not obey him, and Socrates had to say so. He confessed that it was not given to him to do anything but teach humanity to ask questions. He said some other teacher must come and answer the questions, and in that word he revealed how much of heaven's light he had in his own soul. Jesus came to answer the questions, and man found himself again, and realized the meaning of the mystery of his life, when the Word became flesh, and tabernacled, pitched His tent, by the side of him. And that tabernacling meant not merely truth concerning God and man, but triumph for God and man. It was God's highway to accomplish His purposes for man. It was man's highway unto the purposes of God.

Let me say in conclusion that we underrate the infinite value and meaning of this fact of incarnation when we speak of it as something in the past. The incarnation is an abiding fact, not something merely past. At this very hour that same Person is at the center of the universe of God, the risen, glorified and enthroned Man. And if you tell me that that is to state something that cannot

be believed because it transcends the possibility of belief, I tell you that it no more transcends the possibility of belief than does the fact of the historic incarnation. If He came into human flesh, and tabernacled among us, and if while there He could speak of Himself as yet in the bosom of the Father, and as yet being the Word with God, so remember that today He abides for manifestation at the center of the universe of God, the risen and glorified Man, at once a prophecy and a promise, hearing which we dare believe that at last He also will perfect us, and we shall see Him, and be with Him, and be like Him.

John 1:43. Follow Me.

John 1:43.

Follow Me.

I have selected these two words for our present meditation because they seem to have been the favorite form of invitation on the lips of our Master, and I have selected them from this particular verse because it gives us the earliest recorded use of them.

Other occasions of their use we read as lesson. A little later on one of his disciples expressed a desire to remain with his father, saying, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," which, by the way, did not at all mean that his father was then dead; in the Eastern idiom he was expressing the fact that he was devoted to his father, and desired to abide with him until the hour of his death. To such a one Jesus said, "Follow Me... leave the dead to bury their own dead." A little further on, passing on His way, He saw Levi (Matthew) sitting at the receipt of custom; looking at him, He said, "Follow Me," and immediately Matthew left the seat of custom and went after Christ. The words next occur, so far as we are able to arrange them chronologically, in that memorable scene at Caesarea Philippi, when Peter came to the hour of his great and glorious confession concerning Christ and thus made possible the great and glorious confession of the Christ concerning His Church, which was immediately followed by the Master's declaration of His coming suffering and triumph as He spoke of going to Jerusalem to be buffeted and bruised, and killed, and on the third day to be raised from the dead. Against that word as to His coming suffering, blind but intense affection made this protest, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee," and was sternly rebuked by Jesus, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art a stumblingblock unto Me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Immediately, in that atmosphere and in those circumstances, Jesus uttered these words again, making them most emphatic in application to His own disciples, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Yet a little later in that period of public ministry when the Lord was even nearer to His Cross, there came the young ruler, clean, upright, straightforward, yet conscious of a lack in life, as his question gives evidence, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" To him the Lord ultimately replied, "Follow Me." Then again, beyond the Cross and the resurrection, in the flush of that wonderful morning by the shore of the lake as He restored Peter after his deflection from faith, the Lord's last word to him in that connection was, "Follow Me"; and again beyond it, Peter, still the same in temperament, inquired what John was to do, and in words that have in them an ultimate rebuke thrilling with tenderness Jesus said to him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." There is a most illuminative sequence in our Lord's use of this particular term, "Follow Me."

Let us first inquire the simplest meaning of this call which Jesus uttered in so many different circumstances, and with such varied application, "Follow Me." Let us first carefully observe that there is a marked difference between this word and another which our Lord made use of in other circumstances. Subsequently to the initial call of Peter and Andrew, James and John, Jesus found

them fishing and He called them, no longer to Himself as disciples, but to definite co-operation in service. Our old version reads thus, "He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"; the Revised Version has drawn attention to the difference as it translates, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men." In one of the passages which we have read the two ideas are present, the one containing the word spoken by our Lord at Cæsarea Philippi, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"; there are two ideas, to come after, and to follow. If we were dealing simply with English words, this might be spoken of as a distinction without a difference; to come after is to follow, to follow is to come after; but we are dealing with the words which our Lord used, and in them there is a very distinct difference. He did not say, Come after Me, to Philip when He first found him. He did not say, Come after Me, to Peter when He last left him. What, then, did He say? The word He employed is one, but it is constituted of two parts, the first of which I shall speak of as a particle of union, and the second as a simple word which means a way. What, then, did Jesus say? Come in the way with Me. This is My way; I am walking this way, Come after Me. The thought involved in following is included, but there is more in it than that. I shall make no attempt to minimize the imperial call of Christ, I will attempt to emphasize it presently; but let us at first emphasize the sweetness and tenderness and grace of it. I shall attempt to interpret it thus—this is not translation, this is interpretation—"He findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Join Me in the way." He said to Peter by the shore of the Sea of Galilee; "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee, whither thou wouldest not.... Join Me in the way." Presently, when Peter said "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus answered, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Join Me in the way."

I go back to the ancient prophecy of Isaiah and I read this, "We have turned every one to his own way," and in the same prophecy, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." It is that One Who spoke to Philip and said, This is My way, join Me in this way. It is an imperial call, an unequivocal demand for surrender, but thrilling with infinite grace, calling men at once to subjection to Him, and to comradeship with Him, in the way.

This is perhaps the simplest and the sublimest formula of the Christian life to be found in the pages of the New Testament.

It is the simplest. It is Christ's word at the wicket, and it is simple enough for the tiniest child. It presupposes nothing as necessary but need and trust, and trust acting itself out. Do not forget that, I pray you, when you are dealing with children. Do not ask your child to accept a doctrine in order to be a Christian. Do not demand of your child some experience through which you have passed. Say what Jesus would have said to the little one, and try to say it, so far as you can, in our Anglo-Saxon speech, with the same thought there was in His speech. Jesus says to the little one, Come along with Me, walk My way, come with Me.

But if it is the simplest, it is also the sublimest. If it is the King's word at the wicket gate, so simple that every child can hear and understand it, it is the King's perpetual demand. He never changes it from the wicket to the homeland. If it is so wooing and winsome that the little one can hear it and obey it, it is severe enough for the most highly developed man, demanding renunciation of all that hinders, surrender of all that a man is, and absolute, unquestioning loyalty to the Lord. If it presupposes nothing other than trust and need as necessary on the part of the one to whom it is addressed, it assumes the wisdom, power, and right of the One Who utters the word; for we must interpret this word of Jesus in the atmosphere of His ministry and revelation. We must remember that He came to reveal, and to reveal God; that He claimed it as His supreme business to speak to men in the realm of the spiritual and eternal. When He said to Philip, "Join Me in the way," He was not thinking merely of a journey from Galilee to Judæa, He was thinking of that pathway that a pilgrim must take ere he find his way to the everlasting habitations. Consequently, when He said, "Follow Me," there was on His part the assumption of infinite wisdom, absolute right, and perfect power. So that whether I think of the little child unable to appreciate high doctrines of grace or of the man fully intellectually equipped for facing the final problems of life, the King has the same thing to say and He says it with wooing winsomeness to the little one, "Follow Me," Join Me in the way; and He says it with superlative, unequivocal authority to the proudest intellect that has ever faced life's problems, "Follow Me," I will solve the mystery and fulfil thy life.

Let us turn now to examine some of our Lord's uses of the words. As hurriedly as we may we will glance at the passages I have read to you, and see what He meant when He said, "Follow Me."

The first occurrence of the word arrested and guided the slow man. Some of you will remember that three years and nine months ago I preached on the same text dealing wholly with Philip and tracing his story. He was always the slow man, the quiet, unobtrusive man. As Mr. Elvet Lewis beautifully says, he was the man who was always on the fringe of the crowd, and was therefore able to help people whom others might have missed. He was a man who did not seek Christ, not I think because there was no longing in his heart for the things that are high and holy; but because of his slowness. He was the man whom Christ went and found, knowing perfectly the secret in his heart though no one else knew it. He was the man, the slow man, who made no impression on his fellow disciples, or so little that Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us nothing about him except that he was one of the twelve. It was only John who could appreciate all the silent, subtle forces that did not impress others in that man on the fringe of the crowd. All the stories about Philip are in John. To that slow man Jesus came and said, "Follow Me," Join Me in the way. Philip was arrested, and from that moment found his Guide.

The next incident in chronological order is of a strange and startling nature, a contrast to the first. As I have already said, a disciple of Jesus asked to be permitted to return to his father and take care of him. It may be interesting—I say this especially for young people—that I should remind you again of the light on this passage that came to me from a conversation with Dr. George Adam Smith. He told me how on one occasion he was in the byways of Syria and was anxious to secure a certain young Arab to be his guide. The young man sat in the door of his tent, and there by his side sat his father, hale, hearty, patriarchal. Dr. George Adam Smith was trying to persuade the young man to accompany him on a somewhat perilous adventure, and he refused, saying: "Suffer me first to bury my father," thus using the actual words we have in the gospel story. Here, then, was a man who asked to be permitted to bury his father, to stay by him and care for him until his

earthly life was run. Jesus said to him, "Follow Me.... Leave the dead to bury their own dead." Mark this, I pray you, this call of Jesus brooks no burying of the dead if that interferes with loyalty to the Lord. If the first illustration shows us the infinite tenderness of this call, the second arrests us and shows the absolute severity of this word of Jesus.

Take the next in order. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom. We must be Hebrews to understand this picture, or at least we must get back into the Hebrew atmosphere. What was he doing? Matthew's calling was the degradation of a high ideal. Matthew had bent to the Roman yoke, in order to collect from his brethren the taxes of the oppressor. You say, Why do you call that the degradation of a high ideal? Read his gospel. Mark his quotations of the ancient prophetic writings. Watch very carefully the whole method of the gospel of Matthew. Matthew's ideal was that of kingship, empire, authority. He was a man molded on imperial lines. I believe that was the reason why he had hired himself to Rome. The glamor of Rome had possessed his soul, and he had lent himself to Rome—a Levite to collect taxes from his brethren. It was the degradation of a high ideal. It was an attempt to come into touch with the great conception of authority and empire. Jesus Christ, passing, saw him, knew him, understood him; knew his devotion to this high ideal of empire, knew that the prophecies which had charmed him in his youth were such as foretold the coming of a great King Messiah; and He said to him, "Follow Me." He took him with Him, led him through the years and revealed to him the Kingdom and the King, and fitted him for the writing of the gospel which stands out in the Bible as the gospel of the Kingdom of God and of God's anointed King. If the ideal was a high and noble one, and if it had been degraded in an attempt to realize it, when this Christ passed by the man He took hold of him, redeemed his ideal, and enabled him to fulfil it on the highest possible level.

Take the next illustration, that at Caesarea Philippi. I go back to the distinction I made at the beginning. In this verse I find the two ideas. "If any man will come after Me" that literally means, if any man will come behind Me, follow Me, in our usual sense of the word, then let him join Me in the way. The text from which we have preached over and over again in order to emphasize the supremacy of Jesus does emphasize His supremacy, but it thrills with His grace. Peter had just said, "Thou art the Messiah," and Jesus had said, "I will build My Church.... I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven." Christ had said to him, In order to enter into that Kingdom and build that Church I must go to Jerusalem and suffer and die and rise again; and Peter had said, That be far from Thee; God have mercy on Thee, not that. That word of Peter was almost profanity. Now the Lord said, "If any man will come after Me"; if you really mean to follow Me, if you, My disciples, desire to come with Me, your coming must be thorough, your coming must be complete, you must come by the way of the Cross, the way of resurrection, the way by which I am going. But if any man would come after Me, let him join Me in the way; he must come My way, but let him come with Me. You cannot shun the Cross; but share it with Me. You cannot escape the severity of My terms, but let Me be your Comrade as you tramp the via dolorosa. This formula of Jesus in this application insisted on the closest association with Himself in the pathway of obedience; therefore it was a word of severity, yet a word of infinite grace.

I go a little further and see the rich young ruler. Notice in what sense He used the word in speaking to that young man. He asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied to him, "Thou knowest the commandments"; and in brief form He repeated the six of the second table of the decalogue, the six which condition human interrelationships. The man looked back into the

eyes of incarnate Purity and said—and it was no empty boast but an actual fact—"All these things have I observed from my youth up." What did the King say to this man? "One thing thou lackest yet." What was the one thing? Hear the Lord through before you decide. "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come join Me in the way." What did this man lack? Poverty? Nay verily. The element of control, mastership! When Jesus said, "Follow Me," to that man, it was necessary that He should first point out to him that which, though not evil in itself, was nevertheless destroying all the forces of his humanity, in that while ministering to the self-life, it was shutting him out from all high heroisms and noble motives. Christ would sweep away the forces that destroy in order to realize the heroic dignity of human life. "Follow Me" was the supreme word of command, and it revealed the secret of victory over the forces that destroy. How is this man, nursed in the lap of luxury, of fine temperament, of clean record, but being destroyed for lack of fine heroism, how is he to be saved? He must follow the Christ, and in order to do it in his case there must be the parting with all that which ministers to the self-life. But even here the call was of grace, as He invited this man to comradeship, by saying, "Join Me in the way."

Take the next illustration, "Follow Me," spoken at the seashore to Peter. What did the word do then? It transfigured the Cross. It was to make clear Christ's intention that I omitted the parenthesis in reading this evening. I want you to ponder that passage again at your leisure. I have not suggested that John's parenthesis is out of place or unnecessary; I believe it was inspired by the Spirit of God, and must remain. In order to make impossible any doubt as to what Christ meant when He said to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not," John said, "This He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God."

Let us, however, forget for a moment that interpolation of John, and remember that without any break Christ added to that foretelling of the Cross, this word, "Follow Me." What did that mean to Peter? The word was spoken by the side of the lake on a memorable morning. What relation did that morning bear to the past? It was the risen Lord Who spoke. At Caesarea Philippi Peter had shunned the Cross, and had been rebuked. By the side of the lake, Jesus brought him back to the Cross, to his own personal cross, and said to him, if reverently I may change the words of the Lord, Peter, you shunned the Cross for Me, you were afraid of it when you first saw it; you have been afraid of it through all the intervening months; but you must come to it, actually come to it, stretch out your hands and be crucified, die by the cross; follow Me, join Me in the way. And immediately Peter would say to himself, He went to the Cross, but He passed beyond the Cross and is risen from the dead. When Jesus, in that connection, said, "Follow Me," to Peter, it transfigured the coming Cross by revealing to him the fact that whatever man shall follow Jesus by the way of the Cross also shall follow Him beyond the Cross into the light and glory of the Easter morning that lies on the other side.

The last illustration seems almost commonplace by the side of some of the others, yet it is wondrously placed. "What shall this man do?" asked Peter concerning John, and Jesus replied, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." It revealed in a flash, in which there was light, humor, satire, tenderness, the awful dignity of one man's life, and the fact that in this following every man must follow for himself, and that is enough for a man to do. If I were given to announcing

sensational subjects, I think I should take this for a text, and announce as my subject, "Mind your own business." If the phrase sounds commonplace, think it well out. Mind your own business; in this respect it will take thee all thy time and eternity to realize My purpose for thee: "Follow thou Me." It was the individualizing of the man as to his personal relationship to Christ; and at the same time it was a word that declared to Peter that if the Lord demanded all his loyalty, He was not unmindful of John. Leave him to Me, I can care for him also. "Follow thou Me," the emphasis is there.

This hurried survey will enable us to see something of the breadth and glory of this word of Christ.

Hear it again, "Follow Me," Join Me, Come My way. What was His way? How shall I answer my own inquiry. Let me do it for a moment by mentioning certain names which will carry a congregation such as this to associations, which are revelations concerning the Lord. It was the way of Nazareth; long years of the daily round, the common task. It was the way of the wilderness, the short, sharp, fearful struggle of a naked soul with wickedness stripped. It was the way of the crowds and human sorrow, perpetual ministry and virtue going forth. It was the way of Gethsemane. It was the way of Calvary. It was the way of the high places and the outpoured Spirit. "Follow Me," join Me in the way. Set thy soul in the direction of My soul, and relate thy spirit to God, as My spirit is related to God.

Is that it? Then in the name of God I am helpless, I cannot do it. But in the strange, wonderful economy of Christ's dealings with men we begin where He ended, and work backward through the processes of His life. You will find that all through your Bible. I will give you one illustration, without turning to it. Take Exodus and read again the story of the pattern which God gave to Moses in the mount; then read the story of how Moses made the tabernacle, and you will find that it moves in the opposite direction. The pattern given begins at the center and moves outward to the finish; the work done begins where the pattern ended and works in to where the pattern began. It is always so.

Where am I to begin this following? I begin where He ended. I begin with Pentecost. That is the fulfilment of the great word. There were senses in which this word was never fulfilled in the experience of these men until Pentecost. We begin when we receive the Spirit of God, "He hath poured forth this which ye see and hear." When that Spirit comes to me I begin my following. That immediately admits me to the resurrection life which is life indeed, and it is by the way of that resurrection life that I come to personal experience of the Cross, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings." By that identification with Him in the Cross I enter into fellowship with Him in the agony of the garden. Through that and through that alone I pass into fellowship with His ministry amid the crowds of men. It is then the temptation becomes hardest in the normal Christian life; not to the man who never has yielded to Jesus has ever come temptation of the fiercest fury which appalls the trusting soul. Take it as a demonstration of nearness to your Master if the enemy is assailing your soul with fervor. Remember, tried, tempted heart, that temptation is not sin. It is the saint most closely associated with his Lord who knows the power of temptation most keenly. Then what? The most difficult thing of all Christian life, Nazareth and the commonplace.

I do not wish this to be divided into compartments as though I would teach that to those who have been called to public service there will presently come the lonely pathway. There is always a lonely

pathway to the Christian soul. There is always a Nazareth for all of us. The teacher who regularly faces a congregation on the Sunday, whose work is largely in the glare of publicity, has a Nazareth, a home, and that is the place where it is most difficult to be true, true in the commonplaces.

Yet that Master says one thing, "Follow Me," join Me in the way. You can never enter it save as you crown Him Lord, and no man can call Him Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Pentecost is the first thing. I cannot be in the resurrection life save as I come there with Him. He says, Follow Me, walk with Me in the way. This intolerable agony of sin mastering humanity, and demanding sacrifice in order that men may be delivered, who can deal with it? The Lord says, You shall indeed drink My cup and be baptized with My baptism; come with Me, join Me in the way.

Leave out these things and come to the last. Oh, you business men who say the preacher has no temptations, do not believe it! To the man who preaches is granted the freedom from observation which is of the essence of opportunity to sin, for indolence, and for incipient blasphemies. How can I be true when my door is locked and I am alone? There comes into the room, though the door be never unlocked, One Who says, "Join Me in the way," "Follow Me! That is the answer.

What is the secret to the great call of Christ? A vision of the Lord Himself. That vision will create the enthusiasm to follow. That enthusiasm constitutes the secret of abandoning all that hinders.

In this evening hour Christ is saying this selfsame thing, "Follow Me." What that means to me today I cannot tell you. What it means to you I do not ask you to tell me. We know, each man, woman, youth, maiden, for himself and for herself, what this means now. Shall we not obey? Shall we not say, Lord Christ, we will follow Thee, only let it be with Thee. Take us by the hand and lead us; we would come after Thee, but it will be easier if, sweet paradox of Thine own words, we may come after Thee by walking with Thee!

John 2:23-25. Christ's Knowledge Of Men.

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Christ's Knowledge Of Men.

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, during the feast, many believed on His name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.

John 2:23-25

The closing statement of these verses explains why Jesus did not trust certain men who trusted Him. The outward commitment of the life to Him, and the belief which was merely a persuasion toward Him on account of signs seen, were nothing when the heart was not wholly and absolutely abandoned to Him, when in the deepest of the life there was still reserve. The trust was not complete and Christ can never commit Himself to any man who does not commit himself to Christ. I remember once hearing Dwight Lyman Moody says, "Christ is as great a Saviour as your faith makes Him." The perpetual law of Christ's dealing with souls may be expressed in this very simple formula, "All for all." If I have reposed in Him some imperfect and partial trust, He cannot trust me with all His confidence. He cannot commit to me all that He is unless I have committed to Him all that I am. Had we been in Jerusalem at that time, and had we seen the people crowding to Him, and trusting Him, in all probability we should have been eager to count them, to number them; the fever for statistics would have been upon us as it is until this hour. We should have been inclined to say to Him, "Lord, everything is going well! See how these people are trusting Thee!" Then we would have been surprised to notice that He did not commit Himself to them. Why not? Because "He knew all men." He did not require any testimony borne to Him concerning them, "for He Himself knew what was in man."

This statement concerning Christ must be interpreted, not in the light of this immediate paragraph merely, but also in the light of the whole Gospel of John, and particularly in that of the prologue. "He knew all men." Who? To Whom does the personal pronoun refer. For answer we turn back to the opening words of the Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." "He—the Word—knew all men.... He—the Word—needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He—the Word—Himself knew what was in man."

The theme, then, of my message is the knowledge which Christ has of man, and the result of that knowledge in His dealings with men. In the coming weeks—as God shall help me—I propose to consider some illustrations which this Gospel affords of these great truths.

I begin with the general terms: Christ's knowledge of man and His consequent method with men. That will be a message of comfort or of fire according to what we are. There was a time when it

was a very common thing to see on the walls of nurseries and schoolrooms a motto which read: "Thou, God, seest me." That statement is perfectly true, God does see us, but I have often thought that the tone in which it was recited was utterly false. If it was so recited to a child as to make the child think merely of God as present as a moral policeman, watching, it was wholly bad. Do not be surprised that your child has run away from God if you have riot interpreted Him. It is a great truth. We need still to put it in the nursery where the child can see it; only God help us so to interpret God that when we put that truth before the child he may know what God is. You say, Would you take away the sternness of the truth of God's knowledge of men? By no means, but neither would I take away the infinite compassion, the love and beauty of the truth. That old truth printed for us to look at as children is fire or comfort according to what we are. Is there some sin gripping your life, mastering you, to which you are yielding yourself. A solemn hush fell on all the congregation tonight as I read, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off." How did the reading of the psalm affect you? If you came with sin cherished, you trembled! Are you a broken-hearted sinner, knowing your sin and desiring to break with it tonight? Then, oh, the comfort of the words, "Thou knowest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Oh, there is such relief for the sinner when he is found out. Man, you are found out. He knows. "He knew all men."

This passage is more particular in its assertion than appears at first. To read it carefully is to see that the writer was indeed most careful in his choice of words. He declares that this knowledge which Christ had of men was immediate, was profound, was universal.

It was immediate knowledge. Notice the word Himself.

"Jesus did not trust Himself unto them... for He Himself knew what was in man." He knew man in Himself and of Himself. He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man. We are brought into the presence of a knowledge of man that is peculiar to Christ, to that Christ Who is God incarnate. Here is knowledge of man that no other possessed. I cannot know any man apart from testimony. He needs no testimony to give Him knowledge of man. This is brought out in one of the ancient prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, the perfect Judge of men. "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteous judgments shall He judge." How? He knows all men, and, mark this, He knows what is in man. This is the truth of the Bible from cover to cover. It is a fundamental truth of Christianity, a great and startling truth, and yet we do not remember it, or live in the power of it. The meaning of the incarnation is in part that this truth was wrought out into human consciousness. I take up the Gospel of John and in the light of this text I read it through again, and am impressed by the fact that Christ moved amongst men, and had perfect knowledge of them.

There was no hesitation in His dealing with them. They passed before Him, man after man, woman after woman, and in a moment He spoke the word that needed to be said, dealt with them in the one way that met their need. He knew them. He asked them no questions in order to discover the truth concerning them. He perpetually questioned them in the light of truth possessed. He knew men. The Gospel of John works out into visibility this tremendous truth, which, if men can but grasp it, will alter all their lives, mold their character, and drive them in the way in which they should go. His knowledge was immediate, apart from testimony.

Then His knowledge was profound. I have already touched upon it. Let me emphasize it again. You notice the Apostle says two things. "He knew all men," individualities, units. "He knew what was in man," the generic term, human nature, the human heart, and all the deep truth concerning it. He knew all men, the varied manifestations of the one common humanity. He knew what was in man, the essential being. We fail of knowing men because we do not know man. Here in the presence of the men of His own age stood One Who to their seeing was a man, and yet standing there in their presence as they passed before Him He knew them all. Simon, thy name is Simon, it shall be Peter. He knew the whole make-up of the man. Nathanael, I saw thee under the fig tree. Thou art a worshiper in whom there is no guile. So on and on, with perfect ease flashing the truth of each man's life into the open word so that others knew the man, and the man knew himself as never before. It was profound knowledge. He did not form His estimate of human life and character from external manifestations, but He set the external in the light of the inward fact. He knew what was in man.

This knowledge was not merely immediate and profound, it was universal, as we see from the Gospel instances. Christ's knowledge of men was not the intuition of kinship. By that I mean that a man of one race understand the men of his own race, but this Man understood all races. If He was dealing with a Hebrew, He knew exactly how to speak to a Hebrew in the language of Hebrew thinking. If Greeks came, saying, "We would see Jesus," He used language in reference to them which revealed His intimate acquaintance with the Greek mysteries which were unknown to Hebrews of His own time. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." To the men who stood about Him on that day it was a strange thing to say, but the Greeks understood it. Only recently we have come to know something of these Greek mysteries, and we have discovered that at the heart of one lay the representation of the cutting off of the ear of wheat in order to gain more abundant life. The two Greeks came up to Him. He was a Hebrew prophet, and they found Him a master of their own mysteries. Standing in their presence He knew them, He knew all that was in them.

He knew men of different temperaments: whether it were the retiring, shrinking Philip, having to be called before he followed, and forevermore living, as my friend Mr. Elvet Lewis has beautifully put it, on the edge of the crowd, or whether it was fiery, impetuous Peter, He knew them and dealt with them according to their temperaments. He so spoke in metropolitan Jerusalem as to arrest the attention of the leaders of the day, men of light and leading, and as to make them say, "How hath this Man letters, having never learned?" He so spoke to the great crowd of poor people that they heard Him and trusted Him. He won them. He knew men of all ages, men of years, young men, little children, men of all habits. He knew man, and because He knew man He knew men. If you and I try to study humanity by studying men we shall never understand humanity. If we come to know man in the light of God's revelation we shall know how to deal with men. Here standing in the midst was one who knew them.

What knowledge had He of man? I take the whole of the Gospels, and I find, if I study them, Christ's conception of humanity. He looked upon man as spiritual in being, as sinning in experience, as salvable by grace.

He dealt with man as spiritual in being. They crucified Him because of that. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" was a great spiritual word, startling the valleys and mountain heights of Judea.

"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," was a clarion call from dust to Deity, from material-ism to spirituality. "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," evinced a fine scorn for the life that did not count eternities or deal with God. Whether He looked into the face of the impotent man at the pool, a pauper seeking charity, or into the face of the mitred high priest, He dealt with the spirit behind. His conception of humanity was that it was spiritual.

His conception of humanity, moreover, was that it is sinning in experience. Sin was that with which He had come to deal in tears and passion and blood. When He spoke to men upon their highest level and recognized the best in them, He flashed into the midst of His recognition the revelation of man's evil as well as his good. "Ye know how to give good gifts to your children." That is the finest thing you can say about man, it recognizes his tenderness, his compassion, his fatherhood, the most beautiful thing in man. What else? "If ye, then, being evil." He knew that man in experience was sinning, and always dealt with him as a sinner.

But this knowledge did not produce hopelessness in Him, for He dealt with men everywhere as being salvable by grace. Sometimes one finds oneself limited, straitened to find words to tell some great truth! So am I now! How shall I tell it? How shall I say what I mean? Thus—He treated men as worth dying for. He looked upon man as possible of being remade through His passion and His death! How a man would like to stay here were he preaching to Christian people rather than to an assembly in which there are those who are seeking Christ. These are the views of humanity which create the evangelistic fervor. Every human face is the outward manifestation of spiritual being. Every human being is in the grip of sin in some form. Every human being can be saved. In the power of these things we dare preach and work. He knew what was in man.

If you look at the truth and ask the question. What did Christ know of man? you are simply overwhelmed by the variety. You find as you go through the Gospel of John that no two men appeared alike before Him, and that He did not deal with any two men alike. We are saying to men perpetually, to every man who crosses our pathway, You must be born again. There is a sense in which it is true, but Christ said it to only one man. It was true of every man, but He did not approach every man from that standpoint. Of the personalities that came into contact with Christ, this Master Winner of souls, He did not deal with two in the same way. He knew the personal peculiarity, the individual idiosyncrasy, and He dealt with it. He was always leading men to recognition of their spiritual being, to abandonment of their sin, to the river of grace which would heal them, but He acted in a thousand different ways. Every man who came to Him was dealt with by the method demanded by his immediate need. Christ knew what was in man.

That leads me to the second thought, some of the general results of this great knowledge. I begin with the broader facts. What did His knowledge of men produce in the Christ? My first answer is the answer of the whole book. His incarnation is the first result. He expressed God to man through man's own nature. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." How? By being made flesh. That was the first thing He came to do. That is the burden of my message. If I can see how Christ looked at man I shall know God's attitude. If I can discover the diversity of His method and learn therefrom, that though I am a lonely man, there being no other like me in the world, having peculiar sins and temptations, so that I cannot be classified, Christ can yet deal with me, I shall know that God can deal with me.

The incarnation was not the beginning of a new fact, it was the initiation of a new revelation. When the Word became flesh and eternal nearness of God blossomed into visibility, but the psalmist of the olden day had sung the great truth, Thou knowest me, I cannot escape from thee. God was ever present, but the fact became patent when the Man of Nazareth took form and substance and shape, so that these very eyes could see, and this very hand could feel, and this life of mine could come to understand. He did that because of His knowledge of man. His knowledge of man compelled Him to express God for humanity that humanity might have knowledge of God.

Incarnation is not all. It is the way into the mightier, and the next word I use is salvation. He knew man, and what did He? He came, let me not use any words of my own. We fall back upon His own words, they are so familiar to us, and they are music to us tonight, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,

We wretched sinners lay.

He saw, and, oh, amazing love,

He flew to our relief.

Then mark, I pray you, what follows. This is the thing of all things that I want to say in the closing words of my message tonight. Being in human life, visible by incarnation, being there for the saving of men, watch Him carefully, see how He treats every case alone: one issue, but many ways. I take up this Gospel and run through it and see Him in contact first with John the Baptist, and what does He do? He so deals with the prophet who has seen the flaming vision as to make the prophet content to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Andrew approaches Him. The adventurous seeker who turns from John with all sincerity to follow and see what some new teacher has to say. Christ turns and sees him. Andrew asks, "Rabbi, where abidest Thou?" How will Christ deal with him? "Come, and ye shall see." You are curious about Me, come along and I will show you where I live. If you had been a worker in some inquiry rooms you would perhaps have put Him outside because His method was not right! Peter, the man of possibility, what will Christ do with him? Tell him his possibility and then through processes realize it. Philip, the reserved man, Christ sees him, calls him. He would never come unless called, so He will call him and Philip comes. Nathanael, the guileless worshiper, brought by another to the Christ. Christ fulfils all that there was in this worship and brings him into such fellowship with Himself that he becomes Bartholomew the apostle. Mary, His own Mother's supreme human affection, He corrects, and at last commits her in human love to John. Nicodemus, the intellectual seeker, the man who thinks that everything is to come by way of knowledge; pure and upright in character so far as he had light, Christ brings him to the wicket gate and says, What you want is not learning, but life, "Ye must be born anew." The woman of Samaria, the flippant sinner who is ready for a theological argument but not for repentance. He searches her, flames upon her His knowledge, and then sends her to be the messenger to the city, having saved her. The nobleman, the sorrowing father with his boy ill, persistent in his appeal, what will Christ do? Heal his son and so win the father, for the whole house believed. There in the porches of Bethesda is an impotent man, utterly unable to lift himself. He will approach him, renew his hope, set him upon his feet, pronounce him whole and bid him sin no more. A woman taken in adultery, condemned. What will

He do. Deliver her and lay upon her delivered spirit the great charge not to sin. A man born blind in the great and mysterious economy of God in order that God's works may be manifested in him. He gave him sight and made him the first worshiper outside the Jewish economy. Martha, honest, restless, He will patiently teach. Mary, the lowly disciple, He will fill her soul with His great grace. To Lazarus dead He will give life. Judas Iscariot, the thief, He will expose and exclude. Thomas, the skeptic, He will give him patient and gentle instruction. Annas and Caiaphas, mean and false, He will rebuke and then be silent in their presence. Pilate, the time-server, He will strive to save and then abandon. Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple, He will at last bring into such circumstances that his discipleship flames into light. Mary of Magdala, devil possessed, He will cast out the devil and make her the great messenger of His love and of His resurrection. John the rare dreamer, the man seeing visions and attempting to listen to the mystic music of the spheres, He will give him the apocalypse, the unveiling, signs and wonders in the heavens above and the earth beneath. He deals with every man according to his need.

Now hear me, I bring you tonight, in conclusion, the word of the herald in the first chapter of the Gospel, "In the midst of you standeth One Whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." He knows you absolutely, perfectly, profoundly, finally. Not only better than your neighbor knows you, better than you know yourself! That is the final comfort to me. As God is my witness, during the last few months if only I had known myself I would have abandoned hope in more than one dark hour, but the memory of the fact that He knows me better than I know myself, that He looked into the face of Peter and said to him, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled," trust Me, is my comfort. Man, where are you? Would God that I could lay hands, violent hands of love, upon you. He knows you. All things are naked and open to His eyes, and He loves you notwithstanding, and is able to save you to the uttermost, and He will deal with you along the line that is necessary to your making. I pray you turn to Him for perfect understanding, for His perfect understanding of you. I said it was a comfort to be found out. Many a man has hidden a sin, a felony, for years, attempting not to be found out, but the morning in which the hand of the law arrested him was a morning of comfort, it was a relief to be found out. Man, you are found out. He knows, God help you, He knows. What does it matter that mother, or wife, or brother or sister, or neighbor or friend does not know, He knows. Oh, but you say, it is not merely sin, it is weakness, difficulty, I cannot get anyone to appreciate the peculiar difficulty of my life. He knows. There is nothing in the wide world so precious as someone who knows. That is friendship. The measure in which you know and understand me is the measure of your friendship. It may make you rebuke me, but it is friendship. He knows. It is the basis of friendship. Oh, if I could get you to Him! I do not care anything about your getting to me. I care nothing about your getting into the church, you will do that after; you cannot help it. Get to Him for perfect understanding and know as you come to Him that there is no necessity for subterfuge, and no use therein; He knows you.

Know also that when you come to Him you will have not merely perfect understanding, you will have faithful dealing. He will not put His hand upon you in false pity and say these things do not matter. If your right hand offends you, cut it off. If your right eye is making you stumble into lust, gouge it out, fling it away. That is what He will say to you. No man here wants a medical man who faces a disease and tells you it does not matter. You want a man who will take hold of it and with knife and strength cut it out. The Physician of souls is such. He will be faithful with you.

Blessed be God, there is another word. You come not merely for perfect understanding, faithful dealing, but for certain salvation. Demonstrate to me that He cannot save you and I quit preaching. Prove to me that your case is beyond the power of Christ and the evangel breaks down. But you cannot prove it. Oh that there may come to us sooner or later a great baptism of passionate honesty. Witnesses are everywhere here, men and women who know His power; who could not, but can; who were fast bound in sin and nature's night, but who awoke as a ray of light came into the dungeon from His presence, whose chains fell off and who went forth to live, serve, and follow Him. If you will but come to Him because He knows you and let Him deal with you in all His faithfulness, you will find Him able to save you. May God in His grace bring you to this Christ Who knows you, that He may save you.

John 3:36. Eternal Life.

John 3:36.

Eternal Life.

He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.

John 3:36

The first word of Jesus is, "Repent." When men, hearing that call, indeed change their mind, and ask, "What must we do to work the works of God?" He answers, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." The question then arises, What is the issue of such belief? The answer is, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life."

No question can be more interesting or more vital than that which inquires the meaning of this phrase, "eternal life." A partial definition narrows the outlook and gives half a conception which may be false because partial. For instance, eternal life has been thought of too often as though it were a quantity. It is a quantity; but if we think of eternal life only as a quantity we miss the profoundest and most wonderful truth about it.

Eternal life is a quality, and therefore a quantity. A man who has eternal life never dies, he cannot die; death for him is abolished, made not to be, is swallowed up in victory. He may fall on sleep with regard to one manifestation of his life, the purely earthly and physical, but he never dies.

John says more about eternal life than any other of the New Testament writers. Let us take two parentheses, one in the beginning of his gospel, the other in the beginning of his first epistle.

That in the Gospel reads: "And we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 2:14).

That in the Epistle reads: "And the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2).

John declared in each of these passages that if we would know what eternal life is we must know Jesus Christ. He declared that he saw eternal life in a Person—in Jesus. Very remarkable are the words he used, suggesting a merging of the tangible and the intangible. "The Word of life," seen, touched, handled, all which means that John came to know eternal life by knowing Christ. Eternal life is no more a mystery, but a revelation, no more something concerning which we have to speculate; it has been revealed in a Person. Those words from the great intercessory prayer of Christ contain the same thought: "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

Then we may reverently examine eternal life as it is revealed in Jesus. First, we will look at the essential quality thereof, and then consider its relative consequences as manifested in Jesus.

The essential quality is marked by the word "eternal." Eternal means not only unending; it means of the ages. Life which is of the ages lacks the quality that makes for ending, and is a life undying, because there is nothing in it of the element of break-up or decay.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews declared that we have not a High Priest "after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," that is, a life that partakes of the very spirit and nature out of which the ages come. Ages come and ages go, but this life is the dividing principle of them, and continues while they rise and fall. It is endless life, eternal life, the life of the ages. It is the very life of the eternal God Who fashioned and framed the ages themselves.

The difference between eternal life and temporal life is that when a man is living eternal life his intellect operates in the consciousness of eternity rather than in that of time, his emotion is actuated by infinite values and infinite issues rather than by present or perishing reasons, and his will is dominated by the supreme and undying truth rather than by transient currents of thought. In his epistle, Peter says of certain persons, they are "blind," more correctly, they are near-sighted, "seeing only what is near." Eternal life enables man to see the things that are near in the light of the things that are far. The peculiar wrong and disaster of human life as it is being lived in the world today is that all our ideals, apart from the Christian revelation, are ideals that look on things in themselves, and not in relation to the larger issues. I am told sometimes that certain men in this age are far-seeing men, and I am somewhat amused when I hear it. When I ask how far can they see, I am told that they see exactly what is to be the result of a war scare on the market! How far is that? Far enough to buy up all the steamship lines and merge them! That is to say that they see nothing beyond the place where blue sky dips into blue sea. Such men are blind, near-sighted! They are burying their vision in the dust of today, they have not begun to see; they are living temporal life. If we take their philosophy, rub away the tinsel of it, and bring it down to the dead level of truth, it may thus be expressed: "Let us eat, let us drink, for tomorrow we die." But here is an old woman, a church member, who has been praying for forty years. She never saw far enough to make provision for old age; but she has "endured as seeing Him Who is invisible." That is far-sightedness, that is eternal life.

Jesus did not measure the movements of His time by the men of His time, He did not lay on the affairs of His own age, the measuring line of His own age. He lived eternal life.

First, His intellect operated in the consciousness of God and eternity. I love to think of this in small things. Flowers, what did He say about them? One passing reference is enough. "God so clothes the grass of the field." Years ago I walked into my father's garden with a young man who had been led to Christ under my father's ministry. Picking up a common nasturtium leaf, and putting it in my hand, he said, "Is it not beautiful? God made it." That man was a far-seeing man. He was looking through the delicate tracery of the nasturtium leaf to God behind it. You tell me this is old-fashioned! Yes, old as the everlasting hills, white with the hoariness of eternity, and unless we have that vision, we are near-sighted. God open our eyes in order that we may see! When Jesus said God clothed the grass, He talked in the language of the eternal, not in the language of the temporal. We might follow Him through all the gamut of interest in life. Birds? "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father." Children? He declared that every little child has an angel who beholds the face of God. Home? When they came to Him with their casuistical questions concerning divorce, He said, "From the beginning God made them male and female," sweeping

past the dictum of Moses to the infinite purpose of God. Whether He touched a child or a flower, a problem or a pain, He thought and taught in the infinite consciousness of God. That is eternal life. He lived with feet squarely planted on dear old mother earth, but brow lifted high into the infinite light, while the light of the ages of God played on His temporal pathway.

His emotion also was actuated by infinite values and infinite issues. Behind all failure He recognized possibility. He saw in every man the image of God, marred, bruised, battered by sin. He knew that behind the ruin lay the possibility, and when He looked on a man He saw him not only as he stood there in the degradation of his sin; He saw him a being having come out of the infinite, traveling toward the infinite, and He knew that the little hour which He was spending in Jerusalem or Jericho was but a part of the infinite whole. His life, coming out of eternity, embraced eternity, until of His own it is said, "having loved His own, which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is love eternal.

His will was dominated by the Supreme Truth. Every man's will is dominated by his intellect and his emotion. No man's will is finally free. A free will is evidence of fitness for a lunatic asylum. Man's will is never free so long as he is rational. It must be dominated by reason. You cannot cross the road without saying or thinking, "I will cross the road," but you never say, "I will cross the road," without meaning, "I will cross the road, because..." Back of the will is a reason, and your will is dominated by something behind. No man ever exercises his will save under the impulse of intellect or emotion. The impulse that controlled the will of Jesus was an intellect homed in eternal principles, an emotion impelled by infinite love. That is eternal life. Eternal life is not narrow, not of long continuation merely. It is as broad as it is long, as deep as it is high, as magnificent and splendid as it is severe and straight.

Let us briefly notice the relative consequences of this eternal life in the case of Jesus. Seeing God, He used the world. He was no ascetic; He never did violence to Himself, He never took a whip of cords to lacerate His flesh. Whoever imagines he is spiritual because he is bruising himself with cross or cords or hair shirt is sensual, not spiritual. Jesus "was bruised for our iniquities." In the mystery of eternal life, He handed Himself over to bruising by His enemies, but He never bruised Himself. He lived a life so perfectly natural and artless that men said of Him, He was a wine bibber. Instead of retiring from them, He sat down with publicans and sinners, and ate bread with them, until the alarmed Pharisees and Sadducees said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He lived His life amongst men, loved flowers, birds, and little children; He was perfectly simple, perfectly artless, perfectly natural. He took His place in the God-filled natural order; seeing God everywhere, recognizing that all things were of God and for God, He took them as God's great sacramental gifts.

Being God-indwelt, He loved infinitely, and so with a searching severity against sin and an infinite tenderness toward the sinner. These are the two notes of real love, of eternal love. It is temporal love that never says a severe thing. Eternal love is severe. Listen to Jesus Christ, and watch Him. How scathingly He dealt with sin! "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye whitewash the tombs of the prophets, ye yourself are whited sepulchres, but within ye are dead men's bones." Never language was so white-hot and scorching as the language of Jesus against sin. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, even while for a pretence ye make long prayers." If you are a hypocrite, He scorches you with His glance. You

will not dare to stand in the purity of His presence, for you will find the fire of His glance the very consuming fire of perdition. And all that was born of love. It is only love that can be severe. Why was He severe? Because He saw these men were injuring other men, ruining their own lives, spoiling the Divine order, bringing discord where harmony ought to be. Out of His love came the fire of His wrath. It was out of His consciousness of the eternal that He spoke such withering words of scorn to the men who in the temporal were violating eternal principles.

Yet, again, the eternal dominating the will was proof against all merely temporal impulses. I have looked at my Lord, and I have wondered at His victory over temptations, subtle, insidious, that swept on Him like a hurricane in the moment of His weakness, that came whispering to Him through the voices of His friends, temptations unmasked in all their fierceness in the wilderness, temptations coming disguised again and again, and yet He was always victorious. How was it? Because the voices of temptation were for Him voices that spoke in the language of the temporal, the small voices had asked Him to act as though this moment were all. Temptation never dare take eternity into account. How was it that He overcame? Because He thought, loved, and willed in relation to infinite things.

Let one illustration suffice. High on the mountain the arch enemy of mankind flung before Him in panoramic vision the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He said in effect to Christ, "Do something now, get something now. Fall down before me now, and I will give Thee the kingdoms of the world now." What was the answer of the Man who lived eternal life? "It is written, Thou shalt worship God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Do you see the measurement He put on the present moment? Jesus knew that to take those kingdoms in the temporal now, and have them as temporal kingdoms now, was to lose them in the hereafter. In effect, He said, I will take the way of God to the kingdoms, though it be the way of the Cross, of shame and blood, and I will come into the kingdoms by the way of God's appointing along the line of the spiritual and the eternal.

Are you face to face with some temptation in the now? If you are haunted by a suggestion that you should do something dishonorable now; if you are haunted by a face luring you to do something now, for pleasure now, I beseech you to remember that the only way to deal with the now is to flash on it the light of eternity. Every moment winging its way past you is offspring of the ages, and what you do now, stands related to the eternities. Feel the searching fires of eternity in your life, and you will be able to overcome. It is this bringing to bear of the eternal on the now, of the infinite on the small, that is the secret of victory. Eternal life is life that takes account of eternity, refuses to set the horizon at any moment where sky kisses ocean; but sees out beyond the horizon the infinite, the spacious, the unending. I am only child of dust in material life for a little while; but I am offspring of God in my essential being. What I am, I am by the fact of the inbreathing of God, and my life must be conditioned by infinite things.

Now let us hear the Great Announcement. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." I long for the return of the days when men believed as the Word was preached. Believe on Him now. Say I have heard for a long time; I will not make my judgment blind any longer. I know this Man of Nazareth, this Jesus Christ, can save me and give me eternal life. I believe on Him now. I will become His now.

Immediately He will give you eternal life. That is not a mere sentiment; it is a great fact. Eternal life in the present moment, eternal life positively possessed, this is God's declaration. "He that

believeth on the Son hath eternal life."

Or, again, in words almost more startling, and striking and beautiful, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son." What is this witness of God? "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Him: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar: because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

So I put the matter thus for myself—perhaps it is the best way to help others. God declares that if I will believe in His Son, if I will believe into His Son, if I will refuse any longer to make my judgment blind, and will abandon myself to Him, He gives me eternal life here and now.

It is this venturing on the Word of God that will bring a man into conscious possession of eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath the life." If you believe on Him He gives Himself to you. He in you will illuminate your intelligence with the light of eternal life; He will dominate your affection with the love of God; He in you will master your will, to do the will of God. That is eternal life. He will interpret to you the will of God, and so illumine your intelligence that you will go out, and to-morrow you will look again at the old scenes, the old facts of your life, but you will see them with new eyes. Christ's estimate will put on everything.

Jesus living within by the power of His Holy Spirit, illuminating the intelligence, inspiring the emotion, and mastering the will; suddenly we shall know the horizon put back, the dark sky illumined, things that once were wild babel become resonant with the evangel of life, everything will be enlarged and corrected by the enlargement. This is the experience of eternal life—not a magnetic thrill, but a great spiritual consciousness that makes a man at last able to say, "I know I am born again—first, because God says it, and I believe it; but, second, because in me life moves to new impulses, new desires, new passions, new enterprises; and the things I loved I hate, and the things that mastered me like vipers have dropped off, and I am free who once was bound." Such is the consciousness of life, but it never comes to man until he believes in the Son of God.

Now, very reverently and solemnly, hear the final words of my text: "He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Believeth not" it is in the Authorized Version; the word is changed in the Revised Version, because a different Greek word is used. Yet I am not at all sure that this word "obeyeth" covers all the ground. I give you this, not as translation, but as interpretation; he that will not be persuaded, he that refuses conviction, he that declines to believe into, in obedience to a conviction, "he that obeyeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Mark the negative condition: "He that obeyeth not the Son," he that believeth not into the Son of his will, he that will not be persuaded. But all that goes back on our previous subject to those solemn words of Jesus, spoken in the parable in answer to the cry of the rich man in hell, "They have Moses and the prophets. If they will not hear them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

There are men and women who refuse to be persuaded, who will not believe, who will not believe into and obey the Son of God. What of such? "They shall not see life." Here, first, is a reference to something they are hoping for—the life beyond; they shall not see it. But here, in a simpler way, as a profounder truth, is the declaration that such people have not begun to live at all, that the very

life they now live is a living death.

That is not the last word, nor the most solemn word, and I have no more right to omit the last word than I have to omit the first. If the first word is a great evangel, so also is the last a great evangel. The first is the evangel of salvation made possible. The last is the evangel of solemn warning, and it is always an evangel when truth utters a warning. "The wrath of God," terrific word, terrible phrase, not occurring here only, but often in Scripture. I am here to preach the Word, and not to philosophize concerning it. This word wrath means anger, which includes the purpose to punish. There are other words used for wrath that have not that purpose, but this one has—the wrath of God, anger, which includes the purpose of punishment.

"The wrath of God abideth." It is not merely that men are coming into that wrath by-and-by; they are in it at this moment. If you have heard the evangel and have refused to obey, God is angry with you, angry with you, not on the basis of caprice, but by the very necessities of the case; angry with you as you would be with any man who might dwell on the heights of health, but who chose to dwell in the midst of putrefaction and disease; angry with you, first, because you ruin His fair work in yourself; angry with you because by living where you do, outside the life eternal, you spread the contagion of your moral leprosy and lead other men to ruin. Do not imagine when you refuse Christ that there is nothing round about you but the love and mercy of God. "The wrath of God abideth upon the children of disobedience." I am not entering into any argument concerning the attitude of God toward the men who do not know the Gospel. I am talking to people who know it. The Son is calling you into eternal life, and you know it. If you do not obey, you can neither see life, nor enter into life; but, instead, the wrath of God, the anger of God, that holds within itself the purpose of punishment, abideth on you.

And yet, thank God, He calls! He calls to mercy. He calls to life. "I call Heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live."

John 6:29. The Work Of Faith.

John 6:29.

The Work Of Faith.

This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.

John 6:29

The message of this text is a sequel to the subject of our previous consideration. I then spoke from the first words our Lord uttered when He began His public ministry. The keynote of the preaching of Jesus called for a change of mind in its initial word, "Repent," and indicated the direction of that change in the phrase, "for the kingdom of heaven," and proclaimed the possibility of that change in the declaration, "is at hand." That was how He began His preaching.

The words of our text were uttered at a crisis in the work of His ministry. These wonderful discourses from which the text is taken were delivered in Capernaum toward the end of the second year of His ministry, and they constitute the close of the Galilean part of that ministry. He was speaking His last words in Galilee, uttering His last message to that particular region and to those particular men, and the very atmosphere in which He breathed was alive with criticism.

Yet there was a species of interest in Him, born of low motive, manifest on this occasion. He had recently fed the people, and then, escaping from them over the sea, had been found by them on the other side. They came to Him with a question that seemed to be very simple and very natural—a question that was purely geographical, "When earnest Thou hither?" There seemed to be no boat to bring Thee, how didst Thou reach this point? Immediately in the most startling way Jesus Christ flashed on His questioners a great light. "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." Having thus rebuked the low level of their interest, revealed the materialization of their passions, with wooing tenderness and winsome softness He called them to something higher. "Work not for the meat which perisheth," work for the bread that is "unto eternal life." And these people, willing to be religious if He wanted them to be—how many men are so, until He begins to reveal to them what religion is!—willing to discuss religion as a metaphysical question, said, Tell us, what work must we do to work the works of God? He answered, and perhaps men were never much more startled, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." The keynote of their question is to be discovered in the phrase, "Work the works." They asked, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" That was their idea of religion, of spirituality—to work works; and He said to them, "This is the work—believe."

Let us pay special attention to this word of Christ. In common with all His words, it was not spoken for a day but for all time; it is not only a message to the quibblers concerning Him, but also one to us. It came not only as an answer to the peculiar form of their rationalistic thinking; it comes as an answer to every sincere or critical soul who asks, What is the work of religion? What is the secret

of relationship between God and man? I bring you this further word from the teaching of Jesus, as in advance of the one considered previously, on the need for repentance, and I pray you hear the Master as He says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

The first matter of importance in order to have a full appreciation of the value of these words of Jesus is that of their presupposition. Postponing the consideration of its philosophy to the second place, I shall ask you first, then, to notice the presupposition of this declaration, that Jesus was sent by God. We shall never understand the meaning of our Lord's strange declaration that belief is work and that work is belief until we have taken some time to consider this underlying thought, that He who was speaking claimed to be sent by God, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent."

Looking at this inferential claim in the light of other passages of Scripture, I find that here, breaking into the text, is a principle which recurs throughout all the teaching of Jesus, and around which everything else gathers.

Turning to the Gospel stories, we find that our Lord distinctly declared that He had been sent of God. There are three references in Matthew's Gospel showing that Matthew heard Him make the claim. In Mark's Gospel are recorded two occasions on which our Lord declared Himself to be sent of God. In Luke we have four such references. Thus each of the Synoptics gives occasions when Jesus declared He was thus sent.

But when I turn from the Synoptics to John, which is the Gospel of the One revealed from heaven, Who also was the Revealer, I find an accumulated and remarkable testimony to the truth I am trying to emphasize. We may omit chapters 1, 2, 18, 19, and 21; but in every other chapter Jesus is reported as declaring that He was sent. In chapters 18 and 19 man was sending Him back, and there is no declaration that He was sent from the Father.

But why do I emphasize this fact? Because I want to utter a definite protest against the idea that Jesus was a man who dreamed His way into Messiahship, that Jesus was a man who lived a pure life, and one day, as a recent writer has, to my mind, almost blasphemously said, woke up to imagine He could be Messiah and so became Messiah. No, He was sent from God, and throughout the whole of His mission there was the tremendous consciousness surging within Him that He was the sent One, the anointed One of the Father.

The matter of supreme importance for us in this connection is that of the bearing of this fact on the text. This is a distinct claim of personal authority based on the direct authorization of God. He was where He was because God had sent Him. That was the meaning of all the things He said in the ears of men. He was perpetually attempting to arrest the attention, and enforce the claim that men ought to hear Him, not because of what He thought Himself, not because of what He thought of Himself, not because of any testimony He bore to Himself, but because He was in the world, the One sent of God with a message to men, that He was the Sent of God.

The value of His presence in the world was twofold; revelation and reconciliation. Revelation of God, revelation of man, revelation of evil. Men never knew God perfectly until He revealed Himself. Fallen man has no conception to this day of what humanity is save as he sees his possibility in Jesus. The world never knew the truth about Satan; no writer had ever been able to say, "We are not ignorant of his devices" until Jesus dragged him out of the darkness and held him

in the light of His own pure life.

Jesus was the Light of the world, flashing truth on men concerning God, flashing truth on men concerning their own nature, and in that light of truth concerning God and man setting evil in the light that man might know it, and know it as it really is.

A great revelation, and yet the purpose of His mission was infinitely more. A great reconciliation was the intention of His being sent, and that reconciliation was threefold, consisting, first, of mental conviction; second, of moral cleansing, and, finally, of mutual communion between the soul of man and God.

The reconciliation that Jesus came to bring comes first by this revelation, which results in mental conviction. When mental conviction has been realized by the revelation man is ashamed and conscious of his moral failure. Then he receives moral cleansing by blood, for He makes reconciliation by the blood of His Cross, and on the basis of that moral cleansing He restores man to the One Whom man has seen in Him, and there is mutual communion or fellowship between God and man in Christ.

This is a great claim that Jesus made. He stood amongst men and He said: You want to know the work of God? This is it: "Believe on Him Whom He hath sent," the authorized and appointed One, Whose work is that of revelation and reconciliation. You begin your religion when you believe in Me, said Christ; you work the work of God when you believe in Me.

This leads us to our second point. I ask you to notice the philosophy of our text. Jesus declared that belief is an act, that it is not a frame of mind that comes unconsciously to man without the activity of his own will. Yet you find men who tell us today that they cannot help what they believe. I think I may say scores and hundreds of young men have said that to me, and said it honestly. It is partially true. But Tennyson says:

A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight;

and that is true of this statement. Many a man is saying that he cannot help what he believes, and because he persists in saying that, he is uttering half a truth, and the half-truth is blinding him and preventing him from coming into the possession of all the fulness of the suggestion of the word "believe." What is it to believe? Let me take that word that lies in my text: "This is the work of God, that ye believe." What is that word "believe"? I do not mean now merely how we commonly use it, for we cannot understand the use of the word until we understand the true meaning of the word. What is the simplest meaning of the Greek word translated "believe" so constantly in our New Testament? In the last analysis, to believe is to be convinced. You may take this word, which has to be translated trust, or faith, and trace it back to the root meaning, and it will be found that the essential value of the word is to be convinced. A man believes when he is convinced, so that, after all, belief is a matter of the reason. Never trust any teacher who affirms that you must believe against your reason. God calls man to the exercise of every faculty He has given him. To believe is an act of reason, and the simple meaning of the word "believe" is to be convinced that a statement is true. Belief is conviction, and a man may believe a lie or he may believe a truth; but he himself believes it to be true. In the simplest analysis of the meaning of the word, belief itself is

conviction.

You say, Then is a man a Christian because he believes something? Not at all, and that is exactly the point to which I am coming. The New Testament never tells men that they can be saved by belief. It always indicates the line of belief, always declares the facts that must be believed, and indicates an action of the will as accompanying the conviction of the mind. It is belief in or on Jesus Christ that saves. Well, but you say, surely we are still in the presence of the same difficulty. If belief is, in the last analysis, to be convinced, and it is belief on Jesus Christ that saves, I cannot help whether I believe on Him or not.

In my text this word "believe" is used with a little Greek preposition, translated here "on"; and forgive me if for a moment I quarrel with the translators and use the word "in." Everyone knows there is a whole realm of value in prepositions, and this preposition, when used with the accusative case, always means motion into something. Every man will see that if he will take Thomas Newberry's Englishman's Bible and study that simple, yet wonderful, diagram of prepositions at the beginning of the New Testament. There it is clearly shown that this little preposition means motion into.

What is the work of God? Belief, but belief in Him Whom He hath sent. The work of God is the acceptance of conclusions on testimony concerning Jesus Christ. The faith that saves a man is that act of the will by which he says, Yes; the evidence is conclusive. I will believe. And that is the act that brings a man into living relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is an act of the will. I need not argue that. Anyone who has read Professor James' The Will to Believe will not desire me to argue that the will acts in belief.

I suppose there is no single canto of Tennyson's "In Memoriam" more quoted, or in many respects more beautiful, than that which deals with doubt. Shall we have it all, that we may have the truth of the text in its context:

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweethearted you, whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me doubt is devil-born.
I know not. One, indeed, I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true.
Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,

Believe me, than in half the creeds.
He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the specters of the mind,
And laid them; thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own;
And power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone.

The arresting and most often quoted line of that poem is: "He would not make his judgment blind."

Now, forgive me, I am almost tired of hearing that line quoted by one class of men. It has been quoted to me north, south, east, west, in my own country; it has been quoted to me from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific, and almost always by the man who is critical, who does not accept certain truths which I accept, and who in vindication of his skepticism says, I will not make my judgment blind. I am not angry with him. I believe there is such a thing as "honest doubt." But "He would not make his judgment blind" is not merely a line that describes honest doubt, it equally describes honest faith. There is such a thing as making judgment blind by receiving credulously a statement that you cannot believe with your judgment; but there is such a thing as dishonesty in refusing to receive testimony. I will not charge you with that. There is such a thing also as neglecting to consider testimony. There is a peril that when men boast they will not make their judgment blind they are so boasting to cover intellectual indolence or moral failure. It is not always so. There are men who are fighting "the specters of the mind," men who cannot be convinced at present. But, oh, I am a little tired of the man who comes to me and says, I do not believe in Jesus. I say to him, How much time have you given to attempt to consider the arguments? And I sometimes find that he once heard some lecturer say something smart about Jesus, or else he heard some preacher cast reflections on the person of Christ, and, without taking one solid day out of his life, to say nothing of weeks and months of toil and thought, to find the truth, he says, I will not make my judgment blind. Why, man, you are making it blind, and you have no business to say you do or do not believe on Jesus Christ until you have taken time to hear the testimony and to weigh the evidence. The one thing Jesus said in the age when men were criticizing Him was, "Believe Me," examine Me, or else "believe Me for the very work's sake." Consider the arguments, take time to look into the whole question: this is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom God hath sent. The claim is, God has sent Him, and here is the imperial claim Jesus Christ makes. If you will take time to consider Him you will have demonstrated to you the fact that He is sent of God, and there will begin your faith.

Jesus spoke one very terrible parable among many that were beautiful. He spoke of one lost soul crying out to Abraham that somebody should be sent to his brethren. You remember the answer Abraham is represented as giving to the lost soul. I pray you, think of it carefully: "They have

Moses and the prophets... if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead." There "persuaded" is the word translated in other places "believe." So that our Lord said, in effect, that there is such a thing as being willing to be persuaded. The evidences are with them: they have Moses and the prophets, and if they will not hear them it will still be the same—they will not believe, they will not be persuaded. There is the element of will, and that is the element for which we are responsible in the matter of faith. Faith will not come as a sentiment creeping over the life, or if it so come it will be worthless, anemic, faithless. Faith is a great act in response to a great claim. Here is a man who says: I will listen and consider; I will not be persuaded by anything short of conviction, but as the conviction comes I will not make my judgment blind to that; neither will I, because the growing conviction is going to make claims upon me, shut it out. I will believe the thing of which I am convinced by yielding complete obedience to it.

We need to plead for this honesty today. I repeat that half the much-talked-of agnosticism of the present hour is due either to intellectual indolence, or to the desire to cover up some moral defect; and, if not, then, in the name of God and humanity, there is no Gospel. I stand here to declare that, if you will consider Christ, consider Him honestly, listen to Him rather than to the exponents of His teaching, bring your life into the light of the revelation He makes, as to its possibility—if you will measure your creed by His revelation of God, I think you cannot possibly do so without finding that there grows on you the conviction that He is right.

What, then, is belief? Belief is the action of the will whereby you accept the conclusion and abandon yourself to Him. The belief that saves a man is the attitude of will of a man who looks into the face of Jesus and says: At last, oh, Nazarene, Thou hast conquered.

Here I give my all to Thee,

Friends and time and earthly store,

Soul and body Thine to be,

Wholly Thine forevermore.

This is belief in Him: the motion into Him of all the life, under the impulse of an honest conviction which will not make its judgment blind.

Finally, and briefly, let us listen to the proclamation of the text: "This is the work of God: believe." It is the initial work making possible a new life. It is an inspirational work that goes forward through all life. It is an inclusive work that takes in the whole sum of things for a man.

It is the initial work of God. Jesus Christ is God's new point of departure, and from the moment when He came and lived and taught, God swept everything else away. The law and the prophets are no longer necessary, as they are no longer sufficient. Men had lived under conscience, men had lived under law, men had lived under the interpretation of the will of God by the messages of the prophets. God swept them all away when Christ came. The law made nothing perfect, and God, with the sending of Jesus, put His hand on every other method of human salvation, and from that moment until now God refuses to meet any man save through that Man. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ—if I may put this superlatively and finally—was demonstration of the fact that God accepted Jesus, it was also a demonstration of the fact that He rejects everybody else save as they come to Him in and through Jesus Christ. If you ask me whether a man can possibly be

saved except through Jesus Christ I say absolutely, No. No man can be saved except through Jesus Christ. You say, Can I be saved by some educational, ethical method? I tell you, No. This is the work of God, that you believe on Him. This is not a mere caprice of Deity. It is not merely because God will not receive you on any other basis, but because you cannot come to Him on any other basis. Your highest ethical code appears sullied when held in the light of heaven's unsullied purity. Your educational method is the education of devilry when compared with the purpose of God. What He asks is truth in the inward parts, a pure unsullied spotlessness, and there is no man who can bring it to Him. And so, in His mercy, God, sweeping away all other methods, sent forth this Man to be at once Example and Saviour, Revealer and Reconciler; and the first thing in life and religion is that men believe in Him.

But it is not true that God saves a man on the basis of an intellectual assent. This work is not merely initial, it is inspirational. The work of belief is not one act, it is a maintained attitude. I believe on Him, and by that belief I am received of God. But that belief is not then over. It begins then, and it runs through all life; and real Christian living is living by faith in the Son of God all the time. Faith means not merely an intellectual assent; it means a moral obedience, a whole-hearted surrender, and a perpetual yielding of the whole life to Jesus Christ. If a man really believes in Him Whom the Father hath sent, that belief will affect all his thinking, all his speaking, all his doing. To work that initial work of belief is to bring forth all the works that are meet for repentance and manifest the fruit of the Spirit in all its diversity of beauty and of glory.

This work of belief in Jesus is also inclusive, including all the territory of the being, including all the forces of the life, and, thank God, including the utmost reach of the coming ages. This is the work of God. Not that God is mindful of the thing that you believe intellectually and unmindful of the actual doings of your life; but because God would correct the external conduct by the internal creed, because God would set right the last detail of daily activity by setting right relationship to Him.

I ask, therefore, in conclusion, Have you believed in Him? And if not, why not? If you tell me your difficulty is intellectual, then, I pray you, do not make your judgment blind. By that I mean, do not profess a faith you do not possess. But, in God's name, do receive the testimony and consider it, and do not treat a matter so weighty as this with trivial attention, and then profess that you are a skeptic. Think, man, think! Face this claim of Jesus, face all the evidence, do not make your judgment blind.

But is there not a deeper reason? Is not the reason of your unbelief moral? Be honest tonight and answer that question as between God and your own soul. Do you not know that if you believe in Him it means that you must obey, and that means the going out of your life of the cherished thing that is wrong. I do not ask you to confess to me—may God deliver you from such folly! But, as the messenger of the Cross, the messenger of the living Lord, I charge you, look within. Why have you never yet abandoned your life in honesty to the conclusions that have come to you as convictions long ago? Remember that if in the inner shrine of your heart you are now facing some evil and immoral thing, then I must take you back to the former word: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But let my last word be spoken to the man who is close to Christ and is conscious that Christ is close to him. Right there where you are, without outward sign or sound as yet, believe in Him, trust

Him, venture everything on the conviction that is in your heart of what He is and what He can do.

I have often told the story; I will tell it again; to me it illustrates faith so beautifully. It was an old Scotch woman who had been following the Lord for many years, and her minister said to her—I don't know whether it was wise or not, but yet, for the sake of her answer, I am glad he said it—"Maggie, supposing, after having been a Christian for forty years, the Lord should drop you out of His hand, and you should be lost, in spite of your faith." And Maggie, with a radiant smile, looked back into his face and said, "Nay, then I would just lose my puir wee bit soul, but He would lose the honor of His eternal Word." That is the faith that saves a man.

Oh, men, at this moment in the presence of God, I will risk heaven and eternity on this One sent from God. Will you do that? Then there will come into your heart the sense of His peace, the sense of His power, and you will find that in that initial work there lie all the forces of the works, and out of the creed of honesty will come the conduct of purity.

John 9:1-5. Born Blind: The Disciples' Problem--The Master's Answer.

John 9:1-5.

Born Blind: The Disciples' Problem--The Master's Answer.

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

John 9:1-5

The story of the healing of this man is in one sense peculiar. It is the only case on record of Christ's healing of congenital disease. The Greek phrase which is translated "from his birth" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. These things immediately fasten our attention on the healing of this blind man as being one of the singular and outstanding signs recorded by John.

It presents one particular phase of the complex problem of suffering, and this fact is made evident by this opening paragraph which is the subject of our meditation. The problem was stated in the inquiry of the disciples, "Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" That was a surface inquiry, suggesting the problem, but not explicitly stating it. In that inquiry some solutions of the problem were referred to which evidently did not satisfy the disciples. In their question there is evidence of their assumption that there was some connection between sin and suffering. They were trying to account for the fact that a man was born blind, and attempting to square the fact with their assumption of the relationship between sin and suffering, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?"

To that problem we turn in order to consider Christ's dealing with it, and therefore in order that we may learn lessons of practical value to ourselves.

The problem is rendered concrete in the case of the man. Here was a man suffering the disability of blindness through no act of sin on his own part during his lifetime. If there were some connection between sin and suffering, why was that man suffering, seeing that he had not sinned?

The problem is a persistent one. We face it every day if we have eyes to see and hearts to feel, this problem of humanity handicapped from the beginning. I surely need not argue it. If some of you would have an illustration of it you may call here on Wednesday next at six o'clock and find your way into the Cripples' Parlor. There you will see little children crippled from birth. It is only the careless man who has never faced the problem in the presence of a little child twisted, deformed, from birth. In our national life we are attempting to face the problem of the mentally deficient. The profoundest manifestation of it, one, by the way, to which, perhaps, we give the least attention, is the fact that there are people who are born spiritually inefficient. Over against that, let us say in

passing, the vast majority of people born into the world are not born handicapped. Sometimes it is well for us to remind ourselves of this when we are looking at a dark picture.

The same problem comes to us in another aspect: humanity not only handicapped, but humanity imprisoned. Vast multitudes are born into material surroundings which are against them from the very beginning. Naturally there comes to one's mind that strange, weird, terrific word of Bishop South, in which he declared that there are children in London who were damned at birth by the material environment into which they came, that thousands of children are born into a moral atmosphere into which had we been born we would have been other than we are. Save for a miracle of the Divine grace, such children as these are doomed from birth.

But why is this a problem? Why does that little twisted, crippled child create a problem in the mind? Why does that mentally deficient boy put your soul in revolt? Why does the spiritually inefficient girl or boy create within us a sense of protest? Our problem is created by our faith. The man without faith has no problem of this kind. Apart from faith—and by the word faith I now refer to that Christian faith which is conquering the world—apart from that faith, Marcus Aurelius will suffice us. Marcus Aurelius will tell us that in the workshop we are not to look at the shavings but at the perfected article. That will never do for the man whose eyes have seen the light and glory of the Christian revelation, even though he may not have been obedient thereto. Men who have faith in the God of the Scriptures, the God of our Christian faith, have come to another understanding of the dignity and glory of humanity. In their apprehension of the dignity and glory of humanity is created a protest against the physical, mental, spiritual cripples. The problem is a problem of faith. It challenges our conception of the goodness and justice of God. That is to state it with almost appalling frankness, but that is the problem. Here is this little cripple, deformed from birth, and the problem is, how are we to square that cripple with a good and just God? Whether those disciples meant that or not, that is what we mean when we speak of the problem of evil, the problem of suffering in any form.

Some attempts at solving the problem have been made. The disciples suggested that this man had sinned before his birth, or that his parents had sinned. It is an interesting fact that our Lord did not deal with the suggestion that this man may have had a previous existence, for it lurks in the question. He did not deny it, He did not affirm it, He did not correct it, He left it. There we must leave it. Their question suggested that the man was suffering in this life for some sin committed in a prior life, or else was suffering as the result of some sin of his parents.

Again, there is the suggested solution of the charge of injustice against God, formulated in the soul if never expressed by the lips; expressed by the lips only by men who will immediately correct their statement by denying their belief in the existence of God at all. That is in itself a significant fact. This is one of the untabulated triumphs of Christianity very seldom referred to. Wherever Christianity has come it has at least succeeded in making it impossible for men to think of any God other than a good God. This result is not produced by other religions. At the base of the majority of other religions is a slavish fear of God. The concept of a God who can be unkind, cruel, unjust, cannot live where Christianity has come. It is possible in the light of Christianity to deny the existence of God. It is never possible to believe in the existence of an evil God. Consequently, if we try to solve this problem by declaring that the child is crippled physically, mentally, spiritually, because God is unjust, we shall find ourselves unable to accept the solution. Another solution of

the problem that has been attempted is denial of the existence of God. A man face to face with this problem eliminates God, and by doing so may end his problem; but there is one thing he does not do, he does not eliminate children crippled physically, mentally, spiritually. If you are in the presence of this problem in any form—the problem of suffering apparently undeserved, unmerited, out of place—and your soul is in revolt against the doctrine of a just God, and you deny His existence, do not forget that you have not escaped from the horror of the suffering, you have only attempted to find mental ease by denying the problem, and you are still face to face with the crippled child.

All attempted solutions are unsatisfactory. The disciples question proves it. The fact that they asked the question proves that they were not satisfied. The others, as I have said, ending the problem as faith is destroyed, leave the fact in all its horror, and there is no light on it. Blot God out of the universe and you retain human agony without light and without hope.

So let us at once say that from our standpoint the problem is unsolved because we do not possess all the data. If our Christian doctrine be true Christ does possess all the data. He does know the whole story. What, then, has He to say in the presence of the problem? What did He say to these disciples?

Following the story through, I shall ask you to observe three things:

When His disciples named the problem our Lord first replied to them by denying their suggestions. His denial was clear, explicit, definite, "Neither this man nor his parents." This denial of Christ admits the fact of suffering for which neither the sufferer nor the parents of the sufferer are to blame.

Then He made a statement, and here I am going to ask you to be patient, as I so often have to do, while we try to see what He really did say—to be patient, moreover, because I may run counter to a good many prejudices. I certainly shall run counter to almost universal interpretation of this passage. I am going to base a doctrine on punctuation. If you are inclined to object to that I pray you remember that it is already done, as you will see whenever you read this passage as it stands in the Bible.

The first matter is a simple one, and preliminary. The Authorized Version reads at the fourth verse, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me"; the Revised Version reads, "We must work the works of Him that sent Me." I draw attention to this simply to observe that the value of the teaching is not changed. I accept the scholarly consensus that the change is warranted. What Jesus really said was, "We must work the works of Him that sent Me." In the old rendering, the singular pronoun "I" agreed with the singular pronoun "Me," and emphasized the mission of Christ as the Son of God. In the new rendering, the plural pronoun "we" still recognizes the mission of Christ, but suggests the fellowship of His disciples in that mission. To that I shall return in conclusion. For the moment it is enough to observe that the superlative value is the revelation of the mission of Christianity as working the works of God.

Now we come to that which to my own mind is supremely important in an understanding of the statement of Jesus. Two readings of this text are made possible by a change in the punctuation, without the alteration of a single word.

"Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." That is the punctuation as it stands in the Revised Version. That is in harmony with the punctuation of Westcott and Hort in the New Testament in the Greek. That reading places a period at the close of verse three. Let us now read it, changing that period into a comma:

Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him, we must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day.

We immediately recognize that this is a great change. While examining the problem, knowing my own incompetence in many ways, I submitted the passage with my suggestion to an eminent scholar. In his letter replying to my inquiries, he said:

He would be an exceedingly bold scholar who would undertake to prove the punctuation to be one way or the other on the mere ground of the Greek itself. It seems as if the question would have finally to be decided on doctrinal grounds, for it is plain that the difference in punctuation of the verse would change the meaning altogether. If one reading would be more in spirit with the tenor of Christ's teachings, as seems quite probable, that would be quite naturally preferable.

I accept that dictum and on the basis of it have come to the position of personal assurance in this matter. If we leave the period where it is in our version, the whole statement is: "Neither did this man sin nor his parents; but he was born blind that the works of God should be manifest in him." As an elliptical sentence it demands the insertion of the words, "he was born blind." That means that suffering is caused or permitted as an opportunity for the display of the works of God; it means that a little child comes into the world twisted in order that God may have a chance of showing how He can heal it. That I do not believe.

Read the passage as I have suggested, and Jesus simply denied the suggested solutions, and gave none; but over against the problem He stated the central fact of Christianity, and gave the man sight. The problem was not solved but the disability was removed; the mystery of evil and pain was not unveiled, but the fact that Christ had come into the world to deal with evil and to banish pain was made manifest.

What, then, are the values for us of such a meditation as this, for it is quite conceivable to me that it may be said that I have raised a great question which I am not answering. I have not raised a question, I have voiced one. It is my question as well as yours, yours as well as mine. I have attempted to voice it in this narrative as did the disciples, who were my representatives long ago, and I have done so in order to see how Jesus dealt with it. He said to His disciples: Your suggested solutions are not solutions; you are all wrong. Come with Me, and you and I together will remove the disability which creates the problem. That is the inclusive teaching of the story.

Let us now attempt to gather up some of the values. The first value is that the fact that the Son of God is sent to remove disability demonstrates another fact, that such disability is not the will of God for men. Said Jesus, He hath sent Me to do His works. What are they? To open those blind eyes! Therefore those blind eyes are not the will of God for a man. I think this discovery is a gain, for even in Christian circles we hear a great deal—I was going to say blasphemy, I will amend my word and say nonsense—about suffering being the will of God. Every crippled child is contrary to

the will of God; every mentally deficient man or woman is contrary to the will of God; every spiritually inefficient being is contrary to the will of God. There may be a sense in which it is in the will of God that they should continue to suffer disability. That is not a contradiction. I go into the room where my little child is in bed tossing with fever. It is entirely against my will that my child should be in bed tossing with fever. My little child says to me, Take me out! I answer, No, darling, you must stay here! Am I contradicting my original intention? God's will is not human suffering and disability, but human perfection, glory, and beauty. Yet, in that larger discipline of life the meaning of which will break upon us from the other side, He allows us to remain in circumstances of affliction, the meaning of which is postponed. The deepest fact in the story is that when Jesus opened the blind eyes He said in the midst of the world's history, God is against all human blindness.

Because God is against all human disability, disability is part of sin. We must not narrow the meaning of sin at this point. Sin is failure, missing the mark; sin is coming short of the glory of God. Sin does not necessarily include the idea of human responsibility and guilt, but it is always failure. Thus we are bound to face the problem of sin.

Involved in that conception of sin as failure is the Christian doctrine that the possibility of such failure resulted from the volitional element in the spiritual nature of angels and of man. We are compelled to recognize in this and in other ways the fact of the self-imposed limitations of God. It is inconceivable that God could create beings with the grandeur and greatness of volitional power without also creating the possibility of sin—not the necessity for it, but the possibility of it. So that if a man in his heart rebel against God for permitting sin, he rebels against God for creating man, or any intelligent being having the gift of volition. God can create no being with volition without creating the possibility for sin. Therefore, the man who is in rebellion against God for permitting sin in his life can rectify God's blunder only by destroying himself. Only let him remember, this is what he cannot do. Thus we are shut out of this infinite mystery; it is impossible of final solution by finite minds, and God has given us no solution of it. Christ did not attempt to explain it. From beginning to end the Bible offers no solution. Over against this fact of sin, however, God has placed the fact of ransom, redemption, a mystery profounder than that of sin, and yet so beneficent and mighty in its working that I am compelled to believe, "That cannot end worst which began best," and that "though a wide compass first be fetched," there must ultimately be the infinite triumph of the God Who created.

If still there be in the heart of the thinking man a sense of protest, then I shall say to him that the vindication of God is twofold. Our theology is our theodicy; or, in other words, our doctrine of God is in itself a vindication of God. Our doctrine of God is that He is love, and that, consequently, He is righteous and true and just. Therefore, whatever there may be of mystery or of problem in the things on which these eyes are looking, I rest assured as the years run on, and I suffer pain and watch the suffering of others, that the Judge of all the earth must do right. Oftentimes I cannot understand the meaning of the things on which my eyes may look; but hear me patiently, not clearly, not finally, but actually, Mine eyes have seen the glory of God, and there I rest.

But there is another line of vindication. The redeeming activity of God, in all its manifold applications, is a vindication of God. I came across some striking words the other day in a sermon by Baldwin Brown:

The preacher will best help that consummation by letting the light of the gospel shine clearly, and troubling himself for the present little with theodicies. We are not God's advocates, we are His witnesses. We have no case to establish for Him or for His truth. We have simply to bear witness to the truth.

It was a great word, and I affirm that the light of that gospel of redemption in Christ Jesus is God's vindication.

Without any reservation, I say, If this great God had created man with this volitional capacity, knowing that he might use it to entail on himself limitation and misery, and had made no provision for such catastrophe, then I could not have loved Him, I could not have believed in His goodness. But oftentimes perplexed by this mystery of evil, I stand in the presence of the dignity and majesty and glory of humanity and watch its achievement, its struggles, its failures, its risings and pressings forward; and, watching, I see not only the crippled child, the mentally deficient, the spiritually inefficient; I see also the cripple healed, the mentally deficient enabled to understand, and the spiritually inefficient born into new realization of the true, and so I find, operating in the midst of humanity, a redemptive force that remakes; and I hear Jesus saying: Your solutions are wrong, but in order that God's work may be manifest let us go to His work, open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, open the prison houses and make possible the reconstruction of the humanity that is limited and spoiled by sin. That is my ultimate resting place.

There are men today who deny our faith and so escape our problem. They are not troubled today about the problem in this form, because they have denied this God. And yet as I watch them I see them striving to remove the disabilities, and I say to them, Remember, my brothers, remember, this work also is Christian work. You may have denied my faith intellectually, you may have tried to find rest for your troubled heart by denying the government of God, but you still look with pity on the cripple and try to heal him. That is the unconscious, but very definite, result of the very faith you are denying. Sometimes I have said that England is not Christian. There is a sense in which that is perfectly true. Christian England, no! And yet, yes! England is far more Christian than pagan, thank God. There are thousands of men in this land of ours flinging themselves against disability in its material and mental forms. That also is Christian. I am not now dealing with their individual responsibilities and relationship to God, but with the passion and activity of their lives. There was a day when the disciples would fain have called down fire from heaven to destroy men who were casting out devils. Jesus said, "Ye know not what Spirit ye are of." "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." He that gathereth, even though he name not My name, is with Me. Do not forget that.

Now I come to a narrower circle as I conclude. I would do it with carefulness. I may be speaking even in this audience to those who are sufferers, perchance from birth, and who suffer still. It may be that I am speaking to some who, with personal pain of heart, have thought of some loved one in their home. I would like to say some word to them about the light that comes from this story on all such suffering. I would remind them, first of all, that their disability is retained within the realm of the Divine activity by redemption.

I would remind them therefore that they may be—who can tell?—foreordained workers together with God in the very fact of their disability. Not that such disability was foreordained by God or caused by God, but that because they would suffer this disability and limitation, they were

foreordained to afford opportunities for the manifestation of the works of God.

At times His purpose is served by the removal of the disability, at other times by the temper in which the disability is endured. It is a long stretch of time and of country from the days of His flesh to the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirteen, and from Palestine to the United States. Yet let us not separate these places; let us keep them together! Here in Palestine was a man born blind, suffering disability through no sin of his own; the work of God in him was the immediate opening of his eyes. We have all read the almost matchless story of Helen Keller. Have we really read that story? I read yesterday, for my own spirit's help as I thought of this passage, *The Chant of the Stone Wall*. Helen Keller was blind, deaf, dumb; yet today, through Christly ministrations, she positively speaks. She cannot see, she cannot hear; yet, refined, Christian, beautiful, she has felt her way by the rough stone wall, and interpreted its music for the world. Not all her disabilities have been removed; but the glory of God is manifested in the temper in which she has endured and won her victory through the ministry of Christly souls on her behalf.

These are superlative illustrations, I grant you, and for that reason I like them. They constitute the boundaries of illustration, and somewhere between you comes, my brother, my sister, with your persistent weakness, a glorious opportunity for the display of the tone and temper of the Master. Or perchance there may be, even in this house, someone from whom disability has been removed by the ministry of medicine, for I decline to have medicine and surgery put outside the government and Kingdom of God. All activity that makes toward the removal of disability is Christian. Christ did not come to solve mental problems immediately, because He knows I am unequal to grasping the meaning of the things He could say. That is Christ's own teaching. He stood and looked at the group of His disciples—and do not minimize His words, take them in their fulness—and He said, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He has them to say. We shall know the meaning of these things. Light will flash from the heart of Deity on the last dark problem that perplexes the soul, but we could not bear it yet. Therefore Christ says to us, That man did not sin, neither did his parents; postpone your discussion of the problem and come with Me and help to open the blind eyes and heal ruined humanity. That is My mission in the world.

Finally, accepting this reading of our text, "We must work the works of Him that sent Me," let us observe that according to the interpretation of this matchless story His works are those of ending disability, physical, mental, spiritual, and bringing individual men and women, and all the race, to the full realization of the meaning of their own lives.

Let us remember, therefore, that we are workers together with God in all such endeavor.

When into the Cripples' Parlor you pass, to make glad the life of a little child, or perchance by deft fingers so minister to its pain as to ease it, you are a worker together with Him!

When, teacher in the day school, you take extra time and patience with the boy or girl somewhat mentally deficient to enlarge that child's outlook, you are a worker together with God.

When you take time and prayer and patience to lead dead spiritual souls toward the light of eternal truth, you are a worker together with God.

John 10:11. Life Through Death.

John 10:11.

Life Through Death.

I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep.

John 10:11

In this particular statement of the text and in the whole of the passage surrounding it we have an illuminative statement of Christ with regard to His death and its relation to our life. He affirmed that He is the Good Shepherd, and quoted as supreme qualification for the fulfilment of the function of the Shepherd the fact that He laid down His life for the sheep.

It is very important that we should clearly understand that this declaration means infinitely more than that He died for the sheep. When Jesus said in the words of my text, "I lay down My life for the sheep," He did mean that He would die, but He meant more. He meant to say, "I lay down My life for the sheep" that they may have the life I lay down. "I have come," He said, "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." What life is it that He had come that we might have? His own life, as His words, "I lay down My life for the sheep," make plain. So that the great statement of my text includes the fact of His death, and that profounder fact, that by the way of His death His life is at the disposal of men.

I ask you, then—and may God help us all to approach such a subject reverently—to consider the death of Christ in relation to the impartation of life to believing souls.

We all know in art the importance of background to any picture. I shall take a little time to put in the background of my theme by considering the death of Christ in relation to Himself alone, and this in order that I may proceed to put in the foreground of the picture the death of Christ in its relation to sinful and sinning men.

With regard to this subject of background, let me ask you to think with me carefully of that death of Christ in relation to His life, and apart from its great connection with our salvation. It is a somewhat difficult thing to do, I grant you. We have become so familiar with the story of His death as related to His mission and to our salvation. We have so constantly and almost unconsciously—and thank God that it is so—thought of that death as being intimately related with our profoundest need. But shall we attempt for a moment to look at that death simply in its relation to His life?

Let me say at once, in order that I may arrest your attention and aid you in following me along this line, that if the death of Christ stand alone in relation to the life of Christ, and be not seen to have immediate connection with the sin of man, then the death of Christ will make me an infidel immediately. That is a superlative statement. I desired that it should be so, for by such superlative sentences I am attempting to put in this dark background.

There is no problem so terrible and so impossible of solution in all the realm of evil and all the fact of pain as the death of Christ, until we catch its profounder meaning and accept the great evangel concerning it, which He declares.

The death of Christ creates the greatest moral mystery that the mind of man can ever attempt to solve. The death of Christ at the age of thirty-three or thereabouts was the eclipse of light, the extinction of love, the ending of the one life that is by all men—whatever their views of the Person of Christ may be—conceded to be the perfect Pattern and highest Ideal of human life that the world has ever seen.

I say, first of all, that the death of Christ was the eclipse of light. Form what opinion you will of His Person, the fact remains that "never man spake like this Man." My brethren, I pause because a sentence like that lures a man on to exposition and defense of it. I repeat it. "Never man spake like this Man." No other teacher that the world has ever had has pressed into so few and brief sentences so much wisdom which has been productive of such tremendous result in the history of the race as the teaching of Jesus.

The teaching of Jesus was clear, authoritative, rational. He never speculated. There was nothing hesitating about the teaching of Jesus. He said things that had any other man said the world would have ceased to listen to him long ago on account of pride and arrogance. And yet men listen to Him. One illustration will suffice me at this point. There was a day when, standing in the midst of the crowds, He said this: "I do always the things that are pleasing to God." Can you find me another teacher who dare say such a thing and be believed? If I came and faced my congregation on some Sabbath and said to them, I always please God—when the newspapers, religious or irreligious, noticed it, they would say, "From that moment people ceased to believe in him." And quite right that they should. But I find in my Gospel of John this fact: after He had said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to God," from that time "many believed on Him." That is the marvelous mystery of Jesus Christ. His teaching was clear and authoritative and rational and final, and He said such things concerning God, and the soul, and eternity as man had never said and never thought, but which the human conscience knew at once to be true. And He had not said half men wanted Him to say when He was arrested, condemned by the most iniquitous mock trial that ever disgraced the pages of human history, and murdered in cold blood. The Light was eclipsed. Men were groping after it. The world had had other teachers, and the most honest and remarkable of them had said they could not speak of certain subjects with authority. Both Socrates and Plato, among the Greek philosophers, announced that they could teach men only to ask questions concerning God, the soul, and destiny; that another teacher must come who could answer these questions. And He came and answered the questions concerning God, and the soul, and destiny; and yet before His teaching seemed to be well nigh begun He was put to death.

But I go further, and say that in the death of Jesus I see the extinction of love. Among all the love stories that have charmed the hearts of men there never was such a love story as the story of Jesus, and every man knows it if he will stop and think. Jesus' was a love absolutely and utterly self-forgetful. His was a love equal to intense severity and devoid of fear. His was a love patient enough to discover good where no one else could discover it, and to wait for its development. His was a love strong enough to denounce wrong in the heart and life of His best beloved. His was a love strong enough to look Peter in the face, and say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." I know

you better than you know yourself. You have the making of the common blasphemer in you, Peter. His love was strong enough to say to that same man: You will deny Me, but trust Me, and I will realize the good. "Let not your heart be troubled."

His was a love that flamed out strongest in death. I am not now referring to the essential values of the death, but to the simple human story. Oh, man and woman, Christian or un-Christian, did you ever hear such language, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? Yet a Man Whose life was all love was arrested at thirty-three years of age, and murdered, and God did not interfere.

Or take one other point. The death of Jesus was the ending of the one life that was a perfect pattern according to our human ideals. His was the one life which revealed the meaning of life eternal, in which the intellect was illumined by the spiritual, the emotion impulsed by the eternal, and the will dominated by Deity. Yet that perfect life was permitted by God to be arrested and ended in bloody brutality.

In the presence of the death of Christ I find myself confronted by the most superlative manifestation of the problem of evil that the world has ever seen. And I ask this question, and I do not hesitate to ask it: Is the moral Governor of the universe good? There is nothing in that death to show it, until you have the evangelical explanation of it. These are the questions we ask in the presence of the Cross, if we think at all. There is nothing else that compares with this. A life, perfect in light, perfect in love, perfect in essential life, and yet priests in malicious hatred inspired the brutal government of the Roman power to lay foul hands on the fair life and murder it. Where is God? When I stand in the presence of the Cross, I ask, Is God good, and is He powerful? These are the questions that come to me.

Now let me again put this thing superlatively. It is on my heart as a burden. Unless what the New Testament teaches about the death of Christ be true, that there was more value in it than ever can be associated with the moral personality of Jesus, that there was some infinite mystery lying behind that death that awaited the revelation of God, then that Cross makes me an unbeliever. That is all background, dark and mysterious background. I have emphasized it only that we may now turn to the great foreground of revelation.

Christ has answered our problem. I ask you simply to listen to this one word of Jesus about His own dying. The first factor contributing to the solution of the problem is the fact that Christ knew of His death, and distinctly foretold it, and went quietly and resolutely toward it, knowing its manner and method before He came to it. That helps me to a solution, though not to the final one. In the unclouded intelligence of eternal life He foretold His dying. In the overwhelming love of eternal life He chose that method of dying. In the overcoming power of eternal life He accomplished His dying.

I say, in the first place, that in the unclouded intelligence of eternal life He foretold His dying. All through the Gospel story this is evident. I recommend to young men and women interested in this to obtain a book, the most luminous and valuable I have ever read on the New Testament teaching on this subject. I refer to Dr. Denney's *Death of Christ*, more valuable as a treatise on the Atonement than anything I have ever read, because in that book Dr. Denney does not attempt any philosophic account, but simply interprets the New Testament teaching. Among other things that

Christ taught about His death, I find this word at the beginning of His public ministry. I see Him engaged in one of those first activities when He cleansed the temple, and men came to him and said, "What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" and He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The men who listened to Him did not understand Him. The materialists round about Him did not understand Him. They laughed at Him. They thought He spoke of the material temple; but the inspired exposition goes on, "He spake of the temple of His body." So that, in effect, when men said to Him at the beginning, What is your authority? He said, The authority of My death and resurrection. That was the final thing. Not the ethical teaching, not the social order, but the dying and resurrection.

Or, if we go on a little further into the public ministry, we find Him sitting one night, not among the crowds, but with a lonely inquirer on the housetop. It was a great mystery to Nicodemus, that necessity for new birth; and he asked Jesus two questions. First, "How can a man...?" That is the question of critical unbelief. Then, "How can these things be?" That was the question of inquiring honesty. And when he asked Him the second question, How can a man have this life, or by what process is it communicated to him, Jesus said to him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." In effect, Jesus Christ said to the inquiring soul who asked the way of life, The only way of life is by My death. Through that, the new life of which I speak will be placed at the disposal of men.

So that whether He cleansed the temple, or talked to an inquiring soul, underneath His act and His teaching, His right, His authority in His own consciousness, was the right, the authority of that very Cross which fills us with the sense of problem, and almost of pain.

Then, again, not only did He foretell it, but in the overwhelming love of His life He chose it. How often it was suggested to Him that He should omit the Cross from His program. I think, perhaps, the suggestion came first at the beginning of public ministry in the wilderness, when the devil, making to pass before Him in splendid array the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, said to Him, "All these will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." It was subtle, insidious—yes, I must use the word—devilish. What did he mean? Here is a short cut to these kingdoms. Thou hast come for them, and according to all the foreshadowing of the past, and the purpose of Thy heart, Thou art going to death. For remember, Jesus, being baptized in Jordan's waters, typified His consent to die with the transgressors. Take this short and easy method. One moment's homage, and I will give Thee all the kingdoms. Christ turned His back on that short and easy method, choosing the Cross, God's way of suffering and dying, in order to gain possession of the kingdoms.

Again the temptation came when He turned from the ministry to the nation and began that to His own disciples, and Peter said to Him, "That be far from Thee, Lord," pity Thyself, Jesus in stern words said to him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan... thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." The things of men are the things that save life from pain, the things of pure selfishness, that make men choose the easy path. The things of God for the salvation of men demand the Cross, and suffering, and pain; and thus He turned His back again upon the suggestion that He should miss the Cross.

In the gospel according to John it is recorded that certain Greeks wanted to see Him, and when His disciples came running and said, Master, some Greeks are here, and want to see Thee, He said the very strangest thing in all the world, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.... If any man serve Me, let him follow Me."

What was His meaning? Most evidently this: The Greeks desire to see Me. They cannot see Me. No man can see Me now. They must wait for My dying and its issue to see Me. The way of the Cross is the only way by which a man can see Me. Thus He anticipated and deliberately chose the Cross. And we have but to read His prayer to see how the Cross burdened Him, overshadowed Him. He said, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour"—and He did not say, Father, save Me from this hour, but "Father, glorify Thy name." The supreme passion of His life was not to be saved from anything, but that God's name should be glorified. And the answer came, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." And then the word of Jesus rang out about His Cross: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." He deliberately chose the Cross, as well as foretold it.

And once again, in the overcoming power of that eternal life; the Cross which He knew and chose, He accomplished. Those were the very remarkable words that Jesus spoke in connection with the declaration of our text: "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Have we not been a little inclined to say that Jesus died because men murdered Him? There are some senses in which that is correct. But here is the profounder truth. Jesus said, "No one taketh it [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Did you say that is poetic, a mere figure of speech? But listen, He said something else. "I... take it again." Now, if He took it again I will believe that He laid it down, and no man took it from Him. Did He take it again? Yes, thank God for the answer. If somebody says no, then you will question the authority of the statement that He laid it down. In secondary senses—in the sense in which man was an instrument of a Divine purpose—men took His life away; but in the underlying profundities, God gave Him commandment, authority to lay down His life Himself, and He did what none other has ever done, He laid it down and took it again. To me death is a fact, but to Him it was an act. He is lonely and sublime and majestic in the mystery of His dying, and I see Him laying down His life through the secondary process of human murder, but in the underlying fundamental authority of a Divine counsel. And that, my brethren, is what Peter meant when preaching on the Day of Pentecost, he said of Jesus, "Him... by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay." But Peter also said He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." So that I see in this dying that appalls me, this great Cross that shocks me, first, that Jesus knew and foretold it; second, that He went toward it, choosing it; and third, that He died of His own will, and authority, and power. And in that death of Christ, which He—to use the word used in connection with the Holy Mount—accomplished, I have at last touched some secret spring of life. This death is not the ordinary death of other men. It is different, removed, supreme, and marvelous beyond all dying. So that the dying of Christ at the end of His life has in it qualities, quantities, virtues, values, that can be in no other dying.

And now let us go a little further. What did Christ say concerning His death? I confine myself now to the simple statement of this text. He said, "I am the Good Shepherd." The Good Shepherd and

the wolf are favorite figures of Jesus. If you go back to Matthew, you will read that He saw the multitudes of the cities and villages and was moved with compassion because they were as sheep scattered, having no shepherd. And that word "scattered" means flung to the ground, torn and mangled by wolves—harassed. The wolf is the one that destroys the sheep. The Good Shepherd is the One Who loves the sheep, and Who will enter into conflict with the wolf that destroys the sheep. How will He do it? The Good Shepherd laid down His life when He took hold on sin and entered into mortal and final conflict with it. There was only one way to overcome it, and that was by dying. The Good Shepherd did not hesitate at dying, in order that by His dying He might make dead the thing that spoiled the sheep. The Good Shepherd entered into conflict with the wolf, and therein laid down His life for the sheep.

Let us go still further. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. There is a greater truth contained in this than the figure that Jesus used here can possibly contain. Here is a supreme truth that submerges the figure. No truth of God can finally and fully be contained in figures, even those which Jesus used. This is not to question Jesus, but it is to say that figures always faint and fail before infinite facts; and whatever figure Jesus used, you find it was full and overflowing.

I take the figure of the Eastern shepherd. I see Him going into conflict with the wolf. I see Him die as the wolf dies, that the sheep may be delivered and die no more. But here the figure fails. Jesus said, "I take it again," and I take it again for the sheep. Now, suppose the Eastern shepherd dying slew the wolf, and then, taking hold of his own life again, gave it to the sheep, so that the sheep that were not strong enough to enter into conflict and have victory over the wolf should take the very nature of the shepherd and become able to enter into conflict and overcome. That is the figure of the dying of Jesus and the liberation of His life. He died for the destruction of the destroyer, but He rose again, and in His rising He took back His life, not to hold it, but to give it; not to possess it, but to pass it on to others. And today I believe in Him, and have His very life, so that I, who could not have victory over the wolf in my own strength, but in His strength, have received the very nature that triumphs over the wolf; and I am made master of the things that mastered me by the thrill and the throb of the very life of the Shepherd Who died and rose again.

"I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." And out of this comes the great evangel. The wolf which snatcheth and scattereth is overcome. The Shepherd life which overcame him is communicated, and in its power I also may overcome. Eternal life is now at the disposal of men who put their trust in Jesus; and in that gift there are two values, the value of the death for the putting away of sin, and the value of the life, that men may go and sin no more. The Good Shepherd giveth His life to the sheep.

The contemplation of the life eternal in Jesus is the most overwhelming and disheartening exercise possible to man, and if I have nothing in Christ other than the revelation of what eternal life means, that revelation serves only to reveal my degradation. Unless in some way the life revealed can be communicated to me, unless, somehow, the great ethical beauty manifested can become the dynamic virtue operating in me, then the revelation does nothing for me. No man has ever yet been lifted out of degradation by the contemplation of an ideal. No man has ever yet been saved—and I use the word of set purpose—by looking at the glory of Jesus Christ.

Think of it a little more carefully with me. You tell me of the light of His intelligence operating in the realm of eternal love, and I tell you that the light blinds me. You tell me of the love that impulsed all

His doing, and I tell you that the love makes me ashamed of my lovelessness and utter selfishness. You tell me that the exercise of His will was sufficient to resist all temptation, and I am amazed, but I am not helped. I am not helped by looking at the light, or hearing of the love, or watching the great life principle, because it is all outside me. In my ignorance I stand in the presence of the light, and in my darkness I stand in the presence of the love, and in my base unworthiness I stand in the presence of the life that operates to perfect volition; and I say with the Apostle, "To me who would do good, evil is present." There is a paralysis in my veins and blood, and though I admire the ideal, I cannot translate it into the real. Such light reveals darkness. Such love makes one blush for very shame. Such strength of will makes me afraid; and by all this I mean that the incarnation alone never did, and never can, save a single soul.

What, then, must be done? That life must be given up in and through death. Had there been no sin to atone for, perchance there might have been the communication of a life that should have made me undying without the death of the Cross. But because sin is there, the death of the Cross must be the harvest of sin; and in that lone and awful moment, when in His dying He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He spoke the words that I ought to speak. Then He was at the utmost issue of sin. Then He was in the deepest depth of sorrow. Then He touched the unfathomable and unutterable mystery of silence. He was God-forsaken.

I see the crowd in Pilate's hall,
I mark their wrathful mien,
Their shouts of "Crucify" appall
With blasphemy between.
But of that shouting multitude
I know that I am one.

Ask me the meaning of this death, and I stand in the presence of it intellectually, and assert that it is a mystery. But, ah, me, when there lies before me His thought of it, His estimate of it, His declared purpose in it, then I bow my head in the presence of the Cross and say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"; and out of the mystery of that dying, that substitutionary, vicarious, atoning dying—and if you take those words from me you make me an infidel at once—there comes to me the great gift of life.

And now in the communicated life of Christ, liberated through the mystery of His death, I see, for the intelligence is illumined; I love, for the emotion is enkindled; I obey and serve, for the will is brought under its proper impulse and motive. And all this in the eternal sense. The present becomes part of the future, and death becomes the gate of life, because the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep.

Have we that life? It is at our disposal. He tasted death for every man, and unless we have it, then we have no intelligence that takes in the infinite, no love that fastens on God and man and fulfils all the law, no power equal to the obedience that blossoms into righteousness.

And if we have not the life, let us take it. It is God's gift to us. "He that believeth on the Son hath life, eternal life."

John 12:12, 13. The Triumphal Entry.

John 12:12, 13.

The Triumphal Entry.

On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.

John 12:12-13

In the calendar of the Christian Church this is known as Palm Sunday. On Sunday last we considered our Lord's interpretation of His passion-baptism as indicated in words chronicled only by Luke, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."

Now amid the Lenten shadows there breaks a ray of brightness, and flashes a touch of color. We are accustomed to speak of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem as a triumphal entry. There are certain senses in which that description is warranted; yet, it may be a misleading description. The picture is one of ineffable sadness. Contemplated in the light of the ministry of Jesus; considered in relation to all the surrounding circumstances, it was a very, very sad entry. It is a picture of great sadness, merging into gladness; of ineffable sorrow, preparing the way for unutterable and final joy.

It was the first day of the week. In the calendar of the Hebrew people it was the day on which the sacrificial lamb for the Passover was secluded. The Master had spent the Sabbath in quietness among His friends. The day of rest over, He is seen passing to Jerusalem amid the thronging and surging multitudes. It is a little difficult, I sometimes think, for us to comprehend the vastness of the crowds that gathered in Jerusalem at the Passover feast. Josephus sets the number at three million. In all probability we are correct if we say that at that great Passover feast, half, or even more, of the population scattered around Jerusalem gathered to the city. Jerusalem was quite unable to entertain them, even the surrounding villages were overcrowded, and thousands lived in booths and tents erected that they might be able to be present at the Passover feast.

The fame of Jesus had, of course, spread through all the countryside. His name had become a household word. The three years of His public ministry, the wonder of His works, and the more matchless wonder of His words had carried His fame everywhere. The people were eager and anxious to see Him, many who had never seen Him, and others, many who had often seen Him, were desirous of seeing Him again. There was the added wonder of the raising of Lazarus as we are told by the evangelists. The last great public sign in demonstration of His power had been that of the raising of Lazarus. Then the news spread that He was actually coming to Jerusalem, was to enter Jerusalem that day; and so He came, passing through vast multitudes lining the way, thronging the streets.

Now the remarkable thing about this story is that He chose to enter publicly, and deliberately arranged for His entry in such a way as to provoke demonstration. You will remember another occasion where there was a feast in Jerusalem and His brethren after the flesh tried to persuade Him to come up and do this very thing; to present Himself publicly in the midst of the crowds and proclaim His Kingship; and He had said to them with a touch of tender sarcasm, "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready." He eventually went to that feast, but He went quietly, unobserved, finding His way in all probability over some of the mountain paths and through their passes, and it was not known He was coming until suddenly He was found in the temple teaching. How different this entry. He chose now to enter publicly, evoking demonstration. It was by His own arrangement that He went riding upon the colt, the foal of an ass, surrounded by the little band of His own disciples; and by those vast Galilean crowds who had always more sympathy with Him than the crowds of Judaea; the crowds from Galilee of the Gentiles, as the Judaens termed them with contempt; Galilee, the country merging on Gentile land and which had passed under Gentile influence, and in that way had become contaminated.

This entry of our Lord was part of the Divine program; that is made most clear in the Gospel of Matthew, which reveals Him in His kingly character. After He had been rejected by the rulers, He departed from Jerusalem and for a period following Caesarea Philippi, the period during which He was instructing His disciples in the necessity for His coming Cross, He had not been near the city. He is now seen going back to the city for a definite purpose, in awe-inspiring solemnity to challenge those rulers, to compel them by parabolic method to find a verdict against themselves, and then at last to pronounce the doom of the city.

I draw your attention to that only in passing, and yet, we must not lose sight of it. I feel personally that it cannot be too often emphasized that the whole movement of the ministry of Jesus in the latter days, was under His own government and by His own arranging. If we look at Him during those passion days as a victim of circumstances, we miss the vision entirely. Not as a victim did He take His way to Jerusalem and to the Cross, but as a Victor. This entry into Jerusalem was for the specific purpose of uttering its final doom, rejecting the Hebrew people from their position in the economy of God. It was during this final visit to Jerusalem that He uttered the words so full of awful solemnity, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This was a Kingly entrance. He was going deliberately and with determination, for the awe-inspiring and solemn work of pronouncing doom on the city. Yet, He was going to break a way through the doom toward the ultimate victory, going—to use the descriptive phrase of the conversation with the heavenly visitors on the mount of transfiguration—to accomplish an exodus.

Our attention then is to be fixed upon this actual entry; and we will observe it first as to the event itself; secondly, briefly as to the sequel; and finally as to the lessons it has still to teach.

Look for a moment at this entry of Jesus as a patrician Roman would have looked at it. If you do that, your heart will be filled with contempt for the whole movement. I make that suggestion in order that we may see this thing as it really appeared. Has it ever occurred to you that it was a very remarkable thing that the Roman officials did not interfere with this demonstration? They were there to quell insurrection, to hold in check the hot, turbulent Jews, and yet, there was no interference on their part! They were accustomed to see these vast multitudes gathered for

religious exercises at Jerusalem; but they were perfectly aware of this strange movement and this unusual excitement manifest. They knew of the prophet of Nazareth, but they did not interfere. Why not? Because the whole thing was so utterly and absolutely contemptible. I put it more strongly still and say that which we describe as a triumphal entry would have been in the eyes of the Roman a laughing stock; the Roman who perchance had seen in the eternal city sitting on its seven hills, the triumphal return of a conqueror! I need not stop to describe in detail those triumphal entries, in which the conqueror, drawn in triumphal car, with kings whom he had overcome in war chained to his chariot wheels, amid the plaudits of the assembled multitudes, entered the city in military magnificence. Some old soldier who had seen such an entry into Rome, would look at this entry characterized by old clothes, broken trees, unarmed peasant folk, and would have held it in supreme contempt, in the kind of contempt that the West End still feels for any procession out of the East End at any hour of any day. It was just a mob; unorganized, shouting, tearing branches from trees and casting them in the way, taking their garments off and putting them across the back of the colt upon which a man rode. A man riding upon old clothes, in the midst of broken trees, surrounded by a shouting mob. That would have been the Roman outlook upon the whole scene. Grotesque!

Yet look again, for it was a most impressive procession. Forget the accidentals of the old clothes and the broken trees, and the patrician contempt for peasant folk; and see humanity thronging, pressing, jostling, around one central Man. I have seen many impressive congregations gathered in Westminster Chapel, but one abides in my memory with more impressive-ness than any other. Several years ago, there was a procession of unemployed to the House of Commons, and we opened these doors simply to shelter the women while the men went on to the House. I saw this building filled from floor to ceiling with women of the East End, and never was I more impressed by any gathering in all my public ministry. The very fact that they were out of their usual place, and that there were upon them the marks that would have caused them to be held in contempt by patricians, was impressive. There was eagerness and anxiety in all their faces. Their singing of "The Marseillaise" I shall never forget; nor when asked what hymn they would like to sing they replied, "Count your blessings," and they sang it. It was a vast mass of human beings, eager, intent, wondering, ready for anything. That is the grandeur of the crowd that surrounded Jesus as He rode that day.

Look once more upon this gathering and see, so far as it is possible to see, the great spiritual truth, the thing the multitude did not see, the thing that His own disciples did not understand, the thing which at the moment He alone perfectly understood; He was taking His way to the goal which the people desired, but in a way they did not understand. They crowd around Him, these Galilean peasants, and the children of Jerusalem, crying, "Hosanna—Save now: blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," were crying out for the establishment of a Kingdom, for the authority of a King, for deliverance from the yoke of bondage which rested upon them, for the dawning of a new day of light and life and peace. He was riding through the midst of that clamour toward that very goal. He was going by a way that they knew not of, a way that they so little understood that, presently, they turned the cry of Hosanna into the hiss of crucify.

He was moving through the worthless present, transmuting it into the triumphant future. If we fix our eyes upon Him alone, the other things which the patrician Roman would hold in contempt become transfigured and they become beautiful. The old clothes marked sacrificial loyalty on the

part of the men who flung them upon the colt. Nothing else was at hand, therefore they brought their garments and spread them upon the colt that He might ride upon them. The old clothes of the disciples were more beautiful than the purple of patrician Romans. The very tree branches were in fact more beautiful than any human work of art could possibly be. Unarmed men have always been His army, for conducting His warfare and bringing in His victory.

The very things upon which I gaze and hold in contempt when measured by human standards have suddenly cast upon them a light and glory, that transmutes them into fine gold; and there is suggestiveness and beauty about this entrance from which one cannot escape.

Look for a moment at the crowds. The disciples, passionately eager for His crowning. This is what they so often hoped He would do. This is the kind of demonstration to which they have been attempting to urge Him. At last He is riding in, fulfilling prophecy, to proclaim Himself the King of Israel. In their gladness, in their shouting, and in the manifestation of loyalty, there was a strange yet natural reaction from the sadness of those days since Caesarea Philippi. In our Lord's contemplation of His passion, these men could not understand or follow Him; they shrank from the Cross; but this is what they had hoped for. At last, it appeared to them, that He had abandoned those words He had been uttering about the necessity for buffeting, bruising and dying in Jerusalem. At last He was going to Jerusalem, not to yield Himself to the hostility of His foes, but to proclaim His Kingship. They were filled with zeal for Him; but it was zeal without knowledge. He will teach these men, in preparation for the days to come, in the only way in which they can understand His teaching; that the Kingdom cannot come as they expect. Even though He provoke sentiment, and compel demonstration; even though the crowds are ready to shout His name and proclaim Him King; He cannot escape from that determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God which is for Him the way of the Cross.

Turn from that inner circle and observe the multitude; seeking a King, and now crowding around Him. I have often wondered what they meant when they shouted "Hosanna," and I am not quite sure until this moment. Hosanna is a combination of two words in the Hebrew tongue, the one meaning save, the other being always an exclamation, sometimes "Ho," sometimes "Now," but always exclamatory. Look at these people round about Jesus. Look at the children as they take up the song and make it ring in the temple courts. What is the thing they sing? "Hosanna, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." It is an appeal. I think we are perfectly safe in saying it means save now. You discovered from the reading of the paragraph in Psalms 118 that this was a quotation from the ancient psalmody. What did they mean? Were these Galilean peasants appealing to Him, or were they appealing to Jerusalem? Did Hosanna mean they were crying to Him to "Save now," or were they appealing to Jerusalem to receive the King? I leave it as a question, please understand that. If for the moment, I only give you my own conviction you will receive it as such and not as dogmatic or final. I think they were appealing for Him, even though as I have already said, the "Hosanna" presently merged into "Crucify"; but remember, they were two different crowds that cried, "Hosanna" and "Crucify." They were the Galilean crowds that cried, "Hosanna," and the Judaeans that presently cried, "Crucify." I believe that day the Galilean multitudes appealed in their song that He might be received. It was the Galilean appeal to Jerusalem to receive Him. Who answered? Not the city, not the rulers, not the publicans, but the children. For a moment there is the most perfect picture of the temple in all the ministry of Jesus. Again He cleansed it, driving out the traffickers. Then He stood in the midst

surrounded by children and cripples; children singing the Galilean song, and the sick being brought to Him for healing. This for a brief hour ere He doomed the city and said, "Your house is left unto you desolate," notice "Your house," which at the beginning of His ministry He had called "My Father's house."

Whether the multitudes were appealing to Him to save, or to Jerusalem to receive, the fundamental truth is the same; they were seeking for His authority. Yet, the basis of their desire was wholly wrong. The basis of their desire was selfish, they would crown Him, as they had attempted to do again and again, because they believed that if He were King they would be fed with material food, healed of physical disorder, brought into the place of material blessing. There is no spiritual passion in the cry, no deep sense of sin underlying it. So He rode in with disciples mistaking His meaning, glad because He is abandoning, as they think, at the last moment, His purpose of the Cross; surrounded by the multitudes seeking authority, appealing to Him to save, or to Jerusalem to receive, as the case may be, in order that the Kingdom may be established upon a material basis.

Now look once more. The only consistent people in the crowd apart from the King, are the Pharisees; hostile, fearful, rebellious, determined; consistent with themselves. Remember, a man may be consistent and that may be the most terrible indictment you can bring against him. John was beheaded that Herod might be consistent; "I have given my word to the wanton and I will behead the prophet"; so spake Herod. Let us beware of being consistent if consistent means persistent in a thing which is evil.

So the procession moved on, and the King moved in. Though the disciples and the multitudes alike saw the glitter of a crowning, He saw the blood of the Cross. They imagined He was now coming to establish His throne, and break the yoke of Rome and set His people free; He knew that He was moving toward His final baptism, and so He knew that He was moving toward the glory of the crowning and toward the victory that lay beyond.

What of the sequel of this entry? The tears of Jesus. As He observed the city, He wept over it. The temple cleansed by Jesus and restored for a brief hour to its own true use. The accursed tree to which the King went of His own choice and of His own will; the tree which He made the throne of empire, the great center of that government which shall at last build the city of God and establish His order in the world.

The sequel! The disciples all forsook Him and fled. The multitudes of Galileans left and hurried away. The Judaeans took up the cry, "Away with Him, Crucify Him." The Pharisees remained consistent, and murdered Him. Jerusalem was destroyed.

Looking back upon that scene, these are the things that it seems to say to my heart and soul. I hear the King saying in the midst of all that multitude, "My Kingdom is not of this world," which does not mean that His Kingdom is not to be set up in this world, but that the Kingdom of the King can never come according to worldly ideals, by worldly methods, or result in the glamour and glory which is entirely and absolutely of the world.

I say this with all carefulness and all reverence; let us be careful lest we desire to crown Him still upon the worldly foundation, and by earthly method, and only for material glory. The peril has run through the centuries and today desires to make Jesus King because He can feed the multitude.

He will have no throne upon that basis. He will never allow Himself to be crowned in that way. He will build God's city in the world. He will revolutionize the social order. He will bring, ere His work be done, the true brotherhood growing out of the recognition of the Fatherhood of God. But He must begin at the center, at the spiritual center, and in no other way will He ever do His work. His Kingdom is not of this world as to ideal, or method, or ultimate glory. His Kingdom is over the world, over all its necessities, the clothes that He sat upon; over all its beauties, the trees with which they strewed the way of His entry; over its finality, men, for whom all things were made, and who constitute the crowning glory of the creation of God. His Kingdom is over the world, and it will be established over the world and all the facts and forces of the material will also be under His dominion. But these He will remake, renew, render finally beautiful by dealing with the spiritual center, and from that spiritual center He will change the material circumference. Do not let us be led astray by any demonstration that seeks to put Him on the throne in any other way than that of His own appointment.

What is the nature of our joy in the presence of the King? The question appeals to me as being full of searching power. Is our joy that of these multitudes? Is our joy that of these disciples? Or is our joy that which was the inspiration of the King Himself? What was the joy of the multitudes in that brief hour of acclamation? The joy of believing that the King would provide peace and power and plenty. Peace interpreted as quietness to dwell under their own vine and fig tree in comfort. Power, as ability to break the yoke of Rome by their own hand. Plenty, as freedom from all material poverty. This is what they were looking for. This is the joy that was in the heart of the multitude. What was the joy in the heart of the King? The vision of the purity of the redeemed earth, of the peace that would issue from that purity, of the power that would come to men by the way of that purity, and of the plenty which would result. His joy was that of the certainty that by the way of His coming Cross and passion, He could remake men at the center of their being, so that they should be pure, clean, holy, and conformed to the character of God; and the certainty that out of the remaking of the spiritual life there must inevitably come the renewal of everything related thereto. The passion and joy of the fickle crowd was that for material comfort. The passion and joy of the Lord, which was His comfort and strength as He walked the way of the Cross and endured it, was that for the holiness which was within the will and nature of God, and that of His certainty that out of such conformity to the will and nature of God, there must come the final result of peace and good-will among the sons of men.

Therefore, what is my joy in the presence of this Christ? Is it that of my conviction that He will establish an order that shall be materially perfect; or is it the deeper joy of the assurance that He will glorify God in human history by holiness and purity? The first which is selfish will make me cowardly and unfaithful, and may change my singing of "Hosanna" into my crying "Crucify." The second, which is Godly, will enable me to suffer, to dare all things, if necessary to die; but it will make me victor in fellowship with the triumphant King.

So our last glance at this picture is in the presence of that question. See the disciples and the multitudes; full of expectation, joy and singing; but wholly selfish, wholly of the earth, utterly out of harmony with the deep spiritual purpose of the One around Whom they lift their acclamation.

Behold the King! What is His passion? It is the passion for purity, and the passion for holiness, the passion for the victory of God.

May it be given to us to share that passion and that vision, that so we may be prepared to share the travail that makes His Kingdom come.

John 12:36. Life In The Light.

John 12:36.

Life In The Light.

While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.

John 12:36

These words of our Lord were spoken to critical and unbelieving men, and as their context shows, their intention was that of urging these men to yield to the light which was so soon to be withdrawn. They virtually constituted the last public utterance of our Lord.

Let us think first of the assumption of our Lord which we know is so certainly fulfilled; that we have the light; second, of the true attitude towards the light, "... believe on the light..."; and finally, of the issue of such belief, "... that ye may become sons of light."

First, then, as to the assumption of our Lord. Light is peculiarly a word of John, and the sense in which he uses it is made perfectly clear in his prologue. Therein he said, "... the life was the light of men." Dealing with the relation of the Word to the whole creation, he declared inclusively that in Him was life. Then, marking the distinction between human life and all life below that in the scale of being, he said, "... the life was the light of men." That is to say that in man there is a spiritual and moral understanding. In the great process of creation when life reached the height of man, it looked back into the face of God and was conscious of Him. In man life became light.

Then further he declared, "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not..." In that statement there is a recognition of the fact that this light in human life has never been wholly extinguished, but there is also recognition of the fact that this light is shrouded in darkness. The darkness and the light are both recognized.

At last he came to what was the supreme thought in his mind. His eyes fixed upon his Lord and Master with Whom he had walked the holy fields, with Whom he had become so intimately familiar, he said, "There was the true light,... which lighteth every man, coming into the world." It had always been in the world, it had been in every man; but there it was, coming into clear shining and clear observation. In the Incarnation, the hidden light that had been shrouded in darkness but never wholly extinguished, came from the darkness into visibility so that Jesus could and did say, "I am the Light of the world."

Light is that shining of truth which interprets life; the capacity for apprehending that light is in every human soul, and through man, as he receives the light, believes on the light, becomes a son of light, the effects of that light pass to the whole creation. "... I am the Light of the world,..." said our Lord, and He also said to His disciples in the days of His flesh and thereafter to all who believe on His Name, "Ye are the light of the world."

The light then, for us, has been focused in a Person and that a Person of our own humanity. Jesus was a human being, a perfect human being. That is not all of the truth concerning Him. There are deeper and profounder truths concerning the Person of our adorable Lord than can find expression in that statement. To that, this very prologue bears witness in the mystic sentences with which it opens; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But we must remember that the completion of that statement is found in the fourteenth verse: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." For the purpose of understanding the light then, we are not called upon to think of Him in the terms of the eternal and the mysterious. These He came to reveal, but He came to reveal them through the things that are temporal and through our own humanity. Therefore, when we think of the Light, we think of Him, our Lord, as a perfect human being.

What shining forth of light was there in that human Being with regard to the physical, with regard to the mental, with regard to the spiritual?

First, as to the physical. When He, the Word, came into human history as a human being, all conditions were open to Him for His coming. He might have come into any sphere or condition of human life. He might have come into the courts of kings; into the fellowship of learning. He might have entered life amid all its material splendor or, on the other hand, He might have come into the most abject and absolute poverty. All conditions were open to Him. How then did He come? Into what conditions did He come?

The conditions that He chose for Himself in order to give us light upon the physical side of human life were those which may be described as simple and sufficient. We often speak of the poverty of our Lord. It is a comparative and relative term. In certain senses, yea verily, He lived a life of poverty. But we never ought to think of Jesus with pity when we think of His poverty. His was not the grinding poverty which is a tragedy. His life was characterized in His boyhood, in His young manhood, and through the years of His public ministry, by a stern simplicity, but He had all things sufficient. In the Book of Proverbs we have the wonderful prayer of Agur,

Remove far from me vanity and lies;

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with the food that is needful for me;

Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord,

Or lest I be poor, and steal,

And use profanely the name of my God.

That prayer was answered perfectly in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. He was removed in the material surroundings of His life from vanity and lies; He had neither poverty in the extreme sense of the word, nor riches. He was fed throughout His life with food that was needful for Him. He was never full having to face the temptation that comes from repletion, of denying God and saying, "Who is He?" He was never poor having to face the temptation to steal and to use profanely the Name of His God. He chose to enter human life and live as to the physical in circumstances that

were characterized by simplicity and by sufficiency. That is light upon human life. It is the interpretation of the true place of the physical therein; it should be without poverty and without riches.

Then as to the mental. So far as the thinking of Jesus is revealed in His teaching and in His acting—and surely these are the means by which thinking is perpetually revealed—His mental outlook was that of a perpetual apprehension of the spiritual and appreciation of the material. He was forever conscious of the spiritual, forever acting as in the presence of the abiding and the eternal, but never withdrawing Himself from the material or treating it as though it were unimportant or valueless, appreciating it everywhere, in flowers, in children, in all the commonplaces of life. Of course, that was the trouble created in the minds of certain men of religion concerning Him; so much so that exaggerating their language as men in criticism usually do, they said, He is "... a gluttonous man and a winebibber...."

His whole mental outlook, however, was most evidently that of the apprehension of the spiritual. This, of course, is in some senses difficult to speak of. The spiritual is so difficult to reach, to understand in other human lives. It is so profoundly difficult that I question whether one human soul can ever, even after long comradeship, know perfectly the spiritual secret of another human soul. We become acquainted with physical and material manifestations; we pass by dint of friendship into fellowship with the mental attitudes and movements of mind; but that most strange dignity, the spiritual being, dwells always in an inner shrine. Sometimes we get a little nearer to it in the case of each other and then some day are surprised to discover how little we know of the spiritual fact. I believe that this is wholly beneficent and gracious, for God deals with us alone and none other can intrude. Yet we must know something of the spiritual fact if we are to understand life. As we look at this Man, and follow Him on His journeyings, and listen to Him in His teachings, we become familiar with His mental expression and with the physical fact. But how shall we describe the spiritual truth about Jesus? I think we may do so by saying the same things that we have already said concerning His mental outlook, only attempting to say them in the deeper and profounder terms that express the spiritual.

He lived in unbroken fellowship with the eternal and, consequently, in unceasing control over the temporal. He was never mastered by anything temporal, because He was always mastered by the eternal. He reigned over circumstances, because He was reigned over by the static facts of God and eternity.

The fact that He lived in perpetual fellowship with the eternal was manifested in that there was no evidence of haste or of panic. His complete control of the temporal was proved by the fact that there was no evidence of delay or of paralysis. No haste, no panic, because He was dealing with eternity; no delay, no paralysis, because in the conscious power of eternity He dealt with time and mastered it.

There are many of His words which might illustrate these two things. I shall make two selections. That fellowship with the eternal, which meant no haste and no panic in the case of our Lord, always seems to me to have had wonderful expression when He said to His disciples:

Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

There is something wonderfully Eastern about that. The Eastern mind is the mind which is conscious of eternity, of the vastness of things, and, therefore, cannot be hurried. This attitude of mind is expressed in the highest sense in these words. His disciples were afraid for Him, afraid that He should go back to Jerusalem. He said in effect, "There is no need for haste, there is no need for fear. When a man walks in the day of God's own measurement, he does not stumble; he walks in the calm, hasteless freedom from panic which is the result of the spirit life in fellowship with the eternal." He was a Man in time, in the midst of the running hours, mastering the whole of them in their movement because living in fellowship with God with Whom one day is as a thousand years, to Whom a thousand years are but as one day.

Yet let us hear Him again upon another occasion, and we shall find another note balancing this first one and showing that when a man touches the temporal, there must be no delay and there need be no paralysis. Said He to His disciples:

We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

That is singularly Western. That is the language of movement, that is the language of haste that cannot brook delay, that is the language of the soul that seizes the present opportunity for the doing of the present duty. In the Old Testament are two statements, far separated and in some senses having no connection. Nevertheless, I borrow them in this connection. Jesus lived so in fellowship with the eternal that it might be said of Him, "... he that believeth shall not make haste"; and He so lived mastering the temporal that it might be said of Him with equal accuracy, "The King's business requireth haste." He was free from all haste but always hasting; free from any panic and paralysis but seizing every hour and doing the thing appointed therein. Every hour presented to Him an open door of opportunity, only open in that hour, and He, girded with the strength of eternity and acting in cooperation with the impulses of Deity, passed through the open door, met the opportunity, and fulfilled the duty.

If this is the Light of the human personality and being of Jesus, let us see the light that came through Him on human activity. Here we need to remind ourselves that all human activity is fundamentally spiritual. There is nothing that I do with my hand that is not the outcome of my spiritual life. The spiritual life may be degraded, or it may be noble; it may be true, or it may be false; but every physical activity is the outcome of spiritual activity. Processionally, human activity therefore is mental. Out of that deep unfathomable mystery, the spiritual life, the mind forms its conception of things external, and spiritual life and mental process become manifest in things material and physical. We must observe, then, as far as we are able, the mental attitudes of our Lord a little more carefully. Things we have already said will be repeated, but with a new application. The intelligence of Jesus was characterized by the seeing of the whole instead of the part. Does that seem a poor thing to say? As a matter of fact it is a big thing. There are men who see this earth only, and men who see this earth only are sensualists. There are men who strive never to see this earth at all but to see the heavens only and the spiritual only, and they practice their endeavor alone and live the ascetic life. Both outlooks are false, and each is as false as the other. The man who sees the earth only becomes a sensualist but never destroys the harrowing, hungering cry of the spiritual life; he simply refuses to listen to it or attempts to drug it. The man who attempts to realize the spiritual at the expense of the material, thinking of the flesh in a vulgar

material sense which is never the New Testament sense, never escapes from his flesh, never escapes from the material. He was not intended to escape thereby. In the long issue the ascetic becomes as sensual as does the voluptuary. Our Lord saw the whole of things. He saw God and His creation. He saw all ages as well as an age. Perhaps nothing more beautiful was ever written than Thomas Whytehead's poem on the Second Day of Creation. Let me remind you of two or three stanzas from it:

This world I deem
But a beautiful dream
Of shadows that are not what they seem,
Where visions rise
Giving dim surmise
Of the things that shall meet our waking eyes.
But could I see,
As in truth they be,
The glories of heaven that encompass me,
I should lightly hold
The tissued fold
Of that marvellous curtain of blue and gold.
Soon the whole
Like a parched scroll
Shall before my amazed sight uproll,
And without a screen,
At one burst be seen,
The Presence wherein I have ever been.

May I reverently say that all that Thomas Whytehead so beautifully imagined was the commonplace experience of Jesus. Wherever He looked He saw the creation and the God of creation. He never abused the material. He never flagellated Himself. That was an iniquity wrought by his enemies. He realized the glory of the physical and the material because of His keen understanding of the glory of the spiritual.

Emotionally we ever discover in Jesus the feeling which resulted from the vision. He knew the beauty of holiness, and He knew the possibility of renewal even in the case of that which was degraded. He loved the true, He hated the false. He was passionately moved and provoked and consumed by a desire to end the ugliness and restore the beauty, to destroy death and release life, to banish the darkness in the shadow of which He lived and flood the world with light.

Volitionally, all His choices were consonant with that emotion and that outlook.

Thus we have light upon life's activities. There are senses in which we cannot have light upon the activities of today by looking at Jesus. There is a sense in which there is no activity of today on which we cannot have light by looking at Jesus. In the mere external and local facts of the day, we are not in Judæa, we are not in Galilee, we are not living in that strange hour of misery when all the world lived under the incubus of the Romans. Nevertheless, in the deeper things of life, Jesus is still the light of human activity.

What then, must be our attitude toward the Light? Said Jesus: "While ye have the light, believe on the light,..." I could very much wish that this had been rendered, "believe into the light." Activity is suggested. It is infinitely more than believing in the light. That is fundamental, but being only intellectual it may stop short there. That is not what our Lord meant. We are to do more than believe in the light; we are to believe into it. He calls us to action in consonance with conviction. Already in this discourse He had interpreted His meaning as He said: "Walk while ye have the light." To walk in light is to make use of it, to yield ourselves to it. To believe into the light is not to admire the glory of it, it is to obey the call of it.

Those who have the light have this responsibility, that they must seek it. This Light is shining, is shining clearly. Our business is to seek it by considering Him, by giving ourselves to holy contemplation of this Person. If we are to believe into the light, we must acquaint ourselves with the light. We need to get back again and again to Him to understand that light.

Then it means also the trusting of the light as it shines, trusting His ideals, consenting to His conceptions, and refusing to postpone to a more convenient season any great command of Jesus. We are to trust the light and to act in accordance with it.

In our case it will mean perpetual spiritual readjustment; the constant activity of mind that brings it into conformity with the spiritual readjustment. In our case it will mean the perpetual watchfulness over all material and physical expression that these things shall be in harmony with the mental conformity to spiritual readjustment.

If we will do these things, what then? Then we shall be sons of light. Sons of light, not children. There is a difference. There is a difference in the New Testament, and there is always a difference. Canon Westcott says that the word "child" in the New Testament indicates community of nature; the word "son" always connotes the dignity of heirship. Dr. Erdman, of the United States, says: "Sonship relates not to nature but to legal standing. A son is no longer a minor, a son has attained his majority. That is the force of the word 'sons.' All sons are children." Yea verily! but all children are not sons. All children have not attained their majority; all children have not entered into the dignity of heirship. Our Lord did not say "children of light"; He said, "... sons of light." We have the light. Let us believe into it, seek to trust it, obey it, and we shall come into the full dignity of our heirship in light. That means that life will be interpreted, service guided, suffering transfigured.

John 14:9. The Purpose Of The Advent: 3. To Reveal the Father.

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The Purpose Of The Advent:

3. To Reveal the Father.

He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.

John 14:9

This is now the third study on the general subject of the purposes of the Advent. Having spoken of the fact that Jesus was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and of the fact that He was manifested to take away sins, we now turn to that wonderful fact that He was manifested to reveal the Father. I have chosen to take this, His own statement of truth, in this regard because of its simplicity and its sublimity. In our translation of the passage, so simple is it that no word of two syllables is employed save the word "Father." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; and yet so sublime is it that among all the things Jesus said concerning His relationship to the Father none is more comprehensive, inclusive, exhaustive than this. Its very simplicity leaves us no room for doubt as to the meaning of our Lord.

The last hours of Jesus with His disciples were passing away. He was talking to the disciples, and four times over they interrupted Him. Peter first, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" While He was yet answering Peter, Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" While He was yet dealing with Thomas, Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Ere He had done with Philip, Jude said, "What is come to pass that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The lonely Christ, recognizing the fact that the nearest friends of His life, His own followers, did not perfectly understand Him, could not walk with Him along the via dolorosa, were afraid of the gathering shadows, yet taught them, patiently and gently answering objections, clearing away difficulties, storing their minds with truth.

Philip's interruption was due, in the first place, to a conviction of Christ's relation in some way to the Father. He had been so long with Jesus as to become familiar in some senses with His line of thought. He had heard over and over again strange things fall from the lips of the Master. He had listened to the wonderful familiarity with which Jesus had spoken of God as "My Father." In all probability, moreover, Philip was asking that there should be repeated to him and the little group of disciples some such wonderful thing as they had read of in the past of their people's history. He would have read therein of the great and glorious theophanies of days gone by, of how the elders once ascended the mountain and saw God; of how the prophet had declared that "in the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple"; of how Ezekiel had declared that when he was by the river Chebar he had seen God in fire, and wheels; in majesty and glory.

It was to that request, based upon a vision of Christ's relationship to the Father, based upon the memory of how God had manifested Himself to the men of olden days, that Jesus replied. I cannot read this answer of Jesus without feeling that He divested Himself of set purpose of anything that approached stateliness of diction, and dropped into the common speech of friend to friend, as looking back into the face of Philip He said, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Mark the simplicity of it. They were most familiar with Him. I think you will agree with me that it requires no stretch of the imagination to believe that they had looked upon His face more often than upon the face of any other during the three years. They had listened with greater interest to the tones of His voice than to any other sounds that had come to them during that period.

The very simplicity of it is its audacity. The word may not be well chosen, and yet I take it of set purpose. If you want to know how audacious and daring a thing it is, put it into the lips of any other teacher the world has ever produced. Looking into the face of one man, who was voicing, though he little knew it, the great anguish of the human heart, the great hunger of the human soul, Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and in that declaration He claimed absolute identity with God. So much for the setting of my text and the claim thereof.

That claim has been vindicated in the passing of the centuries. The conception of God which is triumphant, intellectually capturing the mind, emotionally capturing the heart, volitionally capturing the will, came to the world through that One Who, standing Man before man, yet said to Him, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

My purpose this evening is not to argue but to consider. I shall ask you therefore to consider with me, first, what this revelation of God has meant to the race; and, secondly, what it has meant to the individual.

First, consider the highest knowledge of God which man had before the Advent, and the new values consequent upon the manifestation in Jesus.

What conception of God had man before Christ came? Taking the Hebrew thought of God, let me put the whole truth as I see it into one comprehensive statement. Prior to the Advent there had been a growing intellectual apprehension of God, accompanied by a diminishing moral result. There had been a growing intellectual apprehension of truth concerning God. That is the first half of my statement. It is impossible to study the Old Testament without seeing that gradually there broke through the mists a clearer light concerning God: the fact of unity of God, the fact of the might of God, the fact of the holiness of God, the fact of the beneficence of God. These things men had come to see through the process of the ages. There had been progressive understanding of the fact of God's might. There had been progressive understanding of the fact of His holiness. There had been progressive understanding of the truth of His beneficence. Yet, side by side with this growing intellectual apprehension of God, there was diminishing moral result, for it is impossible to read the story of the ancient Hebrew people without seeing how they waxed worse and worse in all matters moral until the last. The moral life of Abraham was far purer than life in the time of the kings. Life in the early time of the kings was far purer than the conditions which the prophets ultimately described. This diminishing moral result is not to be wondered at. In proportion as men grew in their intellectual conception of God, it seemed increasingly unthinkable that He could be interested in their everyday life. Morality became something not of intimate relationship to

Him and therefore something that mattered far less. In some senses that has been repeated during the last half century. The discoveries of the scientists have created an ever-increasing sense of the greatness of the universe. Every decade has given man a larger grasp upon the truth of the universe. With the progress of man's intellectual apprehension of the greatness of the universe, there has been an increase necessarily in his conception of the God of the universe, until at last God has grown out of knowledge and men have declared that He is unknowable, and have defined Him as force, as intelligence—or as the operation of force and intelligence combined. The greater the universe, the greater the God, and the greater the God, the less man has been able to appreciate his relation to Him.

Think of the great Gentile world as it then was, and as it still is, save where the message of the Evangel has reached it—for the things of the Gentile world prior to the Advent are the things of the Gentile world until this hour, save where the Gospel of the grace of God has reached it.

In Gentile thought there is always a substratum of accurate consciousness. Go where you will, get down deeply enough, and you will find in the common consciousness of humanity a substratum of truth. When it begins to express itself it does so falsely. When it begins to take that deep underlying conviction, and put it into form or expression it breaks down; but there is universally a sense of God.

Occasional flashes of light have broken out of this underlying subconsciousness. We have had such remarkable teachers as Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, men speaking true things flashing with a new light.

Notwithstanding these things, a perpetual failure in morals and a uniform degradation of religion have been universal. No voice which has spoken some message of truth out of the subconsciousness in the passing of the centuries has been able to lift those to whom it has been addressed in the moral scale. The history of the Hindu religion is, perhaps, the most conspicuous illustration of this fact. Buddhism as it is practiced today and Buddhism as Buddha lived and taught are at the poles asunder.

Wherever you find Gentile nations you find these things true—a substratum of accurate consciousness, occasional flashes of clear light, but perpetual failure in morals and uniform degradation of religion. The failure has ever been due to lack of final knowledge concerning God.

At last there came the song of the angels and the birth of a child. At the close of one swiftly passing generation of teaching and of working, of gathering a few souls together, there stood One in the midst of a little group of disciples, and at the same moment in the midst of all humanity, and He looked into the face of one man and said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

Through that Advent and ministry there came to men a new consciousness of God.

I turn to the centuries that have passed since His coming. What effect has that coming had in the realm of revelation? By that I mean among those who had received revelation from God. First, the inclusion in His teaching and manifestation of all the essential things which men had learned in the long ages of the past. He did not deny the truth of the unity of God. He re-emphasized it. He did not deny the might of God. He declared it and manifested it in many a gentle touch of infinite power. He did not deny the holiness of God. He insisted upon it in teaching and life, and at last by

the mystery of dying. He did not deny the beneficence of God. He changed the cold word "beneficence" into the word throbbing with the infinite heart of Deity, "love"! He did more. He brought to men the new, that toward which they had been groping but had never found. That which men had imperfectly expressed in song and prophecy He came to state. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Not Elohim, not Jehovah, not Adonahy, none of the great names of the past, all of them suggestive, but "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." In and through Him that truth of fatherhood was revealed. When I say that I beseech you remember that fatherhood means a great deal more than we sometimes imagine it means. It is not merely a term of tenderness. It is also a term of law and discipline. But Fatherhood means supremely that if the child have wandered away the Father will suffer everything to save and bring it home again. Within the realm of revealed religion this truth emerged, that the one God, mighty, holy, beneficent, is the Father Who will sacrifice Himself to save the child. There man found the point of contact in infinite love which never abandons him, never leaves him. That is the truth which, coming into revealed religion, saved it from being intellectual apprehension minus moral dynamic, and sent running through all human life rivers of cleansing, renewal, regeneration.

Wherever Christ comes to people who have never had direct revelation, He comes first of all as fulfillment of all that in their thought and scheme is true. He comes, moreover, for the correction of all that in their thought and scheme is false. All the underlying consciousness of humanity concerning God is touched and answered, and lifted into the supreme consciousness whenever God is seen in Christ. All the gleams of light which have been flashing across the consciousness of humanity merge into the essential light when He is presented. I will take the illustration which is the lowest and the simplest, and therefore perhaps the profoundest at this point. It is an old story, I have often used it before. In Africa are found men of whom we speak as superstitious, perhaps the lowest in all the scale intellectually. The only form of religion they have is that of which we speak as fetish worship, which means nothing less and nothing more than that the uninstructed mind of the savage connects with some charm—a little piece of stick, a little piece of leather—certain values that are beyond his ken, supernatural values. He does not think it possible to be fortunate in business, in pleasure, in home or in marriage or anything else save as he is accompanied by his fetish. That is a low form of religion. You smile at it—and yet I know of people in England who carry charms about with them. In Africa, if you are about to trade with one of these men after he has driven his cattle hundreds of miles, and discovers that in his unutterable folly he has not brought his fetish with him, you cannot persuade him to trade with you. He will tramp all the weary miles back again, and postpone his traffic for days, weeks, months, because he cannot trade unless that fetish is with him. You smile at him. When Jesus meets that man he does not destroy that belief. He fulfills it. Christ comes to him and says in effect, "You are perfectly right in your underlying consciousness that you cannot be fortunate in business or home or marriage or pleasure unless you have dealing with the thing that is more than you are, the supernatural. You must have God with you." Jesus takes out of the black hand the fetish, the little piece of leather or stick, and flings it away and puts back into the hand His own pierced hand, saying, "Lo, I am with you all the days—business days, pleasure days, home days, all the days. Never do business without God." Before you mock the African who will not traffic without his fetish learn this, that if you do business without God you are far more heathen than he is. Christ comes not to contradict the essential truth of Buddhism but to fulfill it. He comes not to rob the Chinaman of his regard for parents, as taught by Confucius, but to fulfill it, and to lift him upon that regard into regard for the

One great Father, God. He comes always to fulfill. Wherever He has come, wherever He has been presented, wherever men, low or high in the intellectual scale, have seen God in Christ, their hands have opened and they have dropped the fetishes and the idols and have yielded themselves to Him. If the world has not come to God through Him it is because the world has not yet seen Him; and if the world has not yet seen Him the blame is upon the Christian Church.

The wide issues of the manifestation of God in Christ are the union of intellectual apprehension and moral improvement, and the relation of religion to life. When you are tempted to admire Buddhism, or to admire Confucianism, and to think that in these God has spoken to men, never forget that in no system of religion in the world has there come to men the idea of God which unites religion with morals save in this revelation of God in Jesus Christ. There is through all India today divorce between religion and morals. There a man may be the most immoral of all men and yet be religiously a saint. But wherever this manifestation of God comes, and the heart of God and the sacrifice of God, behind His unity and His might, His holiness and beneficence, emerge into view, there men have found that religion means morality.

I pass, in the second place, to say some few words concerning the effect of the manifestation in relation to the individual. Here I propose to see one man as illustration. I think we cannot be truer to the text than by taking Philip, the man to whom Christ spoke. Mark the words of Jesus to him, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip?" The evident sense of the question is, "You have seen enough of Me, Philip, if you have really seen Me, to have found what you are asking for, a vision of God." There is no other interpretation of Christ's question possible. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," was Philip's request. "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He surely meant that Philip had seen enough of Him to have found the Father. What, then, had Philip seen? What revelations of Deity had come to this man who thought he had not seen and did not understand? Christ evidently intended to say he might have seen and might have understood. What were the things to which Christ referred? I am not going to indulge in speculation. I might gather up the general facts of His teaching and His doing, but I think we shall be safer if we adhere to what Scripture tells of what Philip had seen.

All the story is in John. Philip is referred to by Matthew, Mark, and Luke as being among the number of the Apostles, but in no other way. John tells me of four occasions when Philip is seen in union with Christ. I will take the first three, for the last is the one in which our text occurs. Philip was the first man Jesus called to follow him. I do not say the first man to follow Him. There were other two who preceded Philip, going after Christ in consequence of the teaching of John. Philip did not go to inquire. It is distinctly stated in the first chapter of John's Gospel that Jesus found him and said, "Follow Me." That was the first man to whom Christ used that great formula of calling men which has become so precious in the passing of the centuries. "Follow Me." What happened? "Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto Him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." That was the first thing that Philip had seen in Christ, according to his own confession, One Who embodied all the ideals of Moses and the prophets. When he said, "We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write," he did not refer to any particular word of Moses. The word he used covers the whole of the Old Testament teaching. What he meant was, "We have found Him Who embodies the ideal of Moses, and the ideal of the prophets, all the teaching of Moses, all the messages of the prophets. We have found Him." It was

the cry of a soul inviting another soul. It was the cry of a soul who had this conviction borne in upon it—Here is One Who fulfills all the ideals and suggestions and intentions of the whole religious economy of the past! That was the first thought.

I find Philip next in the sixth chapter, when the multitudes were about Christ and they were hungry. Jesus singled out Philip and said to him, "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" John is very careful to state that Jesus did not ask that question because He needed advice, "for He Himself knew what He would do." He asked it to prove Philip. Philip answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, that everyone may take a little." That is the background. What happened next? Philip, who considered it impossible to feed the hungry multitude, is next seen with the other disciples seating them ready to be fed, incredulously, perhaps; I do not know. Then he watched this selfsame Jesus take the loaves and fishes of the lad and break them. Then with the others he carried the food to rank after rank until all the assembled multitude were fed. So that Philip had now seen Someone Who in a mysterious way had resource enough to satisfy human hunger. That is not all. Philip then listened while in matchless discourse Jesus lifted the thought from material hunger to spiritual need and declared, "I am the Bread of Life." So that the second vision Philip had of Jesus, according to the record, was a vision of Him full of resource and able to satisfy hunger both material and spiritual. I see Philip next in the twelfth chapter. The Greeks coming to him said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip found his way with Andrew to Jesus, and asked Him to see the Greeks. Mark the relation with the Father, and that there was perfect harmony between them, no conflict, no controversy. He saw, moreover, that upon the basis of that communion with His Father and that perfect harmony, His voice changed from the tones of sorrow to those of triumph, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." That was Philip's third vision of Jesus. It was the vision of One acting in perfect accord with God, bending to the sorrow that surged upon His soul in order that through it He might accomplish human redemption.

We now come back to the last scene. Philip said, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." Gathering up all the things of the past, Christ looked into the face of Philip and replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? When thou didst first see Me did there not come to thee the conviction that in Me there was the embodiment of law and righteousness? When thou didst watch Me feed men didst thou not understand that I am the One Who can satisfy all the hunger of the human heart? In the mystery of that strange hour when thou didst bring the Greeks to Me didst thou not understand that in union with God I am moving toward unutterable pain in order that men may be set free?" No, Philip had not seen these things. We are not to blame him. They were there to be seen, and by and by, the infinite work of Christ being accomplished and the glory of Pentecost having dawned upon the world, Philip saw it all. Then Philip saw the meaning of the things he had seen and had never seen, the things he had looked upon and had never understood. Then Philip found that having seen Jesus he had actually seen the Father. When he looked upon One Who embodied in His own personality all the facts of the law and righteousness, he had seen God. When he had looked upon One Who could touch the loaves of a lad until they fed a multitude, and One Who could deal with the spiritual needs of restless hearts until they were rested, he had seen God. When he had seen a Man Who shrank from sorrow yet pressed into it because through it in co-operation with God He could ransom humanity, he had seen God.

This manifestation wins the submission of the reason. This manifestation appeals to the love of the heart. This manifestation demands the surrender of the will. Here is the value of the Advent as revelation of God.

Let my last word be one in which I ask you solemnly to see what this means in your case. Call back your thoughts from the wider application of the earlier part of my sermon. Call back your thoughts for a moment from the particular application in the case of Philip, and think what this means to you. Is it true that this manifestation wins the submission of your reason, appeals to the love of your heart, asks the surrender of your will? Then to refuse God in Christ is to violate at some essential point your own manhood. To refuse, you must violate reason which is captured by the revelation, or you must crush the emotion which springs in your heart in the presence of the revelation, or you must decline to submit your will to the demands which the manifestation makes.

May God grant that we shall rather look into His face and say, "My Lord and my God"! So shall we find our rest and our hearts be satisfied. It shall suffice as we see the Father in the Christ.

John 14:21. Love's Proof And Prize.

John 14:21.

Love's Proof And Prize.

He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.

John 14:21

I cannot read the sublime things of John without feeling that I am listening to the man who leaned his head upon the bosom of Jesus. They are not set and dignified discourses, as was the Manifesto of the King which Matthew records; but they are discourses broken in upon by the interruptions of familiar friends, interruptions which reveal the blunders of the men who interrupted, and yet which lead to new unveilings of the heart of the interrupted Teacher. Take this discourse in the midst of which the words of my text occur, and you find that Jesus was interrupted four times, and yet there is no interruption to the stream of revelation which flowed from His lips. Peter interrupts Him, then James, then Philip, and presently Jude. Through all Jesus' replies runs a perfect system, and in the midst occur the words of my text. How simple these words are and yet how searching. They are so simple that perhaps when I read them they produced no blush of shame, no blanch of fear. They are all commonplace words, yet, somehow, there was something in them which lingered with us, creating a sense of discomfort, and almost compelling a stricter self-examination. Jesus says two things. First, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Secondly, "And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." First of all, Jesus sets love and obedience in relationship. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." It is a statement that has at least a twofold meaning. First, that my love is proven by my obedience, and, secondly, that love to Christ produces obedience. That is but to state the one declaration in its twofold application.

Love, how we speak of it, how we sing of it, how we imagine we understand it! We hardly care to formulate its terms or declare its requirements. We talk of it as a symphony, a song, a sentiment. Jesus Christ analyzes it. It seems an almost ruthless touch that He puts upon love as He declares its terms. We are accustomed to think of love as vaporizing itself away, or expressing itself in a fragrance which cannot be analyzed. We are called Philistines today if we begin to analyze love. Jesus the One Revealer puts His hand upon love and says, "Love is demonstrated by obedience." Obedience is the outcome of love and consequently its fairest blossom and fruitage. Jesus says to us, "You can express love perfectly only in the terms of law." Jesus says to us, "Love that is lawless is not love." "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Jesus, having expressed the truth concerning love in the terms of law, rose to another level: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." If love be most perfectly manifested by obedience to definite and positive commandments it has as

its answer visions, voices, revelations, unfoldings, manifestations. Love's one supreme desire is to comprehend being loved. Thus love will obey the law, keep the commandments, and the loved One will answer the search by revealing Himself. "I will manifest myself unto him."

Let us look at the first thing more particularly. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Some attempt to prove love to Christ by professing it, others by unceasing toil in His service, still others in a higher and better way, by the cultivation of a meek and lowly spirit, by the humility that does not obtrude itself, by manifestation among their fellows of that spirit which has learned sweetness and tenderness and gentleness at the very feet of our Lord Himself. No one in this congregation will for a single moment imagine that I am saying these things are wrong in themselves. I say that they will all be present in the life of the true lover of Jesus, but that none of them demonstrates love. All spring out of other causes and other reasons than love. Untiring zeal in the business of the Kingdom and the work of Jesus Christ does not prove love, nor does even the cultivated humility and meekness of spirit. Christ mentions none of these things. He says simply and prosaically—forgive that word, I do not quite like it, but am at a loss for a better—"There is only one way to prove that you love Me—keep My commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

What are these commandments? First of all, the great kingly words which Jesus uttered while He was here that make for men the way of entrance upon the life of loyalty to Himself: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." That indicates the way of beginning in this whole pathway of loyalty. That one great word of Jesus covers the Christian pathway from its initiation to its consummation in the glory. What is the beginning? Denying self and taking up the cross. What is the progress? Following Him, until He lead us at last into the infinite light. There is, however, a larger application. His commandments are the words which He speaks in loneliness to the heart of everyone who really loves Him and leans upon His bosom, the simple words which He speaks in the silence of the morning or amid the rush of the noontide, or when the shadows of evening are falling; in the place of swift and subtle temptation, or in the quiet calm of that everyday life which becomes dreary because of its monotony. His commandments are given to all trusting souls immediately and directly.

Do you love Him? You do not prove it when, gathered in the sanctuary, you sing of Him. You do not prove it when in the busy hours of toil you are doing work for Him. You do not prove it when amid the men by whom you are surrounded you are attempting to reproduce the humility of His Spirit. You prove your love when in answer to His word you straightway do what He tells you. This is the demonstration of love for which He seeks. I may sing songs of praise to Him in the great congregation, or even in my loneliness I may lift to Him some psalm—and He seeks such singing and loves it—but it does not prove love. I may give my body to be burned. I may pour out all the fiber of my manhood in service and never prove my love. When because He says, "Do this," I do it; when because He says, "Go there," I go; when because He says, "Sit still and wait," I wait with happy spirit, then I prove my love. The final demonstration of love which He craves is not work or anything about which men will talk and sing, but the thousand and one little obediences which men never see and know, in which the heart pours out its gratitude. "He that hath My commandments." How fond Jesus was of sweeping out the interference of all middle men. "He that hath My commandments in his own soul, in his own heart, he that hears My words spoken in a whisper and immediately obeys and keeps the commandment, that is the man who loves Me."

You cannot tell whether I love Him, make no mistake. You cannot measure my love by my service or my lack of it. The final demonstration of love is not for the vision of any save the loved one. Love is always between two. I may sing and serve, toil and suffer, and yet never love; and while the world applauds the supposed evidences of my devotion, my Master may be hungry for the love I am withholding, pining for the affection I will not give Him.

He broods over me and says, "My child, that is the way." I walk in it. It is quite an average way. You see me walking along that way and you do not notice it. It means nothing to you. It is a common, ordinary way; but to Him it is the song of love because He sent me there. He says to a child of His love in some noonday of blessing and of joy, "Come apart into the darkness. Come with me. I am going by this *via dolorosa*; come with me." You see the passing out into that way of sorrow, and you do not understand it. To you there is no song upon the lips, no radiance, no heroism; but there is love because there is walking with Jesus. You cannot discover the love, but He finds it. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." We cannot prove to each other our love for Christ, but we know that He is right when He says that love is proved only by obedience. We often sing, sing loudly to cover the tracks of our disobedience. Thousands of men are busy doing something for Jesus, anything except the thing He told them to do. While we admire their zeal, He mourns their lack of love. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Again, love to Christ produces obedience. This is not a contradiction. It is simply the statement of the same thing from the other side. If obedience proves love, it follows by logical necessity that love is the inspiration of obedience. Love to Christ is produced, first, by knowledge of His love. Do not forget that word which John wrote in his epistle, "We love, because He first loved us." If my obedience is the demonstration of my love, my love is always born of His love and is the response to His love. Nothing short of love will produce perpetual and glad obedience such as satisfies the heart of the Lord. Think of the things I have now referred to us illustration. Profession of love never produces obedience. A man's pride in his own profession will keep him following for a little while. A man will say, "I have said this thing and I will do it." As the darkness falls, the strain and stress become more terrible, and presently he will forget his profession and disobey.

Zeal for work for Christ will not keep him obedient. It will halt, and presently passion will cool, unless the passion be the passion of a burning love for his Lord. Humility, what of that? Humility may become cowardice. Nothing other than love will keep me obedient. It is love which makes obedience a delight, even when obedience means pain and suffering. There is no motive other than love powerful enough to maintain unswerving obedience.

Mark how these two things interact. Obedience is the demonstration of love. Love, therefore, is the inspiration of obedience. At the beginning it is a simple thing. One vision of His face and my heart answers love, and I begin to follow Him. He lays upon me some new word of His law. If I disobey, my love will cool and disobedience will become the order of my life. If I obey I shall find through the gateway of that obedience a new demonstration of His love, which will make my love profounder, and gradually, with the increase of my love, there will be an increase in my devotion, until at last nothing but love will possess my soul and nothing but obedience will express that love.

To these deeper things our Lord passes in the second statement of our text. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father and I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him." At first sight

there may appear to be contradiction to something I have been saying. I have been insisting upon it that He loved us first, and that is why we love Him. Here the love of the Father is stated to be the result of our love to the Son. "He that loveth Me and proves his love by obedience, him My Father will love." There is no contradiction. It is forever true, and there is no escape from it, that God's love is the first thing, but it is when I answer that love with love and obedience that His love is able to flow on toward me unchecked in its manifestation and operation. It is possible, terribly possible for me, not to make God cease to love me, but to put myself outside the place where His love is consciousness and power. That is the meaning of Jude's great word, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Being in that love, keep yourselves there. Keep yourselves bearing such relationship to Him that love may flow on unchecked. Illustrate it if you will by earthly love. I do not think you could possibly make your mother cease to love you, if she is a real mother, but you may do such things as to put yourself outside the operation of a mother's love. I know the Scriptures say a mother may forget her child, but they say so only because it is such a remote possibility, and to throw into clearer relief the fact that God never can. You may check the outflow of a mother's love, you may lose the expression of it. You may make it necessary for the mother, to the breaking of her own heart, to seal up her love because of your disobedience. So also with God. "My Father will love him," says Jesus, "and I will love him," and by that He means to say, "Our love will flow on unchecked in all its expressions and all its operations." Mark the comfort of this word. We are beginning to touch the realm of poetry. We are coming to the place of vision and hope, of joy and strength.

Have I spoken of two things? Really, they are but the unfolding of one logical sequence. At the risk of wearying you, I will repeat again the words of Jesus, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself unto him." Think of the comfort of it. This is the crowning glory which rests upon the path of obedience, the path of the man to whom God has spoken, and who has heard His word and has obeyed it. Jesus says, "My Father will love him, and I will love him." That fact makes the barren path blossom as the rose. That fact makes the dreary day shine with all the glory of God's uplifted face. Think of what this means: this dual consciousness of God's love and Christ's love set upon me in the path of duty.

The path of obedience for you may be a dreary path in many ways. It would be a great deal easier for you to be out upon the high places of the field doing heroic things, but you are needed here, working on the dead level of monotonous repetition as the days become weeks, the weeks months, and the months years. Start once again, my brother, on the same pathway, and start doing on that pathway the thing He appoints because of love to Him, and then what? "My Father will love you, and I will love you." Think of the inspiration of that in any hour of temptation and difficulty. Think of the moral force of it in a man's life if it once take possession of him. Think how the love of some dear one upon earth strengthens a man. There are young men in this house tonight who would have gone to the devil long ago if it had not been that their mother and father loved them. How often a man is saved and delivered in an hour of peril because he knows someone loves him, even though not then with him. We have known of those who have hung up before them the picture of a human friend to save them in the hour of great temptation, and it has saved them. Apply that in a higher realm. As you tramp the ordinary pathway of everyday duty, it may be with bleeding feet and burdened heart, know that because you are aching by His appointment His love rests upon you. I am increasingly convinced that this is the true force of

holiness. It is when I come to say, "I cannot do this, it would grieve the heart of my Lover," that I shall live as I ought to live. It is as this great fact dawns upon the soul like sunshine, and possesses it like a force, that the pathway of commonplace obedience becomes one of perpetual joy.

If God loves me and Christ loves me and increasingly that love surrounds me, what then? Then the laws which govern my life will multiply. You say, "But you are going back to the severe tones." You always get back to the severe tones when you get near to the gentleness of the heart of God. The more perfectly He loves me and the more amenable I am to His love, the more I shall find restrictions multiplying around me. You say, "I thought I was coming to new liberty." So you are, but it is liberty to produce the highest and the best.

I remember that when I was pastor of a country church one of my friends married and went to live out on Cannock Chase. He procured a piece of land, rough and utterly lacking anything in the form of cultivated beauty. When his house was built I went out with him to look at it. His land was fenced in, the fencing consisting of rough poles and wire. That was all. I did not see him for some years after. When I went back I saw that the fence round his land was a great deal stronger than when I first saw it. It was a closer fence. The garden was cultivated now, and the more perfectly you cultivate the garden, the stronger you make the fence. At first it was a fence to keep out marauding animals, but afterwards it must be a fence which will keep out the little foxes that spoil the vines, because the vines have tender grapes. The more God loves me, the closer will His fence be round about me. The more perfectly I answer love, the severer will be the restrictions He sets upon me. That is His principle. It is gentle and tender, always closing up the fence a little because He would come into His garden and find it unspoiled, not only by marauding beasts, but by the little foxes and small things which spoil the garden of God. It is love which makes the fence a little closer. It is love which makes the law a little more severe. It is love which shuts us up more completely from everything, and to Himself.

Now take the other word, a gracious and beautiful word: "I will manifest Myself unto him." This answers the severe part of the last thought. If it be true that the severity has become greater, and the requirements of God more stringent in the case of the man He perfectly loves, do not forget this other thing: "I will manifest Myself unto him." Every new requirement of love is a new opportunity for my rediscovery of my Lord. Every time He confronts me and asks me to yield up something He has never asked me to yield before, there is my chance of a new vision of His face and a new unveiling of His glory; but the face is never seen and the glory never flames until I answer His commandment. He is waiting to give some of you great revelations. He is waiting to unveil before your astonished gaze a face more radiantly lovely than you have ever dreamed, but He cannot do it until you obey that last commandment He laid upon you and so demonstrate your love, for love can be revealed only to love. "I will manifest myself to him." Every new commandment is a proof of new revelation. The world does not understand it. Jesus could not manifest Himself to the world, because the world does not know Him and does not love Him. You say this is something at which proud, cold, rationalistic philosophy smiles, and yet in the higher reaches of spiritual life this is a scientific law. This is a wonderful philosophy of love radiant with beauty, that when Jesus makes a demand and the soul answers it, that soul sees Him as never before.

This manifestation of Jesus, let me ask you to remember finally, is not a manifestation on the mount of transfiguration. It is a manifestation which comes along the lowly pathway in the valley. There are people here who do not want me to talk about this. They know all about it. When they tell you that in the midst of their business yesterday they saw the Lord, you smile at them, and the angels smile at you. Get up tomorrow morning to do His bidding. What shall I do tomorrow morning? The thing you were going to do, do it only at His bidding. Go to your office, your business, your workshop because He bids you go. Do not talk any more of the drudgery of it. Cancel the word "commonplace." Keep His commandment. To do that will be to safeguard you in your calling from everything that is low and base, and it will be to transfigure the meanest calling of all into a thing of glory and beauty. In the office, in the home, on the street, in the hospital, amid its pain and fear, do each thing because it is His bidding, and you will see Him in His glory, toiling through your business vocation toward the building of His city, calling to you through the days of suffering for your help, whispering to you in the lonely hour of your watching, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me."

Earth's crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;

But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

You can see Christ in the street as well as in the sanctuary, on Monday as well as on Sunday. Wherever a soul obeys Him and demonstrates love He answers love with manifestation, and every manifestation leaves its impress upon your brow, its light in your eyes, its elasticity in your step.

So by the commonplace of obedience I climb to the mountain of vision, demonstrating my love by keeping His commandments, seeing Him where I did not dream He could appear.

John 15:5. The Vine.

John 15:5.

The Vine.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for severed from Me ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

These words are among the most simple, the most sublime and the most solemn which ever fell from the sacred lips of our adorable Redeemer. They were spoken to a small group of men who at the moment were alert with the fear of the approaching departure of their Lord. Where He was going they could not tell, but He had told them again and again that He was about to leave them, and that the pathway of His pilgrimage was overshadowed by clouds, and the method of His going must be that of suffering. These men were listening to Him in the quiet and subduing influences of the night.

The words were spoken, not at the commencement of Jesus' training of the twelve, but at its close. So far as His own mission was concerned, the words of the paschal discourses were resultant words, words into which He gathered all the emphases of His teaching, words in which, as in the case of our text, He uttered inclusive and exhaustive claims. If they were resultant so far as His own teaching was concerned, they were preparatory in view of what the disciples were called to do in the world.

We should remember, further, that these words of our text occur in the latter part of the paschal discourses, after the disciples had been at least hushed into silence and solemnity. The first part of Jesus' teaching on this occasion was broken in upon by the questions and objections, aspirations and difficulties, of perplexed and puzzled men. Peter, "Whither goest Thou?... Why cannot I follow Thee even now?" Thomas, "We know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" Philip, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jude, How is it that "Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

At last the questions were hushed, and the men were still. Then He spoke of the mystery of the coming union between themselves and Himself, and that principally in order to teach them, not the privileges that would accrue to them as the result of the union, but the responsibilities that would rest on them in view thereof.

Often our exposition of the teaching concerning that responsibility has been too narrow in that we have dwelt altogether too exclusively on the personal aspects of this particular text, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Almost invariably in our exposition of this great teaching of Jesus we have dwelt on the joy and glory of being members of Christ as branches are members of the vine. We have thought of what that means to us in the way of abounding life and intimate relationships. These things are all true, but they do not constitute the final truth; they do not reveal the ultimate

meaning of this allegory of our Lord. We have rejoiced in the resources which the figure suggests, and have altogether too largely forgotten the responsibilities which it reveals.

Therefore let me ask you to consider with me, first, the figure of which the Lord made use; second, the use which the Lord made of the figure, and that in order that we may come to a practical application of the teaching.

First, then, the figure of which our Lord made use. It is difficult to read the Chapter without wondering where the Lord said these things. The fourteenth Chapter of this gospel ends with the words, "Arise, let us go hence." There can be no doubt in the mind of any natural, simple reader of the narrative that at that point they left the upper room where the earlier part of these discourses had been delivered. Where did they go? It may be that they passed from the upper room, down through the street of the city, and out through its gates across the Kedron toward Gethsemane. If so, possibly on their way they would see the vines growing on the mountain slopes, and in the darkness of the night the fires of the vine dressers, in which withered and dead branches bearing no fruit were burned. Or it may be that they left the upper room and found their way to the great temple, for the Passover period was approaching, and at that time the priests opened the gates of the temple immediately after midnight that worshipers might pass into the courts. At that time the chief and distinctive glory of the temple gate was that of the golden vine, the symbol of Israel. One wonders whether, as Jesus used this figure, they with Him were looking at the actual vine on the mountain side, all gnarled, and showing marks of the knife provocative of fruit, and on the fires lit for the destruction of fruitless branches; or whether, perchance, in the hallowed and sacred courts of the temple they saw the glorious symbol of the national life on the gates.

Whether here or there matters little. That which is of supreme importance and to which I ask your most special attention is that when Jesus commenced this discourse with the words, "I am the true vine," He was not using a figure of speech that was new, but one which was perfectly familiar to the men who listened to Him.

It is in order that we may understand the word of Jesus, so far as is possible, as the men understood it who first heard it, that I read that somewhat long selection of Scriptures, first the song of the ancient psalmist concerning the vine which God had brought out of Egypt and planted in His own vineyard, that marvelous description of its planting, and then of its ruthless destruction, until the sigh and sob of the singer became a prayer for its restoration in the economy of God. Then the two figures of the vine in the prophecy of Isaiah, the first telling of its failure, "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes... He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry"; the second, the song that tells of restoration in the day of God, the song of a watered garden in which the vine grows, and over which God watches in infinite patience and care. Next in the prophecy of Jeremiah, that wonderful word, so rich in suggestion, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?" Thus the figure of the vine runs through the Old Testament teaching; it was the method of the singer of the song, it was the figure of the utterer of the prophecy, and it was always used in relation to God's ancient people. The vine to the Hebrew was the nation of God.

In the New Testament, we find the Lord exercising His ministry among these very people and at last coming to that solemn and culminating hour, when, in Jerusalem, by parables He compelled

the rulers to find a verdict against themselves and to pass sentences upon themselves. The last of these parables was that of the vineyard, the vine, and the men who were responsible for the vine in the vineyard. He asked them, What will the possessor do to these men who have failed to send him the fruit for which He asks? They, caught by the wizardry of His method, passed sentence upon themselves, "He will miserably destroy those miserable men." Then in august and awful dignity He pronounced doom on the nation which had been the vine of God as He said, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

The vine was ever the figure of Israel as the instrument elect for service; its fruit was to fill the whole earth. The vine of Jehovah was not a pleasant plant in His vineyard on which fruit should grow to be consumed for the maintenance of its own life; it was not even to be a precious vine on which should grow fruit which should give satisfaction to the heart of the One Who possessed it; the vine was to be that on which fruit should grow that should fill the whole earth; its fruit was intended for the world. That was the purpose of the creation of the ancient people of God. Seers, singers, psalmists, prophets understood this. They consistently taught that on His vine should grow clusters of fruit that should be for the benefit of the wide world: righteousness and judgment, equity and truth, mercy, love, beneficence; healing for all wounds, rest for weariness, the wine of the Kingdom of God for the gladdening of the heart of humanity. That was the purpose of God in the creation of His ancient people.

After Jesus had thus pronounced doom on the nation because it had failed to bring forth these fruits, He gathered His twelve disciples about Him and said, "I am the true vine." Thus He carried over the figure of the ancient economy into the new. Among all the claims He made, none, in some senses, is quite so wonderful as this. With the songs and voices and messages of the past in their minds, He said to these men, "I am the true vine." By that word He assumed the responsibility that Israel had failed to fulfil. God had made of Israel a nation for the blessing of humanity, and it had failed. He had planted a vine whose fruit was to fill the whole earth, and behind them lay the history of its persistent and perpetual failure. Now standing in the presence of unutterable, final failure, upon which He Himself had been compelled to pronounce doom, He said, "I am the true vine." Among His own disciples He claimed that He had come to fulfill that in which the ancient people of God had failed.

What, then, had He come to do? To bear fruit, the fruit of righteousness and of judgment in all the affairs of the world. Listen to the keynote of the preaching of His herald, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Listen to the keynote of His own preaching, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Listen to the great word of Paul on Mars Hill when he said to the listening Athenians, God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He hath ordained." That was not a reference to the final day of judgment, the great assize when sentences are pronounced; it was a reference to the reign of right in the world. Our Lord, standing among the twelve, said, "I am the true vine," I am here for the fulfilling of the Divine purpose; from Me shall come the fruit that shall be for the healing of the world, and the satisfaction of its need; through My ministry righteousness and truth shall prevail, and humanity shall find the meeting of its need in the Kingdom of God. "I am the true vine."

If that were all then we should wonder and adore; but that does but introduce us to our text. "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Are we not at least inclined to think that our Lord said, I am the main stem of the vine, that through which the life forces rise, and ye are the branches? As a matter of fact, He said nothing of the kind. He said, "I am the vine." What is the vine? The root, the main stem, the branches, the tendrils, the leaves, the fruit. The vine is the vine, the whole of it. The vine is not complete in its branches. The vine is not merely the root, out of sight. The vine is not merely the main stem up which the life forces pass to the uttermost reaches of the last and most delicate tendril. The vine is everything. That is the first amazing revelation of this figure of speech. Jesus said, "I am the vine." By that figure of speech He taught the incorporation with Himself of all believing souls, in vital, intimate union. "Ye are the branches." The branches are part of the vine. These men to whom He spoke were members of Himself, in new and mystic fashion, to be consummated presently by the baptism of the Spirit. Speaking allegorically and prophetically of that which presently was to be perfected by the way of His passion, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said, "I am the vine; ye are the branches"; that is, ye are parts of Myself, united to Me in a union so close and definite that I am incomplete apart from you, as you are incomplete apart from Me. As our Lord said in this particular text, "Severed from Me ye can do nothing," so, with reverent and almost awful sense of the solemnity of the fact, it is true that Christ stood there in the midst of the twelve, and said, in effect, Apart from you I can do nothing. Severed from you I cannot produce the fruit for which God has long been waiting! Severed from Me ye cannot produce the fruit for which the world is waiting! United with Me, and I united with you, then "I am the vine; ye are the branches," parts and members of Myself; and in that vine, that new and mystic entity in human history, consisting of Christ in union with His people, fruit shall grow that is to fill the whole world and glorify God. "I am the vine; ye are the branches."

Yet, if the figure is one that reveals the vital and intimate union between Christ and His people for the purpose of fruit-bearing, the whole teaching of the passage shows that continuity of relationship between Christ and men is dependent on their bearing this very fruit. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away," casteth it out to be burned. If the initial fact of union is of the grace of God, the continuity of union is dependent on the realization of the purpose of God.

It is not the burden of my message to you this evening to dwell on the personal advantages that accrue from this union with Christ. I know how fascinating the theme is, how full of value it is. Oh that we may remember it for the encouragement of our aspirations after good, and our seekings after holiness. Abiding in Him I have all resources for the perfecting of that character of holiness which expresses itself in righteousness. That, however, is not the ultimate value of the story. In this great figure of the vine Christ has revealed the fact that the purpose of the Church of God is bearing that fruit for which the world is waiting in its sickness, its sins, and its miseries. I am a worthy member of Christ only as I am a branch from which fruit is plucked for the benefit of the outside world. The life of the believer is the life of Christ by the ministry of the Spirit of God; and the ministry of the Spirit of God in the world, our Lord clearly defined in this same discourse, in the words, "He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," referring first to that which wounds and wearies and blasts the world, sin; referring, second, to this very fruit which the prophets had described, righteousness and judgment, "He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." Said Jesus,

When the Spirit of truth is come, He "will convict the world" concerning these things, and reveal to the world that all these things are to be dealt with through Christ, that the sin that ultimately blasts and damns is the sin of rejecting Christ, "of sin, because they believe not on Me"; that the possibility of righteousness comes through the finished work of Christ, "of righteousness, because I go to the Father"; that judgment in the economy of God is already accomplished by the way of the passion of Christ, "of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." Thus Jesus taught them that the Spirit of God Who was coming to be their Paraclete, their Comforter, their Advocate, was coming, not for their sakes alone, but for the sake of the world, that the world might be brought to the truth concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Thus we understand that by His use of this figure, Christ was saying, in effect, to these men, the Spirit will be able to bear His witness to the world only through the members of My Church. The Spirit is able to fulfil His ministry in the world only by bringing men into actual vital association with Christ, and by revealing through them what He is. He is the vine; in Him is all the fruit for which the world is waiting; but it can grow only on the branches; only through the branches grafted into Him and sharing His life can righteousness and judgment be given to the world.

This teaching reacts on the soul like a veritable fire. What shame, what wrong, what tragedy if a branch, if such a thing be conceivable, shall grow clusters of grapes containing the wine of the Kingdom of God, and consume them on itself for the enrichment of its own life. There can be no selfishness so devilish as the selfishness of the man who takes whatever comes to him from Christ, and fails to hand it on to other men. There can be no failure in the world so disastrous as that of receiving into the soul all the light and love and life of God by the bruising and the dying of the Son of God, and expending the sacred virtues and values on one's own spiritual condition. "I am the vine; ye are the branches." The purpose is fruit for the world. These words of our Lord, if most tender and gentle, are yet the most severe of all He uttered, as He teaches in this allegory that if there be a branch that fails to bear fruit for the world it is to be cut out of the vine and cast away.

For the fruit of the Son of God incarnate, for the right-ness of His life, for the judgment of His mind, for the mercy of His heart, for the high ideals of His example, for the wondrous dynamic of His passion, for these the world is waiting; all the peoples that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, are waiting for the Vine of God, and for the fruit that grows therefrom.

Do we understand what this means? In order that the need of the world may be satisfied, the branches are responsible for abiding in the vine, for the maintenance of that relationship with Christ that shall issue inevitably in bearing fruit. Herein is revealed the profound malady of the Christian Church. Here is the reason why we are almost wearied to death with appeals from missionary societies for help. I know exactly the feeling that comes to you when the last appeal of some society reaches you through the post. You fling it down with weariness, and say in actual words again and again, Always these appeals, always these appeals! Why are there always these appeals? Simply because in the vine there are thousands of branches fruitless, withered, not abiding in Christ, not responsive to the propulsion of His life, limiting Him by refusing to allow His great life to sweep through all the soul and have its ultimate and final expression.

When first we saw the vision of the Christ there was the sense of allurements, and we went after Him with the flush of hope on the cheek, the flash of a fine endeavor in the eye; we were heroic

and sacrificial, ready Crusaders.

How was it that we lost our first love? Because at some point we became calculating. When the call of Christ was to new heroism, and fresh sacrifice, and larger abandonment, we held back and refused; we began to argue that it was mere emotionalism, and as we stifled emotionalism we quenched the Spirit of the living God, and did despite to the tender emotions of the heart of Christ. That is the story of our failure.

Go through these discourses again and listen to the teaching of the Lord, and attempt to apprehend His outlook on the world. He saw the true order, and He saw the chaos. Listen, as you listen to Him, for the thrill of passion vibrating through His voice, the passion of a great love, the passion of a fierce anger. Observe Him, the Waster, the Destroyer of all that blights humanity; and observe Him the Builder, the Constructor of the city of God. Observe the vision of the Christ, see with His eyes; share the passion of the Christ, feel with His heart; watch the mission of the Christ and be with Him.

"I am the vine; ye are the branches." Then, if branches, we must be of the vine, and allow the life of the vine to master us, the purpose at the heart of the vine to inspire us, and the method of the vine dresser to have victory over us. Is it not in these things that we have failed?

What did He charge these men as to responsibility? He charged them that in order to maintain fellowship two things were always necessary: first, prayer, and, second, abiding in Him.

When reading this fifteenth Chapter have you never felt there was somehow a break in the continuity at a certain point? Does it not seem for a moment as though the rhythm of the method of the teaching is broken in upon? Let me show you what I mean. "I am the vine; ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be generated for you." It is there that it seems as though there were a break in the continuity. Why introduce this word about prayer at that point? When you ponder long enough you will discover that the introduction of prayer at that point was essential to the argument. It was a revelation of the true place of prayer in the life of the believer. Let me put it, almost brutally, by saying, Prayer is not a trick by which we get something for ourselves! Prayer is a method by which we abide in such relationship with the vine that we produce something for the world. Prayer is inspired by passion for the Kingdom of God. Prayer is the branches desiring and demanding the life of the vine in order that they may bear fruit according to the nature and purpose of the vine. Prayer is the soaring of the soul to the height of perfect compliance with the will of God, the consuming of the soul with the passion for doing the will of God. The first operation of prayer in the economy of God, therefore, is not demand for what I need, but for what the world needs. In the pattern prayer mark the revelation of method: First, Give us this day our daily bread? No, a thousand times no! First, "Our Father, Who art in heaven. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is the highest plane of prayer. The first law of fruit-bearing is that of prayer which asks for yet more abundant life, for the mastery of the soul by the life of God revealed in the Son of God, and communicated by His Spirit. Dare we pray for that? If we dare to pray in that spirit tonight what will happen tomorrow? I cannot tell. It may be that if some of you begin to pray in that spirit, ere four and twenty hours have passed over

your heads you will have abandoned your prospects, stepped out of the profession that is so full of hope, and given yourself to some dark lone corner of the world to pour out your life in sacrifice. Prayer asks for fulness of life that fruit may be manifest; asks for that purging of God that shall make life more abundant!

Once more to utter the thing already said, to abide in Christ is the secret of fruitfulness. How are we to abide in Christ? There are two most simple things I will say. First, abiding consists in the cessation of effort. The one thing you do not need in order to abide anywhere is strength. Weakness is the condition for abiding. I can abide in this pulpit for hours without putting forth any strength. I need strength to get out of it, not to abide in it. Do not be afraid of the homeliness of the figure. I have found Christian people strenuously striving to abide in Christ, and by their very effort separating their souls from Him. Rest in Him, abandon yourself to Him, that He may have His way.

To abide means cessation of our effort, and it means the acceptance of His effort, relaxing all the life to the Lord Christ and letting His life have right of way. That is abiding in Him.

This does not necessarily mean perpetual, constant consciousness of Christ. It does mean when His voice speaks, we hear; that when He looks, we see; that when He beckons, we go; that when He commands, we act. In order to win the world He is waiting for that kind of obedience.

"Apart from Me ye can do nothing." There is no vision, no passion, no mission apart from Christ. All the failure of interest and effort in regard to missionary work results from poverty of life. The things which sever, what are they? In the unity of the vine, schism. In the individual branches, selfishness and sin. What is the remedy for all missionary failure? Not demonstration, not literature, not raising of funds. What, then, is the cure? Life, more life.

The vine from every living limb bleeds wine;

Is it the poorer for that spirit shed?

Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;

Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth;

For Love's strength standeth in Love's sacrifice;

And whoso suffers most hath most to give.

John 15:15, 16. The Fruit-Bearing Friends Of Jesus.

John 15:15, 16.

The Fruit-Bearing Friends Of Jesus.

No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you. Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.

John 15:15-16

The words of the text are found among the records of those tender and intimate conversations of our Lord and His disciples on the eve of His passion, and we cannot better prepare our hearts for considering them than by reminding ourselves of the circumstances under which they were uttered. They were indeed dark days in the experience of these men. Behind them lay those brief but wonderful years of comradeship with this strangely commanding Person, those years of ever-growing wonder as they traveled with Him and listened to Him and watched Him. Ahead lay some dark and unfathomable mystery which filled their hearts with foreboding. He gathered them into an upper room, and talked to them. The first part of the Lord's teaching was strangely disturbed by these men; the second part of it was undisturbed and quiet. He first girded Himself with a towel, and bent to wash their feet, and He was disturbed by Peter's protest. Then, at the Passover feast, the atmosphere became electric, and the teaching was disturbed when He excluded Judas. He was further interrupted by Peter's question, "Whither goest Thou?" by Thomas saying, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" by Philip's outcry, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us"; by Jude's inquiry, "Lord, what is come to pass that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" Jesus proceeded to teach them, until, hushed into silence, they followed Him as, leaving the upper room, He moved perchance down the slopes of the mountain, or perchance to the temple in the darkness of the night, uttering as He went the great allegory of the vine, and so completing His instructions. We shall be helped to an understanding of the words of the text if we remember the purpose of these discourses. The keynote of all of them is found in the opening declaration of chapter thirteen: "Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He was preparing them for the future, for the immediate future, dark and mysterious, the tragic hours of the Cross, and for the future that lay beyond, when the new light should shine and the new power be realized at the coming of the Spirit. The final discourse of Jesus upon this occasion was introduced, as I have said, by the allegory of the vine, and our text is contained within that discourse, and is immediately related to that allegory. When Jesus said to these men, "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends... and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and... that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you," He was but carrying out in definite application in one particular regard the whole figure suggested by

His magnificent claim, "I am the Vine, the true."

Two matters demand our consideration. We are arrested first, by the changed relationship and its reasons; and, second, by the resulting responsibility, in itself and as to its possibility.

In the first place let us observe this change in relationship. That the relationship was changed is certain, for the form in which our Lord uttered the words indicates and emphasizes the thought of deeper relationship into which these men were now to pass; "No longer do I call you slaves." The change was not capricious; it was the result of previous training. He called them disciples at the beginning. There came a moment when He called them apostles. Now He called them friends. That is not to say that they had not already been in some sense His friends. That is not to say that they would cease to be disciples. That is not to say they would cease to be apostles. As a matter of fact, their full apostolic work had not yet commenced. They were disciples when first they followed Him, apostles when, after a period of training, He first sent them forth; but now He said to them, "No longer do I call you servants.... I have called you friends."

A slave was the property of his master, unable to possess, and so having nothing of his own, unable to elect and so unable to do, on his own initiative. A slave, therefore, was at the disposal of his owner, all his energy must be for the increase of the possessions of the one who possessed him; all his choosing must be in accord with the choosing of the one who owned him. The law of the slave's life is unquestioning submission, blind obedience. Is not all this a description of the relationship these disciples still bore to Christ? Does it not describe the relation that the Christian must ever bear to Christ? Yes, in some senses. We are still His bondslaves, and it is to be noted that ere this discourse was ended He called them so again. In the twentieth verse we read, "Remember the word that I said unto you, a slave is not greater than his lord." That was a reference to what He had said in the past, but it indicated a maintained relationship. They were still His slaves in some sense of the word; yet He distinctly marked a change in relationship when He said, "No longer do I call you slaves." It is noticeable, moreover, that in the apostolic writings the apostles spoke of themselves as slaves, and the apostle who was added to their company, born out of due season, but not a whit behind the chiefest of them, delighted ever to call himself the bondslave of Jesus Christ. Christians are still the bondslaves of Jesus, His property, unable to possess or to have of their own, unable to elect save under the compulsion of His choice, or to do save as doing is putting forth energy on His behalf. Christians are still called on to increase His possessions, and to elect in accordance with His elections. But here we halt. The slave renders unquestioning submission, and blind obedience. That is not the last word about Christian discipleship. It is at that very point that we discover the character of this change in relationship. "I have called you friends," and in a moment we are introduced into another realm of thought which we shall see does not negative the essential values of the first, but rather transfigures them and makes them glorious and beautiful. What are friends? When we begin to think seriously, we realize how we constantly abuse the great word friend, how casually and carelessly we make use of it. Sit down some time, and write a list of your friends. None of us have very many; we have many acquaintances—and thank God for the whole of them—but few friends.

What is the basis of friendship? Reciprocal and self-emptying love, and, consequently, mutual interest. Find me my friend, and I will say to you, This friend loves me to the forgetfulness of himself, and I love him to the forgetfulness of myself. He is forever seeking my interests, and I am

always seeking his, so far as our lives touch each other in this realm of human friendship. Jesus said, "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends." The law of life in slavery is unquestioning submission and blind obedience. The law of life in friendship is informed submission and intelligent obedience. The friends of Jesus are submissive, but by no means unquestioningly. They are submissive after they have asked questions and He has satisfied them. The friends of Jesus are obedient, but no longer blindly. He has told them all things. "The slave knoweth not what his Lord doeth"; he has to imagine; the friend knows what his Lord is doing; his Lord has told him. He is rendering obedience no longer blindly but intelligently. In this exposition I am warranted by the whole movement of the story. Did I not remind you of the disturbances in the teaching of the Lord in the upper room, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" Jesus answered, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards." "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?" Is that a slave speaking? Yes, a slave seeking friendship. Never forget this, Christ was not angry with Peter, He answered Peter, "Whither I go ye know the way." Then Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" Is that a slave? Yes, a slave getting ready to be a friend, asking his questions. Then Philip cried out almost angrily, almost in protest, "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." Is that a slave? Yes, on the highway to friendship. These men did not become friends because they asked questions, but because He was willing to answer them. He made them His friends, they did not make Him their friend. "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you." The central Personality, full of glory and light, full of surprise and amazement, is neither Peter, nor Thomas, nor Philip, nor Jude, but Jesus. He is seen taking hold of the weaknesses of men and making them the foundations of strength. When He had answered all their questions and removed their blindness, He said, "No longer do I call you servants... I have called you friends," for I have admitted you to the secrets, I have told you all things.

Consequently, in friendship we have the fellowship of love as the inspiration and the atmosphere of fellowship in effort. That is an infinitely higher plane on which to live than that of slavery. This is what Jesus' heart is ever seeking, not that we should render Him blind obedience, but intelligent obedience; not that we should give to Him unquestioning submission, but satisfied submission; not that we should drag ourselves after Him as though it were hard work, and imagine that in the dragging there is virtue; but that we should go gaily, gladly, to suffer for His name, for very love of Him; not slaves, but friends, and therefore slaves as never before.

What was the reason for this change? I have already answered this question incidentally, yet it is so important that we shall dwell on it for a moment longer. Jesus distinctly told them why He made the change. "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you." The basis on which our Lord made the change of relationship was, first, His action in revealing God to them; and, second, their new capacity for service resulting from the revelation.

His revelation of God to them we may consider generally and particularly. I shall dwell principally on the particular revelation contained within this very discourse. To this group of men He had made God known. They had found God in Him. Perhaps at the moment they hardly knew it. I do not believe that at this time they could have formulated a creed which would have contained within it a declaration of Jesus' Deity, but they had found God in Him, and by and by they would find out that they had found God in Him. They had learned two things to the full realization of which they came progressively, to the ultimate realization of which the Church of God has not yet come, so

vast are they. They had found in Him the revelation of the Divine holiness. They had found in Him the revelation of the Divine love. The proportion in which they were conscious of the Divine holiness and the Divine love through His revelation was the proportion in which they understood Him, and, understanding Him, were prepared to be not slaves alone, but friends. The holiness of God was revealed, not so much in the teaching of Jesus—though there surely it is revealed—as in Himself. Let me speak of Him for a moment as man alone, let me think of Him in His human life only. In Him I see a man who by all His affirmations, those which were definite and specific, and those which were occasional and incidental, revealed the fact that all His life was conditioned within the will of God. Then let me watch His life in order that I may understand the will of God, and so know the God in whose will He lived. As I watch Him in the selflessness of His selfhood, in the awful purity of His familiarity with all human emotions, I begin to understand what His God must be. Whereas that does not exhaust the meaning of the great word spoken to Philip, that word has that value also, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He that has seen any man has seen his God. Every man reveals his God in what he is himself. Ultimately the soul responsive to his God, if the god be lust, greed, passion, will reveal in his own face lust, greed, passion. In that sense Jesus challenged men when He said, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Those who have seen Him have seen God in what He is; in His sinlessness they have seen the holiness of God. In Him, moreover, they had seen the Divine compassion, the Divine love; and this, not so much in what He was in Himself, but in what He was toward sinning men.

Here again I pause to lay emphasis on something I have already said incidentally, that the Church itself has not yet grasped the fulness of this revelation of the love of God in Jesus as seen in His attitude toward sinning men. Never were His lips disfigured by the curve of contempt. Never did His face convey to sinning men the assumption of superiority. Never did He say a hard thing to a sinning soul. That is what created difficulty in the mind of the rulers of His time. This Man loved sinners, made friends with them, did not patronize them, did not denounce them. Oh, God, that the Church might begin to see this compassion of God as revealed in Jesus. That compassion is not pity that excuses wrong, it is love that dies for wrong. The measure in which we have seen God as Jesus revealed Him is the measure in which we are prepared to be His friends, and therefore the friends of God.

In these final discourses God was revealed by Jesus supremely in His redeeming grace. Take the whole happenings of the upper room. There was, first, the inclusive symbol, when He girded Himself with a towel. That towel was the insignia of slavery. When Peter wrote his letter, he was surely thinking about that upper room when he said, "Gird yourselves with humility as with a slave's apron." The apron, which was the the symbol of slavery, Jesus girt about Himself and washed their feet. That act was symbolic of redeeming grace, stooping, bending, until it had taken the meanest position of all in order to lift men to the height of glory. In that stooping, bending, bowing of the towel-girt slave, Jesus was revealing God. Then followed the exclusion of Judas. There is an attitude of soul which grace abandons! There is an attitude of spirit which grace excludes from its covenant! After that came the inclusion of Peter. Grace said to him, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me." There is an attitude of soul most dastardly, yet having at its center high aspiration and noble desire, which grace includes, fulfilling the high desire by the destruction of the thing that is mean. Grace was revealed in the expository answers Jesus gave to these men. Mark

the sequence of them. To Thomas He said, I am the way to the Father; to Philip He said, I am the Father also, for if you have seen Me you have seen Him; to Jude He said, The Father will love and come to those who come to Him through Me.

Now said He to them, I have made known these things concerning God to you, and on the basis of this revelation I call you friends. The revelation of love produced love. There came a day when John wrote a letter in which he said, "We love Him because He first loved us." John knew the fact of the love of God through his Lord. So John became his Lord's friend. The revelation of the Divine love in all its glory created love within the souls of these men. Jesus Himself in the prayer that followed said, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God." On the basis of that unveiling of God through Christ these men became slaves no longer, but friends. Therefore they were ever after slaves volitionally, not of compulsion, no longer dragging themselves after Him reluctantly, but rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

So we pass to glance at the resulting responsibility, in both itself and as to its possibility. Our Lord here declared that these men were appointed by Himself to two things; to bear fruit, and to ask whatsoever they would of the Father. These two things must never be separated from each other. The purpose is fruit-bearing; asking is in order to fulfil that purpose. Our Lord had appointed the disciples to bear fruit as branches of the vine, and He had appointed them to ask whatsoever was necessary to enable them to bear that fruit. The idea is of the branch doing two things which a branch always does in a fruitful vine: it bears fruit, and it does so by-demanding from the vine the life that enables it to bear fruit. In any vine on which our eyes may look we may observe the fruit-bearing branch and know that it is asking, demanding, its life of the vine, and expressing the answers it receives in the clusters of fruit it bears.

Nothing can be more important in our interpretation of this particular passage than that we should be harmonious with the whole allegory. When our Lord made use of it He was not using a new figure, He was borrowing an old one. That is the meaning of His claim, the smoothness of our translation of which robs it a little of its impact. What Jesus literally said was, "I am the Vine, the true." That little phrase, the true, interjected after the declaration, emphasized the fact that He was borrowing from the past economy. That figure of the vine runs all through the old economy. It is found in psalm and prophecy. Jesus stood at last among these Jewish disciples, and He said, "I am the Vine, the true!" Glancing back to the ancient prophecy in which it is declared that the vine which should have brought forth grapes had brought forth wild grapes we have an exposition of fruit-bearing. What is the fruit the vine ought to have brought forth? God looked for righteousness and for judgment. Instead of judgment, He found oppression; instead of righteousness, He found a cry! The fruit for which God was looking on His vine was judgment and righteousness. Judgment is not punishment; punishment may be an aspect of it, but judgment is government, true, righteous, just. He looked for judgment, and, behold, oppression. He looked for righteousness, and, behold, a cry. Now said Jesus, "I am the true Vine." By that He meant that through Him judgment and righteousness are coming to the world.

With that general statement in mind, let us observe the fruit-bearing of Jesus. I shall content myself now with the most general statement concerning it. Will you call to mind the first words that Jesus is recorded to have uttered on the verge of His public ministry? I am not now referring to His boyhood's words, but to those He uttered on the day when He came to John's baptism. John said,

"I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Then Jesus said, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." At the end of that public ministry the Greeks came asking to see Him, and He said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." The first word of the public ministry declared that righteousness was to be fulfilled. At the close He said, "Now is the judgment of this world." The Lord looketh down from heaven for righteousness and for judgment, and in the long history of the race He had found oppression and a cry; but, at last, in this Man He found righteousness and judgment, not in Himself alone, but in Him for humanity.

"Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." What was this that He said must be done? It was the baptism of repentance. But He had nothing to repent of! He repented for humanity as He bent to the baptism, and completed His repentance in the passion baptism whereby He made possible the fulfilment of righteousness in the case of men who had failed. When did He declare that judgment, the true government of the world, was coming? When He said, "Now is My soul troubled." By the way of the Cross, that for which God and man had looked, and looked in vain, shall come the judgment of the world, its true government; for the prince of the world is cast out, and our Lord being lifted by the Cross fulfils the purpose of God. In all the ministry of Jesus between that initial word and that final word deeds and teaching, tarryings and journeyings, were true to that passion and purpose. He was bearing fruit.

Now to His friends, He said, I have appointed you to bear fruit. We can leave once more all the ampler outlooks and become immediate, practical, simple. How are we to bear this fruit of righteousness and judgment in the world? Not for ourselves is this fruit to be borne. The figure of fruit denies that spiritual selfishness which simply seeks spiritual blessing to consume it on our own desires. The prevailing sin of the Church is that. The fruit we bear is for others, for the world. How are we to bear that fruit? Only as we are brought into such relation with Jesus that we share His self-emptying. The kenosis must be repeated in His disciples if they are to bear fruit. That is fundamental, initial. How shall we express it? By becoming obedient unto death. If we interpret that by the facts of His life we shall see how we are to bear fruit. By our being ready to go into the company of sinners, by our ability to repent on behalf of sinners, by our belief in sinning men, by our justification of them through our belief in them, by infinite patience with them, by the pouring out of our lives for them and into them, we bear fruit. We see immediately that we can never be fruit-bearers in this sense unless we actually begin at the beginning and put ourselves into definite, living, personal, immediate contact with sinning men. There has been a teaching of separation from the world that in some of its aspects has been utterly pernicious. We are not to withdraw from the society in which we are living, but to stay there and bear fruit there. In proportion as we know what it is to have true fellowship with the Son of God we shall seek out the depraved, the lost, the sunken, the bruised and the unclean, and, sitting down by them, we shall bear the fruit of righteousness and judgment for them as we pour out our lives in sacrificial service.

We need a Church reformed to the pattern of her Lord, the self-emptying One Who bears the fruit of righteousness and judgment in a world dying for lack of righteousness and judgment. He came into contact with polluted and spoiled humanity, and while the Pharisees looked on and were amazed and hostile, He received them and made Himself their friend. We have not begun to learn the meaning of true friendship for Jesus Christ until we have sacrificed our sensibilities and our refinements and our preferences as we gather to our heart and life and actual fellowship sinning

men and women in order that we may lift and change them by that holy contact.

It is a hard word, and who is sufficient for it? Then let us remember that Jesus said, Not only have I appointed you to bear fruit, but I have appointed you to ask the Father whatsoever you need in order to its bearing. If the condition of fellowship be kenosis or self-emptying and the Cross, the resource for that fruit-bearing is pleroma, that fulness which there is in Christ, for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full." If the task be a great one, and if from it flesh and sense shrink, let us ask that we may receive that enduement and equipment of the very compassionate cleansing life of Christ that will enable us to bear this fruit in the world to His glory.

We all began our Christian discipleship as slaves. It is a solemn beginning, characterized by a great silence and a great submission, but if we have come no further than that fruit is rare. That is why there are so many degenerate vines in the vineyard of the Lord. Maintained fellowship with Christ brings us into friendship. We come to that in hours when we are oppressed, frightened, perplexed, and we dare ask Him questions, and have such confidence in Him that we dare express our doubts to Him. In response to such questions and such doubts He is able to tell us His secrets and so to lead us as presently to say, "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends."

Let us gladden His heart by such intimate friendship that through us He may be able to do what He desires to do for this sad and needy world.

John 16:7-11. The Spirit's Testimony To The World.

John 16:7-11.

The Spirit's Testimony To The World.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you. And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.

John 16:7-11

With the awakening of the spiritual side of a man's nature there ever comes to him a threefold consciousness: a consciousness of sin, a consciousness of righteousness, a consciousness of judgment. All this is, after all, but one: it is the consciousness of God, with the things resulting therefrom. Though it may not be formulated, tabulated, expressed, the awakening of the spiritual in a man is always, first, the consciousness of God; and the consciousness of God in the soul of a man is always the consciousness of righteousness, and the consciousness of righteousness in the abstract is forevermore the consciousness of sin as a fact, and the consciousness of sin carries with it the consciousness of judgment. In this passage we have something which touches us very closely and very intimately in this matter of spiritual consciousness. Such an awakening may occur in very varied circumstances in the life of a human being; indeed, it may occur again and yet again without producing any very definite result. The awakening of spiritual consciousness does not necessarily mean the regeneration of the spirit or the beginning of a new life. By the awakening of the spiritual consciousness I mean the sense of the fact of the spiritual. Very often it comes to the most godless men in circumstances of peril and danger. A ship at sea is suddenly in peril of sinking, and it becomes a house of prayer. Men are suddenly overwhelmed in some great calamity, such as the earthquake in San Francisco, and they think of God. It is idle to speak of such seeking after God in times of peril as cowardice. It is not cowardice. It is rather that the essential within the man wakes and realizes itself. It may be a passing emotion, but is a very real one. I have sometimes attempted to illustrate what I mean out of my own experience, an experience very much on the material basis it would seem, and apparently for the moment quite apart from the line we are pursuing. The first time I became profoundly conscious in my own life that I am a spirit and not a body—I had believed it long and had attempted to live in the power of the fact, and had known much of the joy which comes from the conviction—was in an hour of peril. It was in New York, in the Murray Hill Hotel, within five minutes of a fearful explosion which occurred there a few years ago, when the whole building was shaken. In a room on the third floor of that building was my wife. I was attempting to reach that floor, and felt that my spirit was hindered by my body. I became positively conscious that this body was a clog, a hindrance. In that moment I understood what people sing about in higher realms, "This robe of flesh I'll drop," and I wished I could. I knew in the moment of peril, and of desire, that I was a spirit. These moments of

awakening come to men in different circumstances and in different places. They have come to some of you in this house in the singing of a hymn, in the reading of the Word, in some message delivered, in some holy silence when the material has faded, and you have been conscious of the spirituality of your own personality. A man never comes to that consciousness and attends to it, listens to it, thinks of it, but that these things pass through his mind in quick succession—sin, righteousness, and judgment, and if this be dwelt upon and faced honestly, squarely, it becomes in each case a double consciousness—of sin as an actual fact present in the life, and as a paralysis which man cannot overcome; of righteousness as a true ideal, something which can be admired in spite of his uttermost degradation, and yet an impossibility, something he cannot realize; of judgment as a verdict found, not by a jury of his fellow men, not merely by an assembly, or the consensus of universal opinion, but in his own soul, a verdict of guilty, not only a verdict of guilty, but a sentence impending, that of the disaster and death which must overtake sin. This consciousness of the spiritual with its sense of sin, or righteousness and of judgment, is not peculiar to Christianity. When Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," He did not mean that the Spirit would give men to know the fact of sin and the fact of righteousness and the fact of judgment. They knew these things while He was still among them. They had known them long ere His advent in time. Today, where the presence and power of the Spirit through the Church have never yet come, all these things are known.

What, then, is the testimony which the Spirit bears concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment?

First, the Spirit sets this threefold consciousness in relation to Jesus Christ. The Spirit "will convict the world... of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." While there are notes of severity and searching in this testimony of the Spirit concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, it is the one great evangel of hope.

He came to convict the world in respect of sin. What is it that He has to say to us about sin? First of all, He reveals the fact that in this Gospel age sin has a new center and a new responsibility. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." The Spirit, instead of dealing with men about their own specific sins, the varied and thousand forms all manifesting the one central malady, reveals the very heart and root of sin, not as it is where Jesus is not known, but as it is when a man has heard the evangel, has seen Christ, has had his opportunity of believing and being saved. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." The Spirit creates a new center for sin. When the Spirit has exercised His ministry in the life of a man, sin is a new and different thing, yet the reasonableness of it will be seen if we follow for a moment this simple line of thought. What is sin essentially? Sin is rebellion against the government of God. You may speak of your particular sin, your impure nature, your passion, lust, your tendency to lie, to cheat, to embezzle. What are all these things but the results of a cause, but branches springing out of one essential root? What is the root from which all these things spring? Rebellion against the government of God. Sin in the life of a man is high treason against heaven. Sin in the life of a man is not an inheritance to be pitied, not an infirmity to be excused. It is the lifting of the hand in an attempt to smite God Almighty in the face. It is the turning of the back of man upon God.

Jesus Christ lived a life which was directly opposed to that. He bound Himself by bonds of perpetual dedication to the throne of God. He did only the things that His Father willed. The story is an old one. We will not stay to refer to the great words which fell from His lips, proving this to be true. We know it and accept it. He lived in unceasing and undeviating loyalty to the throne of God: perfect amid imperfection, sinless amid sinners, pure amid impurity, loyal amid treason. Such was the life of the Son of God. There are a hundred ways in which you may speak of His death. Let me follow the line of my argument and say that in that death He accepted—I know how impossible it is to state it all, yet hear this one-sided statement very reverently—He accepted the responsibility and consequences of the sin of the race and made them His own. When He walked unknown among the crowd on the banks of the Jordan the last prophet of the Hebrew line pointed Him out and uttered words concerning Him which ought to be carefully pondered. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" It was then a prophecy of hope which has now become a fact of history. He took the responsibility of sin, and because He did that He has provided an absolution which is justification, infinitely more than pardon, and he has provided a purity for man which cleanses his nature and energizes him for new life. I have sinned the sin of rebellion against God and the poison and virus of it have entered into my life, and when I "would do good, evil is present." I see righteousness and admire it, but in my nature is the poison and paralysis of sin. What am I to do? Jesus Christ stands confronting me, and says to me, "All the guilt of the past I have put away. All the weakness of the present I am waiting to energize." If I refuse Him, that is sin. There is no other sin left. He has put it all away. There is no sin in my past life that He has not dealt with in the mystery of His passion. There is no sin in my present life that He cannot deal with in the might of His Holy Spirit. He waits, and plenteous redemption is at my disposal. If I turn my back on that I remain the slave of the sins which bind me. I remain guilty of all the sins which are against me. The central sin, the one holding all these within its grasp, and binding them upon me, is my sin of rejecting Him. "Of sin, because they believe not on me." You tell me, my brother, that your sin consists in some particular failing. That is not your sin. Your sin is that you believe not on Him. If you would believe on Him, if you would believe on Him with abandonment of the life, all the guilt would be put away, all the power of the sin would be broken. If you refuse the remedy that is your sin. The illustration which is simplest is best. Here is a man lying sick of a fell disease. I bring him the one absolutely sure remedy for his disease. He puts it away and dies. You tell me he died of his disease? In some senses you are right; but he died because he declined the remedy. That is the story of sin in the light of the mission of Jesus and the ministry of the Spirit. Whatever sin you are in the grip of, that sin must loosen its hold in the moment when you believe on Him and He commits to you the efficacy of His cross and the dynamic of His resurrection.

You say, "My besetting sin is my temper, my love of drink, some form of impurity." Nothing of the kind. You have not named your besetting sin. Your besetting sin is your persistent unbelief in Jesus. Sin is unbelief. If you would believe on Him your evil temper would be changed, the very fire and force of your love of alcohol would die out, quenched by the power of the Spirit. If you would but believe on Him the feverish fire of your impurity would be dealt with. Some of you go mourning all the days, with a mourning which insults heaven and grieves the Spirit, over some besetting sin which you cannot cure. If you would but believe on Him! The Spirit comes to give sin its relation to Jesus Christ, to reveal to men the perfect Saviour in order that they may understand that if any suffer the penalty of sin it is because they have refused God's one great all-sufficient

remedy for sin.

Following that is the testimony of God's Spirit to righteousness. He "will convict the world in respect... of righteousness, because I go to the Father." The Spirit's testimony concerning righteousness reveals Jesus in two ways: first as a perfect pattern, and secondly as an all-sufficient power—a perfect pattern.

When Jesus said, "I go to the Father," so far as He personally is concerned He meant, "I came forth from the Father. I have walked the earth and the ways of men in the light of the Father. I am going back to the Father. There is nothing to keep me out. There is no barrier shutting me out of God's heaven. I go to the Father. I challenge heaven's light because of the purity of my life. I challenge the very holiness of God because I have never sinned. I am at home with the Father." That is Holiness challenging holiness and defying God's light to exclude Him. "I go to the Father, for I love the Father and my home is with the Father. The place of all my affinities is with the Father." Thus there emerges a new ideal of righteousness. We have said righteousness is for a man to pay his debts, and never to do his neighbor any harm, imagining that it consists in all that morality which is conditioned by the policeman. Jesus Christ says that righteousness consists in such relationships with heaven as make relationships with earth high and holy and noble. Righteousness consists not merely in the keeping of the laws written upon tables of stone, but in life which finds its center in the heart of God, and finds its home in the home of God. The Spirit reveals to us the true meaning of righteousness, and delivers us from false conceptions. The Spirit says to you righteousness is rightness, and rightness is right, and right is the proper relationship to the will of God, so that a man finds himself at home only when he finds himself with God. There are a great many men who are boasting of their righteousness who are not at all at home if you talk about God. There is a difference between the boasted morality of the sinner and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you are going to measure things by the standard of the street and the police court I respect your respectability; but here in the sanctuary where His Name is proclaimed your respectability is as far below God's righteousness as hell is beneath heaven. "I go to the Father." That is human speech. It is the language of a man who has walked here amid earthly things, amid the flowers and birds, and children, and in the dusty highways, yet forever more homed in the bosom of the Father. This is righteousness. "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father." That is not all. If that were all I would be afraid, more afraid than ever before. Let me speak for my own heart. If I had nothing other than this revelation of righteousness I would be hopeless, desperately hopeless. I pity with all my heart the man who tells me that Jesus is his ideal and nothing more. Either he is so blind as never to have seen Jesus' glory, or else if he has seen, and is honest, the comprehension of the distance is in itself the consciousness of perdition. When Jesus said, "I go to the Father," He was not speaking personally merely. He meant more than that. He meant, "I go to the Father for you." In stately language, in the second chapter of the Acts, Peter traces the way and issue of His going. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.... Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." When He sent to the Father, and there in high

heaven challenged holiness by the purity of His life, and found Himself at home with love ineffable, He came there not merely as the perfect Man. He came there wounded, with scars in His hands, and feet, and side. I see this Man of Nazareth coming back to heaven's high court, and I hear the song of heaven as it tells of His victory, and I am afraid, for I am left here amid my sin. Yet as He comes I hear Him say, "I am He that liveth." I understand that. Purity always lives. Holiness cannot die. "And was dead." Why did He die? I give you the answer in the first person singular. You must make it your own. "He loved me and gave Himself up for me." When the Man of purity came back to heaven, when the Man of right challenged heaven's light and was as unsullied as it, in His hands and feet and side were the arguments which told of the passion by which He had made it possible for the impure to come home, for the lost to be found, for the ruined to be redeemed. Now the Spirit has come to "convict the world in respect... of righteousness, because I go to the Father." Conviction by the Spirit is not only the revelation of a new pattern of righteousness, it is the declaration of a new power whereby men can themselves become righteous, and can themselves become holy. I think we must see that or we miss the very heart of the evangel. What is man's salvation? If by God's grace I stand in the light by and by—and by God's grace I shall—how shall I stand there? Not merely because He pardons sin. That is so, or I never could stand there. How, then, shall I stand there? First, because He pardons sin; and, secondly, because He makes me perfect. No one will misunderstand me. I speak not as though "I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." The work is not yet done. My patient, tender Lord has much to do, but He will do it. He "will perfect that which concerneth me." Jesus Christ is not proposing to lead into the courts of heaven an army of crippled men and women. He is not proposing to bring back to God's dwelling place vast companies of incompetent spiritual beings. What, then, is He going to do? Let inspiration tell us. He will "set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy." This is what the Spirit says to a weary world about righteousness. Have the true pattern and see it in Jesus. Have the power, and have it in Him.

Once again, note what the Spirit says to the world concerning judgment. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." This is a new emphasis upon judgment. It is a new warning from a somewhat strange angle of thought, and yet a very true one. It is, first of all, a new emphasis. In His victory over sin borne, and in His ascension and enthronement, God's final judgment is pronounced against sin. It surely has occurred to you that whereas the gospel of the resurrection is a gospel of hope, it is the severest gospel of condemnation which men have ever listened to. When on that Easter morning long ago God Almighty raised Jesus from the dead, selecting Him from among others, choosing Him and making Him the approach to Himself, what was He doing? He was saying in the sight of all the race, "This is the Man, the anointed Man. This is the Man I accept." What more, then, was He saying? "All men unlike Him I reject." The resurrection of Jesus was the evidence in human history of the type, the pattern, which God accepts. The resurrection of Jesus was the proclamation to men everywhere that it is only as men are like Him that they can hope to rise as He rose, and ascend as He ascended, and come into the light and glory as He came into the light and glory, so that the fact of the cross and resurrection of Jesus is God's verdict against sin. "The prince of this world hath been judged." The verdict was found, and the sentence passed in the morning of resurrection. By the acceptance of this One, all unlike Him are rejected and judgment is pronounced against the prince of this world. Mark the emphasis. We cannot afford to miss anything that Jesus says. Who is it that is judged? The prince of this world. The master of worldliness. Worldliness is a great deal more and other than some of

us think it is. Some people think that worldliness consists in playing cards and going to theaters and balls. There may be a great deal of worldliness that never plays cards and never goes to theaters or balls. Worldliness is that which never stretches out into the spiritual. Christ judges the world, pronounces it a failure, and condemns it to its own death in dust. By that material cross on which cruel and bloody men have nailed God's ideal "the prince of this world hath been judged."

Where are you living, my brother? Are you living here in London as though London were the last thing? Are you living on this one little planet amid the spaces as though it were all? Whether you play cards, or go to the theater or not, is nothing for the moment. Where do you live? How far does your horizon stretch out? How much do you know of the eternal? Your heart is capable of being full of God. What is it full of? If it is full of anything less than God, do not forget that "the prince of this world hath been judged."

Thank God, it means more than that. It means that the prince of this world hath been judged, and therefore his captives are free. "He came to break oppression and set the captives free." You have been mastered by the foe. He masters the foe, and if you will, you can go out; your prison door is open, the prince is judged. He bruised the heel of the Lion of the tribe of Judah; but the Lion of the tribe of Judah put His foot upon the neck of the roaring lion. The prince of this world plunged his venomous dart into the side of the Prince of glory; but the Prince of glory quenched its venom in blood, and you are free if you will be so. The Spirit is not here to convince you of judgment to come, unless that is your choice. He is here to convince you that judgment is accomplished. The monster is dead. His power is broken. The foe that held you has been despoiled in the mystery of the cross, and you and I may be free. If you choose to abide in slavery, if you choose to make this world the beginning and the end and the all of your life, then you must share the hell of the prince of this world. But it is your own choice. It is not God's choice for you. If you make it your own you must abide by it.

The Spirit's testimony is the most solemn and searching declaration that men can ever receive concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Yet my heart bids me declare to you that if it be solemn and searching, it is the one evangel of hope that is worth having. It does not seem to me that to preach Jesus as an ideal is an evangel at all. It does not seem to me that if He told me He was willing to forgive my sin without any reference to myself or my state it would be enough. When I learn by the ministry and witness and testimony of the Spirit that if I will believe on Him the sins that bound me shall bind me no more, the fierce fires of passion that burned shall be quenched. When I hear that if I will believe on Him Who went to the Father, Who bends out of His high heaven, and says, "I will that ye also shall be with Me where I am, though I know the worst of you—that you will deny me on the way—let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, trust Me and I will bring you home," then I have an evangel! When I hear that He Who calls me to follow Him is not asking me to escape and run away from a foe that may dodge my footsteps and may overtake me, but is asking me to follow Him, has met the foe, and has broken his power, and has delivered me, then I hear the evangel.

What shall we do with the evangel? If you reject Him tonight that is your sin. Will you believe on Him tonight? That is your righteousness as pattern and power. Will you reject the Christ of Whom the Spirit speaks? Then you choose the judgment which follows upon the prince of this world. Will you crown the Christ of Whom the Spirit speaks? Then you share His victory over the prince of this

world, and instead of being vanquished you shall be victor. Do not give this away in generalities. Shut yourself up to yourself in these last minutes. Forget me, and forget your neighbor, whoever that may be, friend, husband, wife, brother, sister, child. Be alone one moment with God. Now confronting you stands the Christ. What will you do with Him? May God help you to decide.

John 16:12. Progressive Revelation.

John 16:12.

Progressive Revelation.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

John 16:12

These were some of the final words of Jesus to His disciples, spoken amid the messages of which we speak as His Paschal discourses. They were uttered in the hearing of that inner circle of souls who had gathered about Him, loyal to Him, having tabernacled with Him, had listened to His teaching and had become familiar so far as was possible with His Person. To these men He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

This has always been so. God has ever had more to say to man than man has been able to bear. And God has ever patiently waited for man's ability to bear before speaking to him other of the things that he ought to know.

You will remember that Isaiah was criticized by men who mocked at his method, and said that he was a man of "strange lips" and "another tongue," that he was a man who spoke to them "line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, there a little." We have come to include these words in our prayers of thankfulness for God's patience with us, saying that He deals with us thus—"precept upon precept; line upon line... here a little, there a little." We are perfectly right. But the lips that first uttered those words were the lips of men who laughed at the method. They criticized God's servant, saying "Whom will he teach knowledge?" That was his method. It was made necessary by their blindness and sin, and even though the prophet did not declare it at the moment, we, looking back, see the infinite grace and patience of God manifest therein.

And the method obtained even after our Master had passed back into heaven. You will remember that Paul in his great Corinthian letter says, I cannot feed you with meat because you are not able to bear it; you are yet carnal. The carnal mind cannot discern the deep things of God. He said, I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Why not? Because they were carnal, and not able to bear anything else. We have made that the watchword of the preacher. It is, however, a misinterpretation of the meaning of the Apostle. Upon another occasion he says, "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead." The Christian preacher has never preached the whole Christian message until he has preached the resurrection and the ascension, and the infinite issues of positive life that come from the narrow and straitened gateway of the Master's death. To these Corinthian Christians the Apostle said, I cannot go further on in my instruction, I am bound to keep you in the region of first principles, because you are not able to bear it.

Thus having seen that the method obtained in the old prophetic age, and in the apostolic age, I come back to my text, and I find Jesus standing amid His disciples. After the three years of

instruction He was about to leave them, and looking into their faces, He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Shall we listen to that word of Jesus, first as a statement of the Divine method of revelation, second, as a basis of faith, a secret of peace for all our hearts; and, third, as a trumpet call to the life of receptivity.

In order that we may appreciate the value of that final thought, let us dwell upon the first. In this text we have an illustration, as I have already indicated, of the perpetual method of God in revealing Himself to men.

In reading the Divine library we discover that every dispensation has grown out of a preceding one, the preceding having prepared for it; and every distinct and successive dispensation has prepared the way for another, which was coming after. The line of development is to be discovered in man's appreciation and appropriation of something new revealed. In proportion as man has learned the lesson of a particular period, God has been prepared to pass on to something else. There are many ways of tracing that line of development in the Old Testament Scriptures. Take the broadest, and therefore in some senses the least satisfactory, and yet for the moment the most easy. Taking the history of man as a sinner, leaving out from our present thought everything that goes before it, we find that God has been teaching humanity lessons one at a time, never the second until the first was learned.

We find God dealing first with individual man, and teaching him the lesson of his responsibility to God. Then, dealing with man as to his social interrelationship, the meaning of the family, and of society; and gradually the emergence of the national ideal. Then the meaning of community of worship, and gradually, through long and tedious processes the great monotheistic lesson, the fact of the one God.

Then after a lapse of centuries we have the incarnation, the coming of the one God into human life, rendered necessary by man's sin and failure; and from that incarnation until now, still the same line of development—progressive revelation. I believe that the catholic consciousness of Christ—I use the word in its simplest and truest sense, including within its gracious and spacious and radiant sweep all the children of God of every denomination—at the moment is the greatest and the grandest that the world has ever had, as the result of a progressive unfolding of all the essential truth concerning God which came to men by the way of the coming of Christ. Not all at once did the light come, but it has been increasing little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept.

Progress has always depended upon realization of the truth. God has never led humanity forward into any new truth concerning Himself, save as they have realized and obeyed the measure of truth already manifested. This law of Divine revelation still stands.

It is God's method with the individual. If I speak experimentally, it is in order to illustrate the truth. What is His method with me? "Line upon line." Yes, but when did I come to the second line? Never until I had learned the first. By learning the first I do not mean committing it to memory, or accepting it theoretically, but obeying it, and being transformed into its intention; for truth is always a sanctifying force. Truth is not a commodity that a man has any right to place upon his shoulder and label. Truth possessed by a man is valueless. Truth possessing a man is valuable, and it is

when any particular truth concerning Jesus Christ has come to me not merely as an illumination, but has become part of me by sanctification of my life, that I am ready for some other lesson.

Brethren, here is the meaning of the arrest of development in Christian character which is so often manifest in our own lives. How is it that some of us have lost our first love for the Word of God, have lost our appreciation of things Divine, are looking back with a sigh of regret to days long gone when the light was clear? In every case because somewhere we disobeyed the truth, we refused to submit ourselves to the light that came to us. There can be no advancement or development until there has been obedience to the particular thing God said to us. Where? I do not know! You know! One year ago, ten years ago! Some of you may have to tramp your way back for twenty years to find the point where development was arrested, and it was because you refused to obey light at that point. God cannot advance in the unfolding of essential truth because as yet you have not been prepared for the greater truth by obedience in the first thing He said to you.

I have said that the catholic consciousness of Jesus Christ is far finer today than it has ever been, but is it not a sad thing that it is nevertheless so imperfect as to create divisions within the catholic Church. Oh, these divisions! How can they be healed? There are men this morning in the Christian Church, absolutely sincere in their loyalty to Jesus Christ, and yet we are absolutely opposed in certain views concerning Jesus Christ and Christianity. Why? You cannot answer that individual question by individual examination. You must take the larger and wider outlook. You must become conscious of the Church, the whole catholic Church of Jesus Christ before that question can be answered. And when you have become conscious of it, then the answer is to be found in this conclusion, that the Church itself has not been true to the things which have been certainly revealed to her somewhere. And all divergence of opinion means, somewhere, disloyalty to truth.

Our responsibility consists in finding out whether or not we are true to the thing about which we are absolutely certain, and convinced. If we get down to the simplicity of our Christian life, to the fundamental things about which we are all agreed—and thank God there are such things—are we true to these things? Have we obeyed them? So long as the Church holds truth as an intellectual quantity it becomes its curse, its bone of contention, its reason of division, the rock upon which it goes to pieces. But when the whole Church of Jesus Christ in its individual membership will answer the demand of truth, and walk in the light of the revelation, then there will be the coming together of those that have been divided, not by any organic attempt at reunion, but upon the basis of God's unfolding of His new meaning.

We are quarreling about some things He has never revealed. Men are differing, even to bitterness, about the future of the wicked. God has said no final thing in Scripture about the future of the wicked. He has said quite enough to lay upon the heart of every preacher the awful responsibility of what it may mean for a human soul to cut itself off from God. But no man has any right to anathematize me, or anyone else who does not hold his view upon the future of the wicked. These things are not fully revealed.

For centuries the Church has been divided about Arminianism and Calvinism. God has not said the last thing about the great problem, and why should we quarrel about it? We have disobeyed light and wasted time trying to discover other light, while still disobedient to the thing He has spoken. This is the perpetual method of God. The law of revelation still stands, that He can never reveal new truth to those who have disobeyed the truth received. I find in my text a basis of faith,

and therefore a secret of peace.

In spite of what I have said concerning the necessity for obedience to truth, before we attempt any further intellectual apprehension of its meaning, is it not a fact that there is nothing the heart of man rebels against so much as the sense of mystery? The rebellion against mystery is that by which man has beaten his way into new discoveries which on the other side have been new revelations from God. And yet we have to admit that the mystery is still there, in every department of life. There is no pathway that I traverse long before I come face to face with mystery. But mystery is another word for human limitation. Finally, there is no mystery. At the heart of mystery is intelligence. "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all." That is the great and essential word that denies mystery. Mystery to me, surely yes! Mystery in every flower that blossoms, and every day that comes. More mystery I think within my own personality than anywhere outside it. Mystery, yes, but not to God. At the heart of the mystery is the Light. Behind the clouds through which gleams of glory break occasionally upon our waiting vision is the Light itself. As God is essential Light, so Jesus Christ, God incarnate, is Light. He said upon one occasion, "I am the Light of the world." He brought into human life all that human life needs of illumination, of instruction, and of intelligence. So to Him in the things that I desire to know there is no mystery. "I have yet many things to say," and the things that are mysteries to me He holds in trust for me, and He holds them in order that I may know them; the essential light is to come in gleam after gleam until it burns to the eternal brightness upon my life. He holds in trust, but He reveals them to me line by line, and precept by precept as I am able to bear.

To my own heart this morning that is a foundation for faith. The thing which today is a mystery to me, tomorrow will be a revelation. The very veil that prevents my seeing through to the heart will resolve itself into the method of revelation presently.

Soft they shine,

Through that pure shrine,

As beneath the veil of Thy flesh divine,

Beams forth the light,

That were else too bright,

For the feebleness of a sinner's sight.

He veils in love, but my heart says in the presence of the veiled mystery, He knows, He holds in trust the things He holds for the moment! Consequently I wait in my limitation by faith in Him.

Take Him away from me, remove Him from before my eyes, tell me that He also is a struggler amid the mists, attempting to find out; tell me moreover that He is a half-informed personality in human history, then I have no focusing for essential light. I am more afraid of light than darkness, I will hark back to the mist to escape the blinding glare of the Throne of the infinite Knowledge.

But Love, standing before me in this Man Who is also God, says to me, I know these things, troubled heart. There are things you do not know, and I have them to say to you, but you cannot bear them yet. The reason of My withholding is not capricious. It is not that you are to be

perpetually shut out from final knowledge concerning all your problems. It is because your eyes are not ready for the light. The mind is not trained to grasp, is not prepared for the apocalypse. I have the things to say, but you are not yet able to bear them.

If that be the basis of faith, it is also the secret of peace. His very chastisements are grievous, but afterward I learn that the very processes of His discipline are leading me into larger capacity for revelation. My friend, Margaret Bottome, of the United States, founder and president of the King's Daughters, was telling me some time ago of how upon one occasion a friend of hers came into possession of a chrysalis of one of the most gorgeous butterflies. She took care of it toward the day of emancipation when it should find its color and beauty. She watched patiently the struggle of the life within, and thinking it a pity that there should be such a struggle, she took her scissors to help it out. Oh the disaster of it! That butterfly never found its wings, nor lived its life. God might help me out of some present pain, some present anguish. He might make it easier for me, but He would cripple my wings. And through the process of mystery and even of pain and withholding He is not withholding, for He is preparing me to see.

And so, finally, and, as I think, naturally, the text becomes a trumpet call to the life of receptivity. His will is to reveal to us the deep things of God, but He waits for the fulfilment of condition on our part. What is my responsibility? Quick response to the demand of the truth that He has revealed. As I make that response the truth makes me free, sanctifies me, and I am prepared for another line, another precept, a little advancement. The trouble with us all is that we are so fearfully content not to know. I am never so anxious about the soul who rebels in the presence of mystery if that soul will remit the story of rebellion to Jesus Christ as I am about the man who is content to sing the hymns he sang ten years ago, as though they were the finality of Christian experience. One or two things at the beginning, and the revelation did not proceed. Why not? Why was it that we did not get further? We make up for lack of growth in development by singing:—

Where is the blessedness I had,

When first I found the Lord?

If we were true to Jesus Christ the blessedness of this morning would eclipse in its glory any blessedness that preceded it. The trouble is that we are content not to know the deep things of God, to live upon the surface of things. I have heard people say that they will be quite content if they get just inside heaven. Just to get inside is pure selfishness. Oh that there might come upon us the passion to know the deep things of God, to look into the mist with eyes intense in their longing, until we see it disappear, and the light break. Oh, to ponder the things He has said until we hear their clamant call, and obey. He will lead us on into deeper things, and higher things, and better things.

Surely if we hear Him say, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now," we ought to reply, "Oh, Master, prepare us to receive them. Bring us back to the point where we were disobedient." You know where you lost the line of your development. Something He told you to do, and you have not done it, though the years have rolled away. Something He told you to cease doing, and you are still doing it. Some call of truth disobeyed. Back to it, my brother, this morning, back to the point of your disobedience, and there obey.

John 19:30. The Accomplished Mystery.

John 19:30.

The Accomplished Mystery.

It is finished.

John 19:30

When I approach the Cross of our Lord I feel increasingly that I am beaten, baffled; its mystery is so vast, so wonderful that it is impossible to understand it. With that increased consciousness of its mystery there grows in the heart an increased sense of its necessity, its perfection, and its glory.

"It is finished," was the last but one of the sayings which Jesus uttered on the Cross. The previous saying, "I thirst," was supremely the word of His physical agony, the only such word that escaped Him through all the period of His travail. The next and last word was pre-eminently one of rest and triumph and quietness, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

John does not record for us the fact of the three hours' darkness, and consequently he omits the central cry of the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." In view of the purpose and motive of John's narrative, this is perfectly natural; but for our understanding of these words, "It is finished," we must include the fact of that darkness and the cry that escaped Jesus therein, for it was, indeed, the central word, the word of the darkness, the word of the mystery.

Let us, then, recall the sequence of the seven words. Our Lord uttered three before the noonday darkness: the first, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; the second, to the thief, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"; the third, with infinite tenderness to His mother, "Woman, behold, thy son," and to John, "Behold, thy mother." Then from noon until three o'clock darkness covered the land. At the close of that period of darkness that central cry passed the lips of the Son of God, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Beyond the darkness three other words passed His lips: "I thirst"; "It is finished"; "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Let us observe carefully, even if rapidly, the relation of the last four of these words. In the darkness, toward its close, Jesus said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That is translation. In the saying, our Lord fell into His mother speech, crying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" John tells us what followed: "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, said, I thirst." They immediately brought the sponge or hyssop dipped in vinegar and put it to His lips, which, having received, He said, "It is finished." Then He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.

Thus our text is the record of an exclamation. In the Greek New Testament there is but one word, "finished!" In that exclamation, Jesus openly declared what John tells us He knew before He said, "I thirst."

"Finished" is an arresting word. It means completed, not merely ended, not merely done, but perfectly done, rounded out, absolutely and actually accomplished. Jesus knew, not merely that He was at the end of the process, but that the process was perfect in its operation, its purpose absolutely achieved.

Something was completed. What was it? Let us endeavor to consider that which was then completed, first in itself, and then in its bearings on the whole work of our Lord, and on the experience of human souls.

First, then, the fact in itself. Here, indeed, we must proceed with all reverence and all caution, conscious from the first that the deepest and profoundest meaning must remain a mystery, eluding the grasp of the intellect, but not eluding the confidence of the heart. It is well to remember that no man is made a Christian by intellectual belief. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. While the mystery of the Cross will elude the wisest of us to the end of time, souls, instructed so far as earthly wisdom is concerned, will grasp with the heart the inner message of the Cross, and find life.

What, then, we inquire, was completed when Jesus said, "It is finished"? First, it is evident that what was completed was the work which had been Jesus' set purpose in all His journeyings toward the Cross. That was completed for which He went to the Cross. That was completed which He had declared, against the opinion of His dearest friends, could be completed only by the Cross. For at least three months Jesus' face had been resolutely set toward Jerusalem. Over and over again, He had tried to tell His disciples about His coming sorrows and triumphs, and always they had shrunk from the Cross. It is perfectly evident that what Jesus now declared to be completed was that which He had declared He must go to the Cross to do; that which He could not do in any other way than by going to the Cross.

Again, it is quite evident that when He said, "It is finished," He was referring to the one thing which He was authorized to do in order to complete every part of His doing, and so to fulfil the Divine purpose of His coming. I use the word "authorized" with all carefulness, for in this gospel of John we have the record of the fact that Jesus had declared in the hearing of the people in Jerusalem, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from My Father." He persistently spoke of Himself as the Sent of God for a certain purpose. He declared that He was authorized by God to do one specific work; and so definitely was it in the mind of the Lord, that it was the will of God that the work should be done, that in the discourse already referred to He added, "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again.... I lay down My life for the sheep." It is evident that He was referring to the one thing which He was authorized to do, and the one thing which constituted the perpetual passion of His life. Underneath all His teaching, underneath all His miracles, this one thing was ever present to His mind. He referred to it, not clearly, not definitely, but quite certainly, in the early days of His ministry. Reading things which He said in the light of subsequent events, we see how perpetually it was with Him.

When the disciples came back and found Him talking to the Samaritan woman, and they thought He would be hungry and offered Him food, He said this strangely mystic and wonderful thing to them, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." Later on in the

same connection He referred to "the works which the Father hath given Me to accomplish." At last, in the quiet seclusion and solemnity of the intercessory prayer, He declared to His Father this same passion for the accomplishment and finishing of the work that had been given Him to do. What was this work? The answer is found in the words already recited. It was the work of laying down His life, of dying.

Now we approach both the mystery and the light. Jesus said, "This commandment received I from My Father"—that I lay down My life. "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again." Now on the Cross, He said, "It is finished!" But physically He was not dead. How, then, could the reference have been to His death? Here let me pause to refer to at least an interesting, and, as I believe, a most suggestive and significant fact. None of the evangelists calls Jesus' physical dissolution His death, not one of them speaks of that ultimate fact or act as death. Matthew says, "He yielded up His spirit"; Mark, "Jesus gave up the ghost"; Luke, "He gave up the spirit"; John, "He gave up His spirit." The death of Christ by which men are saved, the laying down of His life, out of which comes the possibility of our renewed life, was finished before the physical death occurred. That dying whereby we live, that dying or laying down of life in which Christ made possible the taking of it again for its communication, was finished before the physical dying. That dying was experienced when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? That is the experience and the inquiry of the human soul in its lost condition. Whatever hell may be, or wherever hell may be, that is hell—the soul conscious of its lack of God. There are men and women living today, living without God and without hope in the world, who are not yet conscious of the loss, the ultimate unutterable agony of missing God and knowing that He is absent. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Let us pass, so far as we reverently may, into the state of mind that made that question possible. It was a quotation from one of those old Hebrew psalms, which pulsate and throb with the agony of the human soul. In the book of Psalms the human soul sobs or sings itself out in its agony or its joy. In the psalm from which the word is taken, a pilgrim of the night woke to find himself without God, and he cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Word of God incarnate, the One Who was also the incarnation of ideal humanity in all its essential, universal values, entered voluntarily and vicariously into that experience, in its profundity and fulness. The language of the singer of long ago became the language of this One on His Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Let us place beside that sigh of the dying One another psalm quotation: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." That is a far more pregnant saying than appears on the surface. The word "pains" might be rendered distress. Sheol was the underworld of departed spirits. The root of the word "sheol" is to request, to demand; sheol is the land of darkness, where perpetual demands are made and never answered. That is the distress of sheol, of death, not physical death, but the death of the spirit, the separation of the spirit from God, the inquiry, the request, the demand, the agony of the insatiable longing which has no answer! That is the experience expressed in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" There we stand aside. We have come only to the confines of the great sea of sorrow; its waters fill the soul with fear, surging with the horror of the ultimate night. Who shall follow the goings or interpret their sighings of those condemned to this endless night? Presently Jesus said, "I thirst." When did He say it? When He knew that all things were accomplished. Then He said, "It is finished."

We follow Him to the Cross and stand before it in the darkness until He says, "It is finished." After that He died physically, and the physical death of Jesus bore the same relation to the spiritual death by which He redeems as His physical birth bore to the essential fact of His being. He emptied Himself before He was born in time; He died in all spiritual significance before He died in time. But the birth in time was necessary, that we might have some grasp on the eternal mystery. So also the physical death was necessary, that we might have some grasp on the spiritual mystery. These spiritual mysteries are wholly within Deity; it is the passion of God, whereby humanity is redeemed.

Our certainty, as we hear this word of Christ, is that however dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere He found His sheep that were lost, the darkness passed, and the light dawned; however deep was the pit out of which He must dig and lift the souls of men, He fathomed its black profundity, and emerged victorious over sin and death; for He Himself did say, ere He gave up His spirit, that the work was accomplished, that the work was done.

So, passing from the fact itself, let us attempt to see something of the fact in its bearing on the whole of Jesus' work and on human experience.

This whole of His work is so great and so vast that we must find some method of reducing it to simple terms in what must necessarily be a brief meditation. Therefore I shall employ the threefold official designation of the Lord with which we are familiar. I think of Him as Priest, as Prophet, and as King. I think of Him as Priest mediating between God and men. I think of Him as Prophet revealing to men the truth concerning God. I think of Him as King establishing the broad, beneficent Kingdom of God over men. I think of Him as Priest dealing with sin in its relation to the human soul. I think of Him as Prophet dealing with sin in its relation to the knowledge of God. I think of Him as King dealing with sin in its relation to the rule of God. He came to be a Priest. Sin had alienated man from God, divided man from God, shut him off from the very life of God; consequently, sin had destroyed humanity. The Priest must deal with that sin if He is to be a true Mediator. This Christ did by His death. We cannot go beyond the word of Scripture, "Who Himself bear our sins." We may employ figures in attempting to illustrate it, but they all break down. We may endeavor to interpret the Cross from the ethical viewpoint, and there will always be a measure of truth in the interpretation, but the infinite mystery will elude us. If we are inclined to ask, How can this One bear the sin of the race? we must remember that we must not separate between that One on Whom we look and the God He is, "For in Him dwelleth all the pleroma of the Godhead corporeally." The uttermost reaches of that Personality include all the facts of Deity. He bore sin in His own body on the tree, and so He canceled sin; and by this means He restores man to God. His work as Priest could be completed only by that Cross, with its infinite and unfathomable mystery.

In His work as Prophet Christ dealt with sin in relation to the knowledge of God. Why is it that men are against God? It is certain that they are against Him. There would have been no war if men had not been against God. That is a broad, brutal illustration that we cannot escape. The human heart is naturally against God. Why? Because men do not know God. There is blindness and consequent ignorance of God. This Prophet of the Most High, this Man Whose work it was to speak to men and to humanity, and to all ages the supreme truth about God, could not say the final thing except by the way of the Cross. It was by the Cross that He said the last thing

concerning God. He was the Word of God, the Word of God incarnate; but where and when did the Word incarnate utter the deepest truth? In the Logos of the Cross, the Word of the Cross, by the truth concerning God there uttered. By that unveiling He gave to men knowledge of God. All true knowledge of God must begin in the Cross, and be conditioned by the Cross. Men say that they find God in nature! They cannot! No man ever yet found God in nature. Men have sought the truth in nature, and they have found evidences of a "double-faced somewhat," a strange union of intelligence and power, and that is all that men can find of God in nature. To know God we must begin with the Cross. "The Son Who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared Him"—hath given an exegesis of Him, to be quite literal in our translation. We never find the bosom of the Father in nature, Reverently, but without hesitation, I say that we never find the bosom of the Father ultimately even in the Son until we hear Him speaking by the way of the Cross. He completed the work of uttering His prophetic word concerning God which is to condition all human knowledge of God by the Cross.

Once again, and last, in this connection, Christ's work was the work of the King. Here it was necessary that He should deal with sin in relation to the rule of God. Because of his ignorance of God, man is hostile to the government of God, and will not yield to God's control. By this death, when its mediating quality has restored the soul to knowledge of God, all sense of hostility passes out of the human heart, and the human soul, having come to God through the Cross, then dares to lift itself up and look into God's face, and say,

O God, of good the unfathomed sea,

Who would not give himself to Thee?

This yielding to God's Kingship in love of Him makes possible the establishment of His Kingdom in the heart, and contributes to the final establishment of the Kingdom for the world. This King cannot establish the Kingdom save by the Cross. When Christ said, "It is finished," He spoke of the central mystery of His mission, and included therein His work as Priest, as Prophet, and as King.

What bearing, then, has this fact on human experience? I need do no more than attempt to name in the simplest way the effect produced by this fact in the human soul. First, sin is overcome as pollution, as paralysis, and as penalty. I name penalty last because it seems to me that forgiveness of sins, insofar as it means escape from the penalty for sin, is a poor and paltry thing if there is nothing more in it than that. I believe that when the human soul wakes up to know its own vice, its own unutterable pollution, it would prefer hell to escape from hell with pollution still clinging to it. The first thing is that God overcomes the pollution and poison of sin, that principle in the life which makes the fever rise and masters all capacity. He overcomes the paralysis of sin so that the man who said, I cannot overcome this evil thing, stands with his foot on it, master of it. Here we are getting into the realm where there is very little mystery except as to the method. These are the credentials of our religion: living men emancipated from the power of sin and standing erect who once were in its awful grasp and grip. Sin is overcome by way of the Cross.

The next thing is most marvelous! Shame is transmuted by the Cross. In enduring that Cross Jesus despised the shame, and even the shame of sin and the past becomes the occasion for glorying in the Lord, Who cancels its pollution, paralysis, and power.

Finally, by the Cross sorrow is transfigured. Sorrow becomes the very way of life, the very method of perfecting, the very furnace of purifying. The hour is electric with problems and perplexities. Out of these overwhelming sorrows something finer is yet to come. I try to look out on the world sorrows of today from the height of the green hill. That is the central sorrow, that is the central death. That is at the heart of all our agonies and pains. Because we trust there, we trust everywhere; and we know by that sacred token that it is by sorrow that life is to be perfected and fulfilled at last.

Some troubled heart burdened with sin is saying, What, then, shall I do to inherit eternal life? What, then, shall I do to be saved if the inner purpose which took Jesus to the Cross was that of saving? I will answer that question by repeating a simple hymn of a generation ago:

Nothing either great or small—

Nothing, sinner, no;

Jesus did it, did it all

Long, long ago.

When He from His lofty throne

Stooped to do and die,

Everything was fully done:

Hearken to His cry—

It is finished! Yes, indeed,

Finished every jot;

Sinner, this is all you need—

Tell me, is it not?

Weary, working, burdened one,

Wherefore toil you so?

Cease your doing, all was done

Long, long ago.

Till to Jesu's work you cling

By a simple faith,

"Doing" is a deadly thing,

Doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly doing down,

Down at Jesu's feet;

Stand in Him, in Him alone,

Gloriously complete.

Or let me recite other words yet more familiar, and let the inquiring soul use them meaningly, for as the soul uses them all the infinite values of the Cross are appropriated:

Just as I am, without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,

O Lamb of God, I come.

John 20:28. Was Thomas Mistaken?.

John 20:28.

Was Thomas Mistaken?.

Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.

John 20:28

In the Biblical order this is the eighth day after Easter, and consequently, the anniversary of the day on which Thomas uttered his great confession; and our Lord, His final beatitude. The confession of Thomas was the greatest of the confessions which fell from the lips of disciples of Jesus during the period of His presence among them in manifest and bodily form. The final beatitude of Jesus, the beatitude meant not for Thomas, not for the other apostles, but for us who name His name, and, believing thereinto, have received that gift of abounding life which comes in answer to such faith.

This confession of Thomas was without ambiguity in its terms. The evangelist was, moreover, most careful to state that the words were not in the nature of a declaration which might have been addressed to the Almighty Father, but that they were addressed to the Lord Himself. Notice the carefulness of the words, "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

Was Thomas mistaken? That is a serious question; and upon our answer to it must depend our intellectual, emotional and volitional attitude toward Christ Himself. If Thomas was mistaken, then our attitude toward Christ cannot be that of Thomas. If Thomas was right our attitude must be that of his great confession.

Let us first consider the confession of Thomas as to its nature and as to its reason; and, secondly, inquire the bearing of this confession upon our attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

I need hardly tarry above a few moments with the first suggested matter—that, namely, of the nature of the confession. As I have already said, it was a confession without ambiguity, perfectly clear and simple, from which there can be no possible escape. Thomas, looking into the face of his Lord, said to Him, "My Lord and my God." "My Lord," which was a confession of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus, and therefore a confession of absolute submission to Him. Yet, had there been no other word spoken, it would not have arrested our attention, or perhaps demanded so serious consideration. The disciples had called Him Lord so often; and, indeed, it may be said that the title as it was then used was not as significant as I have indicated in my present definition of its meaning. The title "Lord" as used at the time had in some cases very little more significance than the title "Sir" as we use it in addressing men today. As it fell from the lips of this man, however, I think I am warranted in saying it came with full and rich and spacious meaning. I do not think for a moment that you will differ with me when I say that Thomas, saying to Christ upon that occasion "My Lord," did in that word recognize the sovereignty of Christ over his own life, and did by that word yield himself in willing submission to that sovereignty.

The second word of the great confession is even more arresting, and, indeed, it is by the second that I interpret the value of the first. Not only "My Lord," not only the One Who is sovereign over my life and to Whom I am prepared to render whole-hearted submission, but "My God." The word stands without exception for absolute Deity; and therefore indicated, on the part of the man who employed it, that he bowed before the One so addressed not only in submission but in worship. "My Lord," the confession of sovereignty and of submission; "My God," the confession of Deity and of worship.

Let us inquire into the reason why Thomas made the confession. Let us first of all look at the man. We did not see very much of him in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark and Luke all name him, simply placing him among the number of the first twelve disciples who subsequently became apostles. Luke also tells us that he was with the twelve in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. These are the only references which the evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke make to him. It was reserved for John to give us pictures of him; and these are few, but they are full. We see him first in the eleventh chapter on the occasion when the Lord was turning His face toward Jerusalem, with the intention of bringing back Lazarus out from among the dead. It was Thomas who said in heroic despair, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." The next picture of him is in the upper room, when the Lord was delivering His final discourses, which we call the paschal discourse. Thomas was the second to interrupt the conversation. Christ was talking about His own going away, and it was Peter who first interrupted Him. As our Lord answered Peter, He said, "Whither I go, ye know the way." Thomas, who would never pretend to believe anything of which he was not sure, said: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; how know we the way?" Jesus answered Him: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me." Then Philip interrupted: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The answer came tenderly and quickly: "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Thomas was listening. The next time we see Thomas is in this chapter twenty. Once again and only once again. He was one of the seven who stood on the shores of the lake when Jesus restored Peter to service. These are all the pictures we have of the man, but they are certainly enough to enable us to say two things concerning him. He was a man at once cautious and courageous. We speak of Thomas as a sceptic. Yes, but let the word be redeemed from our abuse of it. He was a sceptic. He was a man who was compelled to investigate, to inquire, a man who "would not make his judgment blind," a man who would "face the spectres of the mind," and would make no confession of faith, of hope, of confidence, unless it were a confession absolutely honest, true to the profoundest convictions of his mind. He was cautious; he was courageous. This is the man from whose lips the greatest confession fell that was ever uttered in the listening ear of Jesus during the time He was present among His disciples in bodily manifestation.

The confession was the result of a triumph over difficulty. Wherein lay his difficulty? He knew perfectly well that his Lord was dead, dead as both Thomas and all the disciples expected He would be if He persisted, in spite of all their warnings, in going up to Jerusalem. I believe that Thomas had either watched the crucifixion from a distance, or else that he had taken one last agonized look at the dead body of the Lord. I think when the disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, in his answer there is a revelation, not of hard, cynical scepticism, but of a broken heart: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." The impression of the wounds was upon the spirit

of the man. Perchance that was why he was not present on that Easter morning when the Lord was manifested. No hint is given as to the reason of the absence; only the fact is chronicled.

Thomas said, "Unless I see what you saw, I will not believe." He did not ask for something other than they had received. He did not ask for some special revelation, denied to the rest. He asked for the same proof, and for that alone. Jesus was dead; Thomas saw the wounds, and knew that He was dead. Eight days passed away. Thomas was now in the upper room with the rest. Suddenly Christ stood in the midst. Now what were the evidences that produced this confession? First, the things he saw. He saw Jesus, and he knew perfectly that it was the very Lord and Master he had seen nailed to the Cross, and Whose wounds had been apparent to him. There He stood, wounded, dead, alive with the very scars displayed. He was alive out of death. Then Thomas believed.

What did he believe? Not that Jesus was alive. Do not let us read these stories carelessly, or we miss our way in the very heart of the confession. When Jesus said to Him, "Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed," He did not mean he believed He was alive; that required no exercise of faith. The fact that Jesus Who had been dead was alive was demonstrated by sight. Then he believed. What did he believe? Not that Jesus was alive. That, he saw and knew. Of that, vision was proof. It is not true, even though we still repeat it, that seeing is believing. "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." There are two separate statements; seeing first, believing followed. Seeing that He was the living Christ, what did he believe? He believed what he confessed, "My Lord, and my God." He believed that the One Whom he had seen die, and known dead, but Whom he now saw risen and alive, was the Lord, that He was God.

So far I am not arguing as to whether he was justified in his belief. I am only trying to show the process by which he came to that belief. Thomas—cautious, courageous—had seen his Master die, had seen His wounding; knew He was dead. Then he saw Him alive, confronting him; and as a result he believed, first, that the risen One was his Lord, and, secondly, that He was his God.

The inquiry of supreme importance is this: Was that conclusion justified? Though I weary you with repetition of the circumstances, I want us to get back into the naturalness of the scene. Thomas saw Him dying, saw Him dead, saw the gaping wounds. Was he justified in saying "My Lord, and my God"? Was that conclusion justified upon the basis of that evidence? That is the heart of the inquiry.

If the conclusion that Jesus was God was based merely upon the fact of resurrection, I declare it was not justified. The resurrection did not demonstrate Deity. The Hebrew Scriptures told of the actual raising of certain men from the dead. This man Thomas had seen three dead ones come to life during the ministry of Jesus. He had seen the child of Jairus after resurrection. He had seen the son of the widow of Nain, lying dead upon the bier, carried out to burial, raised to life. The very last sign of the Lord had been that of the raising of Lazarus, and he did not say, "My God," because Lazarus was alive from the dead. If the confession was merely the result of the resurrection, then I declare it was not justified, that the fact that Christ was risen from among the dead is not enough upon which to base a doctrine of His Deity; but if he believed on the basis of that resurrection as the sequence of all that had preceded it, then I claim that he was justified.

In that hour when Thomas became convinced that the One he had seen dead was alive from among the dead, there came back again to him with gathered force, focused into one clear, bright light, all the facts in the life and ministry of Jesus which had preceded that resurrection. All the way from Caesarea Philippi to Calvary, Jesus had told Thomas and the rest He was going to die and rise again, but they had never believed Him. Now Thomas looked at Him and saw Him alive: He had said He would come back from the dead so repeatedly that you cannot find me a single instance when Jesus foretold His coming Cross, that He did not also predict His resurrection. No one had believed Him. I do not mean to suggest that their unbelief was malicious or unkind, or that they questioned His sincerity, but they thought He was mistaken. Had they believed what He told them, that He would rise again, they would not have been scattered at the crucifixion, or they would have gathered back again into Joseph's garden, waiting to see if He would come; but they never believed. Thomas, now looking into His face, remembered all that He had said as He stood confronting Him. In that moment all the predictions of Jesus were fulfilled by His standing there alive, and He was vindicated in those claims He had made. In that, His resurrection was differentiated from that of all others; it was part of a fore-ordained purpose.

Yet, more than that contributed to produce the conviction which made Thomas add "My God." Let me rapidly group what Thomas had seen before the Resurrection. I am simply trying to interpret by looking through the lattice windows of the pictures already referred to. What had Thomas seen in Jesus? First of all, he had undoubtedly been captured by the charm of His personality. Then he had been impressed with the splendor of His ideals. Still later, he had been amazed at the foolhardiness of His heroism. I am trying to speak out of Thomas's experience. There had entered into the mind of the Master the conviction that He was bound to go to Jerusalem, when every sane man knew perfectly well that His enemies were waiting to kill Him; and He Himself knew it, yet with splendid heroism but awful foolhardiness He would go. That is what Thomas felt. What next? Thomas had seen an exhibition of His power more wonderful than he had ever seen before, when He called Lazarus out of the grave. Then what? Arrived at Jerusalem, Thomas had been impressed by the mysticism of His teaching in those paschal discourses in which He talked so strangely. We really do need to get back into the atmosphere to understand how these men must have felt as He uttered His last words to them. We read them over and over again in the light of the Spirit's interpretation until their great teaching flames and flashes in eternal value; but these men did not understand these things as we understand them. They had heard Him say, I am going away, and where I am going you can come. None of you ask Me where I am going; I am going to the Father, and if I go, I will come again to you. I came from the Father. I have been in the earth. I am going again to the Father. Put yourself in the place of Thomas, and listen to such words; they must have sounded mystical, mysterious, the words of a Dreamer, with no logical sequence or connection. When He said, "Where I am going you know the way," Thomas could bear it no longer, and he blurted out: "We do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?" Finally there had been the tragedy of the Cross, the horror of it, the shame of it, the brutality of it, the devilishness of it!

All these things were in the past, separated from each other, with no relation to each other, separated because seeming to contradict each other. The irresistible charm of His personality, the splendor of His great ideals for humanity, the apparent foolhardiness of heroism that marched straight toward murder; the wonderful power that tarried on the march to bring back out of death a

man, while He Himself was going straight into death; the strange mysticism of His teaching about going to the Father when they knew there were those in the city that would murder Him; and the end of it all when they arrested Him, and swore His dear life away, nailed His kind hands to the Cross, plunged a spear into His side. Thomas turned away, and there was no Easter Sunday for him. Do you wonder at it?

He was there the next Sunday, the next first day of the week, and there stood his Master, the same; the same charm of personality, the same light flashing from His eye, undimmed even though He had been through death; His heroism vindicated, for He had been to death and had mastered it; the wonder of His power greater than ever, for He had not been raised by another—He had come back Himself; more mystical than ever, for no door had opened to admit Him; and, finally, the Cross of shame was seen shining in the light of resurrection. In that moment Thomas said: "It is my Lord; it is my God!" The isolated, separated incidents merged into a great whole and captured the man, so that he bent in worship. I, perhaps, should not have had clarity of vision enough to come so quickly to conclusion, but I must eventually have made the same confession had I had such experience of this One, infinitely more than man, "My Lord, and my God."

Take any one of those impressions alone, and you can nearly account for it, but never quite. Take them all and merge them in the mystery of resurrection, and you cannot account for them. Yes, we have known people with great charm of personality. We have known people with great ideals. We have seen foolhardiness in heroism, but there we must halt. We have not seen men raise the dead, although we may be able nearly to account for that. We have heard great mystic words from others. That day, in the upper room, the whole of these impressions came back surging upon Thomas, light meeting light, tone merging into tone, until harmony from the heart of the universe swept through him, and he said, not "My Lord" alone, but also "My God."

When he made the great confession, Jesus looked at him and said: "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." He did not deny its declaration; He did not refuse its implication; He did not say to Thomas, "This is a mistake."

Can we believe that Jesus is Lord and God? Can we say of Him "My Lord, and my God"? We have not seen; can we believe? What evidence have we? John writes: "Many other signs, therefore, did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe." John said: "I have grouped together here words and works of this self-same One, crowning all my story with this story of the resurrection; I have put before you in the writings the things that Thomas had before him, that though you have not seen Him you may also believe." All the evidences Thomas had we have in these writings. What is this Gospel of John—a biography of Jesus? Certainly not. Some of you have often heard me say it; forgive me if I repeat it. Arrange this book chronologically, and you have not the happenings of twenty days. It is a document of signs, words uttered and works done, and the whole of them interpreted finally by the resurrection. In the presence of this writing, if Thomas was justified in saying "My Lord, and my God," I am also justified in saying it.

Yes, but you say: "Are you sure of the writing? Are you sure it is a true story?" You must let me answer that after my own fashion. If it be not true, I still earnestly desire to find the men who invented it. There is nothing in literature like it, no dream like it in all your dreamings, oh masters

mine!

But we have more than the writings; we have the witnesses. We have the witness of those who have had life in His name. John said, "These are written that ye may believe." Can you find any people who have read the writings, and have believed what Thomas believed, and who as the result have had life in His name? The question is an absurd one. That is the history of nineteen centuries of Christian effort; the writings, men believing, men receiving life, men sealing the accuracy of the writings by the witness of their own victories won. Life, what kind of life? Life that masters sin, that realizes holiness, that is growingly conformed to the image and likeness of God. These are the victories of the writings through nineteen centuries. I need not go back to apostolic times. All this host, not one or two, not occasional individuals, but tens, twenties, hundreds, thousands, millions who have believed in the Christ of these writings and have received life; and I know they have received life not because they say so, but because I have seen it working dynamically in them until the evil things that mastered them have dropped off like leaves from a tree smitten by the lightning of God, and fresh, beautiful things have been manifested in their lives. The witnesses to the accuracy of the writings compel me to say: "Seeing that I have in the writings all that Thomas had, and I have in the witnesses those who seal the writings, then also in the presence of this Christ who has been winning these victories, the Christ of these writings, I must say, and I can no other, so help me God, He is my Lord and my God."

What is faith? Mark Rutherford says: "Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise. It is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something which enables us to act upon it, the susceptibility to all the strength there is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can precisely define it.... All we can say about it is that it comes by the grace of God, and that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by it." Thomas was convinced of truth when he saw the risen Christ. That was not faith or belief. He felt the whole fact of the truth and its appeal, and he answered it when he said, "My Lord, and my God." That was belief. I may or may not be able by my argument concerning the writings or the witnesses to bring you into intellectual conviction of the truth; but if I do it is quite useless. It is not by conviction that man receives this life. It is by answer to it, by uttering that voluntary confession.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The experience growing out of faith is an experience of blessedness, and it seals the act of faith which at the beginning is a venture in response to conviction; and no man has ever made that act of faith in the presence of this Lord Christ, but that there has been such answering experience.

Our decision as to whether Thomas was right or wrong will make a very great difference. Supposing Thomas was wrong, what then? Supposing it was a mistake, that this Jesus risen from among the dead was not God, absolute God, very God, what then? On highest levels let me state it. Our intellectual conception of Christ is one which makes trust impossible. I may be able to have confidence in His ideal and in His endeavor, I may admire it and even seek to imitate it; but trust him—no. No man of my own nature can command my perfect trust. I cannot trust Him. Why not? He is as finite as I am. He cannot see any further beyond the horizon than I can see, or if He can see further than I can, there is yet more beyond His seeing, and I must have a guide who can lead me there. I cannot trust Him if He be only man.

Our emotional attitude must be changed. If Thomas was wrong, our emotional attitude toward Him is one of sympathy and nothing more. I can sympathize with His great ideals, I can wish He had been able to establish that Kingdom that men thought He was going to establish. I can sympathize with the tragedy of His death, and say He is Brother to all suffering souls who have walked such ways of darkness. I can enter into sympathy with Him, but that is all.

If He be not very God, my volitional relation to Him is immediately changed, and I speak on the highest level only. What is my volitional attitude to Christ if Thomas was wrong? It is one of friendship, which takes His advice, but is able to better it, friendship which gives as well as takes advice. If He was not very God, then indeed He was a child of His own age, and today we know infinitely more than He did. I catch gleams of truth, but I can better them from later teachers. That is the consistent attitude, if Thomas was wrong.

If Thomas was right, then I worship. Then, though I say I love Him, I am almost afraid to sing it glibly, for my love is reverent, adoring love, which, while I touch the warm flesh of His condescending humanity, is conscious of the splendors of Deity; not the love of friendship, which takes and betters advice, but the love of worship which when He speaks asks no question; when He seals truth concerning my own life, concerning God or the Holy Scriptures, know that truth is final. That is my Christ. I do most definitely and solemnly affirm that the confession of Thomas is my confession, "My Lord, and my God."

We must understand that those two attitudes, both of them honest, cannot merge, cannot mix, cannot walk together. They must in honesty stand apart, for if the thing I believe of this Christ is true, then those who rob Him—for me, at least—are degrading Him. Whereas I may respect them, I cannot work with them. If the thing they say is true, then I am an idolator, for I am worshipping a man.

The question is a supreme question, and it is one we are bound to ask, and we are compelled to answer; and upon our answer must depend the whole of our attitude both toward the Christian religion and all those who bear His name. The hour is an hour in which loyalty demands that if we believe Him to be very God, we reaffirm the truth with lip and life.

John 21:1. Manifestations Of The Risen Lord.

John 21:1.

Manifestations Of The Risen Lord.

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and He manifested Himself on this wise.

John 21:1

Our subject is the whole of the twenty-first chapter of John in the light of this first verse. Whatever there is in the story is qualified by this opening statement, and especially by the word which is twice repeated in the course thereof, a word which is well rendered in the Revised Version, "manifested." The literal meaning of the word is "to shine forth." In this particular verse, moreover, the verb is in the active voice, thus showing that John considered that it was the intention of the Lord to reveal Himself in some special way. Taking this, then, as the keynote, we find the viewpoint for our meditation.

The story is another of the Post Resurrection stories. It would seem to have been added after the conclusion of the narrative in its more systematic form. The verse with which chapter 20 ends formed a natural ending to the scheme of the Gospel. The probability is that the Gospel did end there, and that at some later period, perchance for some very special reason, John added this chapter. I am not going to argue about the writer. I take it for granted that John wrote it. I think the internal evidences are absolutely conclusive that whosoever wrote the first part of the Gospel wrote this also.

In very many ways this chapter is peculiarly beautiful, and its different parts often have been considered in detail. I now propose a quiet meditation while we attempt to see the Lord as in the fresh light of early morning, He is manifested in the whole movement by the sea of Tiberias. In order to do this, we will first consider the succeeding incidents that make up the whole movement, and then notice some facts which here have special manifestation and outshining.

First, then, let us look at the incidents. There are three. First, the Lord is seen directing fishermen in their fishing, then providing breakfast for the toilers, and, finally, dealing with Peter—here, as always, the representative disciple—on the future.

As I thus merely name the three incidents, there is almost a shock of surprise in the mind. Directing fishermen about their fishing, preparing breakfast, and uttering high and wonderful words concerning a spiritual campaign! It seems as though, after mentioning the first two incidents, we have to readjust ourselves to speak of the third. That sense of incongruity is our fault, our failure, and an immediate revelation of one of the marvels and glories of the story. Here our Lord is seen relating these things to each other: a common calling—fishing, a very persistent necessity—breakfast, and some of the most wonderful things He ever said about the whole campaign of His Church. The three follow naturally and regularly and beautifully. There is no real

break in the story. The break comes in our mind, because we think we must put some gap between breakfast and spiritual work, that we must put some great gulf between fishing on Saturday and worshipping on Sunday. So we are face to face with one of the values of the story at the very beginning, to which we shall have to come back presently.

Let us, however, look at the Lord. First, we see Him standing on the beach directing fishermen in their fishing. Now, whether these men ought to have been fishing does not matter. I know there are different opinions as to whether Peter, on this occasion, when he said, "I go a fishing," was warranted in doing so. I am very willing to give my personal opinion for what it is worth, and then it can be dismissed. I think he was wrong. Our Lord distinctly told the disciples to wait until they were endued with power from on high. But this must be added: whatever the Lord felt about their going, He did not rebuke them.

These men knew the business of fishing, at least it is certain that three of them did. Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, were fishermen. They knew the Sea of Tiberias well, just when it was likely that the fish would be best taken, where the currents ran, what effect the driving wind would have on the waters, how to cast the net, how to be silent, and how to act. They were fishermen, and yet that night they had failed. I do not say that they were to blame. It was fisherman's luck. They had taken no fish; there was no harvest of the sea that night. There, on the beach, in the gleam of the morning, stood a stranger. They did not know Him. They were only about a hundred yards from the shore at the time. Then Jesus' Voice came across the waters: "Children, have ye aught to eat?" The answer came back clear and sharp, and, perhaps, with a slight tone of disappointment, "No." "Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find."

Now, whether this was miraculous or not does not matter. Whether our Lord here may have been exercising His sovereignty over all nature; or whether He was merely observing the sea and saw the shoal of fish there does not signify anything. The great value of the story is that He was interested in the men fishing, He directed their operations, and He gave them success. The most obvious thing here is the most important. He Who did this was the Risen Lord of Life and Glory. He was interested in the fisher folk while they were fishing, and directed them in the hour of their failure, so that they became successful.

In the next incident Jesus is seen providing breakfast for the toilers. When these men found their way to land, they saw a fire of coals there. I would like to use a more literal translation, They saw a fire of coals laid. In that word laid there is the simple significance that the fire had been carefully prepared; it was built, it was laid. Moreover, fish was laid thereon, and bread was provided.

Now, again, whether in all this there was anything supernatural or miraculous, to use our very imperfect words, I care nothing. Here is the fact. Jesus is seen on the seashore building a fire and preparing food for hungry fishermen. The Risen Lord of Life and Glory, Whose persistent mission had been to ransom a race and establish the Kingdom of God is seen on the seashore, while men are absent fishing. What is He doing? Getting breakfast ready for them! One man on that boat knew Him, and said to his companion, "It is the Lord." Immediately that splendid man, that impulsive man, the friend, girt his outer garment about him and flung himself into the sea and reached the shore. At last they all arrived. None of them durst ask this stranger who He was. They were afraid. Then Jesus came nearer and invited them to sit down and eat, and waited on them. That is the second picture. Jesus was manifesting Himself; He was shining forth on these men. A

mystic glory had enveloped His Person in consequence of His Resurrection which seemed apt to remove them from Him and Him from them. Here He was seen understanding their hunger, sympathizing with their necessity, serving; and in the Hands that built the fire and placed the fish thereon were wound prints! It is a picture of the world's Redeemer getting breakfast ready for cold, tired fishermen.

There is yet another scene, equally familiar and equally wonderful. Finally, Jesus is seen here dealing with Peter on the future—dealing with him, as I have already hinted and will now again remark, as a representative man. All the way through Peter is the representative disciple; he is more intensely human than is any other man; he is a man in whom all the elemental qualities of humanity are discovered—intellectual, emotional, and volitional. When the breakfast was ended, Jesus began to deal with this man, and to challenge him three times in order to utter to him a threefold commission, which covers the whole of the Church's campaign to the end of the Age. It is not sufficient only to declare what has been declared, that at this point our Lord handed to Peter the Crozier—that is, the Staff of Office of the Pastor of the flock when the flock is folded. In other words, He was not thinking only of the Church when He spoke of "My sheep" and "My lambs." He was thinking of the race.

Now, whereas I am perfectly sure there is a close connection between the threefold denial uttered in the presence of a fire the enemies of Jesus had built and this threefold confession made in the presence of a fire that Jesus had built—I do not think that our Lord was especially concerned with that matter. He had had a private interview with Peter before this, since His Resurrection, in which the whole business of Peter's deflection had been once and forever settled. Our Lord does not go back on such settlements. That is the mistake we too often make. When He forgives He blots out. It was in view of a larger commission that a threefold confession was necessary, because of the threefold character of the work it included.

What is the first thing our Lord wants to say to the Church through Peter? "Feed My lambs." In the view of Christ all the lambs are already included in the flock, and the business of the Church is to feed them. The second phase of the great commission is, "Shepherd My sheep," that is, gather them, guard them, guide them. When speaking of His own work, Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd." The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep. The Good Shepherd layeth down His life that He may take it again. The Good Shepherd entereth into conflict with the wolf, and when the wolf can be destroyed only by the Shepherd's dying, then the Shepherd dies to destroy the wolf. All that was surely in His mind when he said, "Shepherd My sheep." Finally, He said: "Feed My sheep." In these commands we have the whole commission. In order that Peter may be able to do it, in order that the Church may be able to do it, there is one supreme necessity, which is revealed in the challenge: "Lovest thou Me?"

In the next place, the Lord proceeded to deal with Peter about his personal pathway of service. He told Peter what lay ahead of him in the consummation of his earthly service:

When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.

With all reverence, if I may change the wording, this is what Jesus said to him: In the days of thy young manhood thou hast made thine own choices, and thine own decisions; even in the days of thy fellowship with Me thou hast asserted thy will, protesting against My Cross, that yoke under which I serve. But now thou must walk My way, and the culmination of that walk shall be that thou wilt, at last, suffer apparent defeat. The Cross waits for thee actually. But Follow Me.

As Peter heard Him say this he remembered that the Lord had gone to the Cross, but that the Cross had not been the end. Jesus was alive from among the dead. Peter understood there and then that if he himself must go by that restricted, pressing, agonizing way of the Cross, it was a way that led out into life and fulness of victory.

Then all the glory and the beauty of the story once again seems to switch back, almost with vulgarity, to the commonplace. When Jesus said: Follow Me, evidently He began to walk away, and Peter, literally following Him, turned round and saw John. Then he asked Jesus: What shall this man do? Will he die, too? Will he suffer? With swift suddenness Christ definitely and sharply rebuked Peter. What is that to thee? Follow thou Me. If, again without irreverence, I may translate into the language of today, this is what Jesus said: "Mind your own business! Follow thou Me!"

In this simple looking at the story, as it seems to me, there is almost all we need of help and encouragement. Yet let us pass to the second and the last line of consideration, and notice some of the facts that are revealed as we look at the manifesting of the Lord in this page of incidents.

What first impresses me as I watch Jesus is the sanctification of all life, and the cancellation of many false human terms. Let us remember Who this One is, and where He stands; that He is the Son of God and the Son of Man; that He stands on the other side of the forces of sin and sorrow and death against humanity. As I watch Him I know that all life is sanctified. I know that fishing is sanctified, and not merely as a figure of speech concerning spiritual work, but as an actual occupation for every day in the week. That would appeal to us more strongly if we were fisher folk. And yet why? We shall destroy the beauty of it if we think only of fishing boats. I will try to make the lesson superlative by saying that Jesus Christ would never have said to me, I will make you a fisher of men. He knows perfectly well that I am no fisherman. He did come to me one day, when I sat at a desk with boys around me teaching, and He said: Follow Me, and I will make you a teacher of men. I went after Him on the line of my capacity. Suppose He had not called me to this work as I sat at the desk. Then that work would have been as sacred as is this. Or suppose He has not called you to give up your office in the city, but to stay there. Then your office is a holy place, if you are a holy man. Suppose you are called on every day of the week to work at the carpenter's bench, to superintend the building of houses, to place brick on brick therein! It is all sacred. The Lord is watching you when you are fishing, watching you as you write your letters, watching as you build your house, as you do your work. Then all life becomes sacred. If we could but realize this, then we would go back to a week radiant with light and glory. Ah, yes, that particular work that is so very commonplace, hidden away in some quarter in London, up some back stairs—that work and that office would be radiant with glory if you remembered that the Lord is watching, that all life has become beautiful since you stood on the seashore and watched Jesus taking an interest in fishermen.

Yes, all life is sacred, and here I want to speak with reverence. I say this, not in pleasantry, but with real reverence. The greatest work that is done in London on any given day is that done, not in

the office, but in the home. The place of drudgery, the place of the commonplace, of monotony, is the home. You men, think of the commonplace of having to get breakfast ready in the morning. My sisters, I speak to you with reverence. You who preside over our homes and our households—and not only those of you who preside, but also those who serve therein—when tomorrow morning you are up betimes, laying a fire, preparing a breakfast, remember that the Lord of Glory built a fire and cooked a breakfast. This is a wonderful sanctification of life; this is an illuminating glory that transfigures the commonplace and makes it the special. Let us cancel the word, "secular," or at least some of our uses of it. There is nothing secular. Our Lord transmuted the commonplace, base metal, and made it the fine gold of the sanctuary of God, when He prepared that breakfast and waited upon those hungry men.

He has sanctified human life in its larger outlooks also by the fact that when He looked out with those wonderful Eyes of His, He saw humanity, and He said, "My sheep." Oh, but you say, surely He meant His people! Yes, but who are His people? We must interpret our Lord's word here by our Lord's thought and teaching elsewhere. In a superlatively revealing passage, at the dividing of the ways, when Jesus was about to send these men out for the first time, Matthew has told us how our Lord went through all the villages and cities teaching, beholding the multitudes, and was moved with compassion for them. Why? They were as sheep without a shepherd. Here, then, in the simple words, "My sheep," "My lambs," He includes all humanity—the bruised, the degraded, and the vicious.

Then on each He setteth,

His own secret sign.

That secret sign is not merely on the brow of the saints worshiping; that secret sign of a love ineffable and a passion unfathomable is on the brow of every man and woman and child. Our Lord sanctified humanity when He spoke of the multitudes as "My sheep" and "My lambs." He sanctified all human life. Let us never again think contemptuously of any human being.

Again I look, and I see Jesus manifested here, not only as the Sanctifier of all life. He is also manifested in His Sovereignty. It is seen in that first incident in the direction of the fishermen, in the fact that He told them where to fling the net. Whether His sovereign will impressed the strange harvest of the sea, or whether it did not, He knew how to direct the fishermen, and in the act I observe the easy grace and equal beauty of a Sovereign Lord and Master. I hear the strong authoritative note of His Sovereignty also in the tender terms by which He described humanity: "My sheep, My lambs!" when I put the emphasis on the possessive, "My sheep, My lambs!" Our Lord had entered into conflict with the wolf, and had destroyed the wolf; and now He claimed authority over the sheep among whom the wolf had ravened. It was the tone of His sovereignty.

I find that evidence of supreme sovereignty, moreover, in the test He imposed on those who will serve Him, revealing as it does the one and only fitness necessary for spiritual ministry: "Lovest thou Me?" Observe the superlativeness of this, for, said Jesus in effect to this man, If you love Me, then you are fit for this high and holy office to which I appoint you. He made Himself the spiritual Master of the affection, claiming that in love to Him there was transforming and transmuting power, enabling a man to do the most glorious work of the centuries.

Yet once again His sovereignty is revealed in this narrative in the fact that He taught Peter that the one and only business of His followers is to follow. Peter, there is the Via Dolorosa that thou must tread, there is the girding and the binding and the veritable cross. Follow Me! Yes, Peter, and here is this man John; but you do not need to know My arrangements for him. It is not necessary for you to know them. Follow Me! That is the Voice of supreme sovereignty.

Once again, and finally, as I look at these incidents, I see Our Lord's devotion to His own, His devotion to their physical necessities, and His devotion to whatever their spiritual obligation required. I see His devotion to His own in their suffering. I see His devotion to them in their weakness, in that He will make no peace with their folly, but will sharply rebuke it in order that they may realize the fulness of their fellowship with Him, and consequently with the Father.

As I close, I go back to the beginning of the chapter, to the things that immediately follow my text. For just a moment I want to look at the men. Who are these men round about our Lord? I see, first, Simon Peter, the impulsive, the great human; then Thomas, the magnificent, the skeptic—which simply means the man who looks hard, the man who by now was not only trustful, but trustworthy, having heard His Lord's words to him when they met on that eighth day after the resurrection. Then there is Nathanael, the man who was guileless, the man who would never have made a politician, the man who was so guileless that he admitted it. Observe that! Jesus said to him when he saw him: Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael said: "How knewest Thou me?" By now he had seen the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. James and John Boanerges were also there, the men who asked to sit on Jesus' right hand and on His left, and were admitted to the sacramental preparation of cup and baptism that they might do it. And who else? Two others. Thank God for these representatives of the anonymous multitude. No! no! not Andrew and Philip. Many an expositor has tried to prove to me that they were Andrew and Philip. Nothing of the kind. If it had been so, they would have been named. They were not of the twelve. They were two men of the outside crowd, of the anonymous multitude, the multitude which create the dynamic, in the force of which the named and prominent men go forward. I am perfectly honest in saying this. How could I preach except for the unnamed souls that pray for me? Two others! I like that group of men. That impulsive, hot, magnificent Peter; that critical, cautious, splendid, trustworthy Thomas; that guileless Nathanael; those Sons of Thunders, and two others. To these Jesus manifested Himself.

Jesus is the Lord of Life and Glory. He will be interested in the daily callings of His people to the end of time; He will sanctify all household duties so that they flash with the splendor of service heavenly; He will direct our spiritual campaign, and comfort us in all our sufferings. Think of the effect of these manifestations on subsequent days of fruitless toil. By His action we know that He overrules our failures, and makes them the processes of His successes. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men in days of weariness and hunger, when they were shepherding the sheep and feeding the lambs. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men when they had to confront death. Think of what it meant afterwards to these men in those days when they would be tempted to fussiness about other people.

I am not proposing to allow any man to take from me this twenty-first chapter of John. For thus He manifested Himself!

John 21:15, 16, 17. My Lambs--My Sheep.

John 21:15, 16, 17.

My Lambs--My Sheep.

Feed My Lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep.

John 21:15-17

These words constitute our Lord's final commission to Peter, and as Peter stands ever before us as the representative man, the words were spoken through him to the Church. We need to rescue these words from an altogether too narrow interpretation. It has been said that, on the shores of the lake in the flush of the early morning, Jesus handed Peter the crozier, the staff of the pastoral office, and thus entrusted to him the oversight of the saints of God. This is undoubtedly true, but the whole truth is more than this. That narrow view of our Lord's meaning is due largely to the fact that our minds are obsessed almost by one particular utterance of our Lord, in which He drew a clear and sharp distinction between sheep and goats. It is well to remember that Christ only once made such distinction.

If in that great chapter of Matthew, our Lord was referring to a final assize, when individuals will appear before Him for sentence, then we must recognize that He never makes the division until the day of final assize, never suggests that men are goats on the one hand, and sheep on the other, until the day of final destiny. I do not believe that our Lord even then had any such meaning in His speech. The picture of that chapter of Matthew is not that of the assembling before Him of individuals for individual sentence. It is, rather, the picture of the assembling before Him of nations for national sentence. When He makes His division as between sheep and goats, the division is not between individual men, but between nations. The prophecy had special reference to Israel.

The spaciousness of these words spoken to Peter on the shores of the lake can only be discovered as we adopt the usual line of teaching suggested by the figure of the shepherd and the sheep in the Scriptures. The seers and psalmists of the old economy, in moments of highest exaltation and clearest vision, saw that the supreme truth concerning the Kingship of Jehovah is that He is a Shepherd, and that the direst woe fallen upon the sons of men is that they are as sheep without a shepherd.

In that very brief paragraph, which I read from the Gospel of Matthew, we have something we need to attend to very carefully. Matthew tells us that Jesus went through all the cities and villages preaching, teaching and healing, and that when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.

In that matchless discourse recorded in the tenth chapter of John, Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd... other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring."

When Peter, who heard these words on the shore of the lake, came to write his letter afterward to Christian men and women, he said: "Ye were going astray like sheep, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

The words spoken to Peter must be interpreted in harmony with these uses of the figure of the sheep. When Jesus, looking into the eyes of Peter as He restored Him by challenge, confession and commission, said, "Feed My lambs... shepherd My sheep... feed My sheep," His holy, loveliest eyes were looking far beyond the first narrow circle of His own disciples, to the vast multitudes of all nations, all peoples and all tongues who were in His heart, because He was the good, the great and the chief Shepherd.

These words are suggestive, as they reveal to us the nature of the work committed to the Church. It is not my intention to deal with them now in that way. I ask only that you ponder, at your leisure, these simple facts. Of the lambs He said, Feed them, and there is profound significance in the fact. He did not suggest that our first work should be that of finding them. He spoke of the children as already His own. When He referred to the sheep, His first word was, shepherd them; that is, find them if they have gone astray, seek them if they are lost, then fold them and guard them. Then, beyond that, "Feed my sheep."

I desire now to direct attention first, to the assumptions of Christ which these words suggest, and, secondly, to what they reveal as to the preparation that is necessary for all such as seek to feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep.

First, let us listen to the words as revealing the assumptions of Jesus: "My lambs... My sheep." The note that first impresses the heart is that of infinite and tender compassion: "My lambs... My sheep."

Let me illuminate this by reference again to the passage in Matthew. When He saw the multitudes, what effect did the vision produce upon Him? As God is my witness, I hardly know how to cite these words to you. I am afraid of harshness of tone. Yet I am also afraid that if I attempt to do other than recite them with the natural harshness of tone, I may but libel the exquisite tenderness that ought to be heard in them. "He was moved with compassion for them."

How familiar we are with the words. Would that in the quiet hush of this moment, they might come to us with all their infinite meaning. "He was moved with compassion." The final outcome of that compassion was the cross.

Why was He moved with compassion? Because He saw them "distressed and scattered." Take the words and let them be pictures, as they really are, and in a moment we discover their true significance. I do no violence to them if I say that our Lord saw the sheep harried by wolves, bruised, wounded, flung to the ground, faint and weary; and it was that vision of humanity in its degradation, spoiled and ruined, that moved His heart with compassion. "My lambs... My sheep." We cannot hear these words, interpreted by the declaration of the Gospel of Matthew, without discovering in them the note of infinite tenderness and compassion.

Yet, there is infinitely more in them than the note of compassion. There is that of supremacy. It was Homer who once said that kings are the shepherds of the people. Perhaps it would have been more correct to have said kings ought to be the shepherds of the people. It is at least perfectly true

that the master figure of kingship in the Old Testament is that of the Shepherd. All God's chosen, ordained kings and leaders were of the shepherd heart. If Moses was to lead the people, he had to learn the art of leading them by being a shepherd for long years. If David was to come to the throne, he had to discover the secrets of victory by slaying the lion and the bear that came against the sheep of his father's flock. The idea of kingship in the economy of God is always that of the shepherd, who feeds rather than is fed, who guards rather than seeks to be guarded. It is the true ideal of kingship.

Ringed through this word of Jesus, coming up out of the old Hebrew economy and ideal, is the note of supremacy, "MY lambs... MY sheep." Standing in the midst of humanity, speaking to His own disciples, He claimed absolute Lordship over all the race.

We have not yet touched the profoundest note. We go to the tenth chapter of John, and listen: "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." Then, with a touch of fine scorn: "He that is a hireling and not a shepherd... fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." The Good Shepherd enters into conflict with the wolf, and even though He die, He dies to slay the wolf. Jesus saw the sheep distressed and scattered as by wolves, and He was moved with compassion for them; and then, as King, He entered into conflict with the forces that spoil, and, though dying in the conflict, He despoiled and triumphed over the foe in His cross, making a show openly of such as were opposed.

There is yet another note, that of resurrection victory. Once again we go to the same chapter of John for exposition. He not only said, "The Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." He also said this strange, mysterious, overwhelming thing: "No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." That was an empty and a vain boast, unless He rose from among the dead. I need not argue it. He rose. He took again the life laid down, and, standing there on the shores of the lake, He said: "My lambs, My sheep." I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down My life for them. They are Mine by virtue of life laid down. I am the Good Shepherd. I have taken My life again for them. They are Mine by virtue of resurrection.

We think of the Galilean lake, and, in imagination, see all humanity gathered around that central Person; the men of His own age, of every successive age, this congregation, the whole of this city, all the nations of the world, and of them all He said: "My lambs... My sheep." In His voice there is the note of infinite compassion, the ring of absolute authority, the passion of the cross and the triumph of resurrection.

Now, in order that we may understand the commission itself, and our responsibility, let us inquire at what point in the life and history of this man, Peter, our Lord gave him the commission. In order to gain anything like a full and adequate answer to that inquiry we need the whole story of Peter. My comfort is that we know it. We are very familiar with it. I need therefore stay only to refer to the outstanding facts in Christ's method of preparing this man for the hearing of this commission. The work began when Jesus first met him. In that hour, and upon this alone I dwell, the glamour of Christ's personality fell upon Peter. He did not understand Him. He had no theory as to His Person, no doctrine as to His mission, but he felt the irresistible attraction of His personality. He was not yet ready for Christ to commission him to feed the lambs and gather the sheep, but the first stage in his preparation was accomplished.

What next? All the patient training of the weeks, months, years over which we pass, until we come to Caesarea Philippi, and again we have a familiar story. I need but refer to it for illustration. There at Caesarea Philippi this man looked back into the eyes of Christ, and said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Christ, for Whose coming Jeremiah had watched, shedding bitter tears; Whose advent John had announced; for Whose work Elijah had sighed; the One to Whom all the prophets had given witness. Peter had reached the second stage in his preparation for hearing this commission when he uttered that confession. He had come to the hour in which he no longer placed Christ on the level of other teachers, but had discovered His absolute supremacy; knew that all the light that burned in others was derived from this one essential source of light; knew that all the aspirations, and hopes, and longings in the hearts of men were to be fulfilled in Him.

The third stage in preparation followed immediately, as for the first time he beheld the tragedy of the cross. I think sometimes that we are unfair to Peter and the rest of the disciples about that cross. We preach sermons upon their frailty and folly. Had we been among their number we would have shared their disappointment when Jesus spoke of the cross. It was absolutely revolutionary. There was nothing in human philosophy that could understand it. Who ever heard of a man coming to crowning by way of a cross? Who ever heard of a man winning universal victory by the way of disastrous defeat? "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom." These are the things to be desired. And immediately He declared He was going to Jerusalem to die, to be mauled by brutal hands, to suffer and be crucified. Ere we criticize Peter, let us get back into Peter's place. In that moment, he saw the tragedy of the cross, to use Paul's great word, the offence of the cross, the scandal of the cross, scandal in the true sense, the thing in the way that prevents progress. He had to see that, to feel the agony of it, before he was ready to feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep.

One final and revealing matter. When Jesus gave him this commission He was the risen Lord. It is so easy to say this, but can we put ourselves back into his place? What does Peter say about the resurrection? He declares we were begotten again "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"—a most graphic and wonderful statement—by which he meant this: I saw Him die, and was certain that by that death all my hopes were put out in darkness, all the high and noble things I had hoped for Him and through Him were defeated; but when I saw Him alive beyond death, I was born again, I came to a new vision, a new understanding, and the very cross from which I had shrunk was transfigured with light, and became glorious with a glory that amazed my heart and soul. It was never until Peter had seen his risen Lord that the Lord commissioned him to feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep.

Mark the four stages. First, he felt the glamour of His personality. Second, he came to conviction of His absolute supremacy. Third, he came to the horror and tragedy of the cross. Finally, he came into the light of the resurrection, and saw that selfsame cross transfigured until it shone with a beauty and glory of which he had never dreamed. Never before was Peter ready for the great commission, for the great and sacred work.

These four experiences of Peter coincide exactly with the assumptions of Jesus. The first note is that of His compassion. Peter felt the glamour of His personality. The second note is that of His supremacy. Peter came to the confession of this at Caesarea Philippi. The third note is that of His

cross. Peter had felt the offence of the cross. The fourth note is that of resurrection. Peter stood in the light of it.

Does not the meditation carry its own lessons? Christ still stands amid the multitudes of the world. The more I think of my Lord, the more I study His teaching; the more I strive to come into fellowship with Him; the more I recognize that in His presence there are no divisions. He will have none of our adjectives such as home and foreign. He stands in the midst of humanity, universal in His own humanity, whether it be east or west, a Man among men, standing in the midst of the multitudes of our own city, and of the far distant places of the world, moved with compassion for their sorrows and their sins.

If we are to fulfil His commission, we must pass through exactly the same experiences of spiritual life. No man can feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep until he himself has felt the mysterious attraction of the Person of Christ upon his own life. No man can feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep until he has put Christ in the place of final supremacy. If I am a mere discussor of comparative religions, if I put Christ's name by the side of that of Buddha, or Confucius, or any other, I cannot feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep. Until I see that He is above them all, that every gleam of light in their teaching, every touch of truth in the things they said were derived from Him, that He is the supreme, absolute, final Lord, I cannot do His work, neither can the Christian Church. If there be paralysis of missionary endeavour, that is the essential reason of it. We are not sure about His supremacy. We are not absolutely convinced that He is the one lonely Lord and Master of the race. We are trying to put others into comparison with Him, and to admit that perhaps other lords are better for other men than this Lord Christ of ours. All such comparison cuts the nerve of missionary endeavour, and paralyzes the possibility of obedience to this great and gracious commission.

We can never fulfil this commission until we ourselves have come to a sense of the horror of the cross. We must see the offence of it, or we cannot serve. I know that in the light of resurrection we see the glory and beauty of it, but let us be careful lest we miss all that lies behind—the offence, the scandal, the horror of the cross of Christ. That is the danger of the present moment. It is affirmed by some that the doctrine of the cross is vulgar. Hear me now patiently. The cross is vulgar; nothing in human history is so vulgar, nothing so dastardly, nothing so unholy. But what is the vulgarity? Listen to this awful word of Scripture. "He was made sin." There is the vulgarity. It is the vulgarity of the sin that made the cross necessary. Until I have felt it, the horror of it, the scandal of it, and have come to a sense of the shame of the sin that erected it, I cannot shepherd the sheep. We cannot heal humanity's wounds with rosewater. We cannot touch the sheep with their festering sores until we see the horror of the wounding. Who else saw the multitudes as Christ saw them? Not the disciples of those early days. Not the rulers of the people. Not the people themselves. But He knew the poison of sin, the awfulness of sin. That led Him to the cross. We must measure the ruin of humanity by that cross ere we can hope to help it, or serve it, or save it.

That is not the last word. We must know Christ as risen, and so understand the cross as infinitely more than the revelation of sin. It is the revelation of grace—triumphant grace, rich and spacious and overwhelming word of the Christian Church, altogether too lightly and too glibly used in these days. Grace, let the first Pentecostal preacher tell the story of the cross. He fixes your attention

upon the Person of the Christ, and says: "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." There is your sin: Lawless men mauled the Christ of God. There is God's grace, "Delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." We never see the cross in that way until we see Christ risen from among the dead. We are not prepared to feed the lambs or shepherd the sheep until we know the risen Lord, and know Him for our very selves.

When He had prepared this man for the work, He brought him face to face with these four matters. Let us state them in sequence. "My sheep." That is the note of compassion. The first thing that Peter ever felt when he came to Jesus was the glamour of His personality. Now Christ begins there, "Lovest thou Me?" You know, of course, that the word Christ used for love is not the word that Peter used. The revisers in the margin have drawn attention to the fact that these words are not the same, and thus they have only made darkness visible by not distinguishing between them. The word of Jesus suggested love illuminated by intelligence. Peter dared not climb to it, and he said, using a simpler word which seemed a warmer one, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Christ challenged him again—"Lovest thou Me?"—on this high level, with love governed by judgment and understanding, and Peter kept to his own word. Then Christ came down to Peter's level. That is why Peter was grieved, not because He asked three times, but that the third time He came down to his word. But the essential matter is love. The first condition of service is love. That is the first question, not do you love the heathen, but do you love me? If we go to the heathen because we love Him, we shall come to love the heathen also.

What next? He said to Him, "Feed My lambs... Shepherd My sheep." Mark the grace of this. What did He give them to do? His own shepherd work. We have been saying that the shepherd is king. Kingly work, then, is that of feeding lambs and shepherding sheep. He says to Peter: Prove your loyalty by sharing My royalty. I am King. You have crowned Me King. They are My lambs, My sheep. My work as Shepherd is to feed them and gather them. Share it with me. Do it by My side. Prove your loyalty by fellowship in the exercise of My royalty.

Then the cross. "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God." Jesus brought him back to the cross, and said to him: You can only feed My lambs and shepherd My sheep as you have fellowship with My cross. It is a very actual, definite word, believe me. In the case of Peter, it was an actual, positive cross to which he came. We say that has no application to us. No! And yet, think again. I have a newspaper clipping at home. I have had it for more than twenty years. I have read it scores of times for the discipline of my life. It was from the pen of Thomas Champness, and it is headed "Sheer Hard Work." He declared that no minister of Christ has any right to lay his head upon the pillow on any given day of the seven until he is worn out in work. What is true of the minister is true of every man who bears the name of Christ. We have not begun to touch the great business of salvation when we have sung "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying." We have not entered into the business of evangelizing the city or the world until we have put our own lives into the business, our own immediate physical endeavour, inspired by spiritual devotion. We must get to the cross in actual fellowship, in weariness and pain and suffering. When the Church of God gets there, we shall hear no more of decrease and languishing exchequers, the impossibility of raising funds for missionary work, no

more of the necessity for calling home missionaries and closing doors. It is to go back to the cross, to individual toil and pain and suffering, that is our supreme need.

But there is one other thing. When Jesus said this final word to Peter about the cross, He did not finish there. He said, "Follow Me." That is to say: When I first named My cross you shunned it; you must come back to it, but "follow Me." You saw Me go to it; you lost hope. You have seen Me alive again. "Follow Me." The man who comes to the cross with Me comes to resurrection with Me. The man who comes along the pathway of suffering in fellowship for the doing of My work comes to the hour of absolute and assured victory with Me. The Lord challenges us still to follow Him to the cross, but to follow Him to the cross is to follow Him to resurrection and to triumph.

Now we must leave these words of His that are more than all the preacher has tried to say, infinitely more! As we scatter to our homes, those who bear His name and sign, let us listen to His voice, as He says, "My lambs... My sheep." Yes, those children you saw in the street, "My lambs." Yes, those bruised and broken men and women, those far distant peoples sighing and crying in desolation and darkness, "My sheep."

If we hear His own voice, we shall want to get very near to Him, and to obey Him, when He says: Feed them, shepherd them, feed them!

Acts 1:1. The Unstraitened Christ.

Acts 1:1.

The Unstraitened Christ.

The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.

Acts 1:1

This at first sight appears a strange opening to a book, and yet it is perfectly natural when we remember that the writer had already written another pamphlet, which we know as the Gospel according to Luke. It is to that he makes reference when he writes, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach."

To this link of connection I desire to draw your attention, in order that we may understand the true character of this book of the Acts of the Apostles, and from such understanding deduce certain lessons of profound and paramount importance to the whole Church of Jesus Christ.

First, Luke does not say in speaking of his previous pamphlet, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus did and taught." He says, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." The story of Luke, as he gives it to us in the Gospel, is the story of the beginnings of the doing and teaching of Jesus.

Over twenty years ago one of the most brilliant of our journalists went to see the representation of the Oberammergau Passion play. When he came back he wrote an account of what he had seen, and he called the little book, "The Story that Transformed the World." I have no desire to be hypercritical, but while I greatly enjoyed reading the book, I join issue altogether with the suggestion of the title, that the world has been transformed by the telling of a story. I do not mean to say that the world has not been transformed. I hold that it has been transformed as the result of the coming of Christ, and the message and ministry of Christ in every successive century, but what I do say is that this transformation has not been brought about by the telling of a story. There never was such a story as the story of Jesus. Never was story so pathetic, so tender, so beautiful, so strong. But I do not hesitate to say that if there had been nothing more than a story it would have lost its power long ago. Men have not been remade, and nationalities reborn, and human society permeated with new influences and new thoughts and new conceptions by the telling of a story. How, then, has the world been transformed? The answer is suggested by the underlying truth contained in my text. The story is the story of the things He began to do and teach. The world has been transformed by the things He has continued to do and teach. The world has not been transformed by the telling of the story of a death and a life transcendently beautiful nineteen centuries ago. The world has been transformed by the living presence of the living Christ in every successive century. He began to do, and, thank God, He has never ceased doing; He began to teach, and, thank God, He has never ceased teaching. Christ did not pass away from the world

when He ascended; He has been here ever since, and through every successive century He has been busy doing and teaching. Thus has the world been transformed. This congregation is not gathered round the memory of a Christ Who was. It is gathered round the presence of a Christ Who is. We are not here because of the pathetic and majestic and radiantly beautiful story of what happened nineteen centuries ago. We are here because Christ is here, the same living Lord, by the power of His Holy Spirit, doing things among men, still teaching men, even as of old.

What, then, is the book of the Acts of the Apostles? It is the first fragment of Church history. It is the first Chapter in the story of the things that Jesus has continued to do and teach.

Let us go back to the Gospel of Luke, to something that Jesus said while He was still among men:

I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I desire? I would that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! (Luke 12:49-50).

In these words our Lord declared that He had come to the world to pour on men a baptism of fire; He declared the supreme wish of His heart was that that baptism might be poured out, that that work might be accomplished; but He also declared He could not send the fire until He Himself had been baptized with a baptism toward which His face was set. What was that baptism? The baptism of the Cross. So that Jesus, in effect, stated that He could not do His greatest work until after the Cross, that He was straitened, limited, confined, and only beginning His doing and teaching. He could not carry either to consummation until He Himself had been immersed in the great baptism of death, the mysterious passion baptism of the Cross.

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles I stand by the side of Jesus and listen to Him after His baptism, after the Cross, and I do not hear Him saying, "I am straitened." I hear Him saying now, "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The Cross being accomplished, the greater work begins.

From this beginning the book runs on. In the second Chapter we read, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place"; and the rest you know: the fire baptism came, and in its coming the little group of disciples were made one with Jesus as they never had been one with Him in the days of His flesh. Peter and James and John and the rest never knew Jesus perfectly until He was dead, buried, risen, ascended, and had poured on them the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then their eyes were opened, then their ears were unstopped, then their heart lost its frost and flamed with fire, then Peter ceased to be anxious about keys. He was prepared for the Cross, if by any means he could suffer and serve with Christ; and in the little company of disciples baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire Jesus found an enlarged sphere of operation. He began the mightier works which He could not do before, but which He had promised they should do when He had gone to the Father.

I love the Gospel story, for it gives me the beginnings of things, but when I come to the Acts of the Apostles I feel myself in the tremendous movement of the larger Christ, of the more infinite power, no longer straitened, confined, and shut up within Himself, but liberated through His passion baptism. Here I see Him moving to the greater works.

That is the significance of this introduction. Let us now look at it from another standpoint. If, indeed, I have in the Gospel the story of what Jesus began to do and teach, and if in the Acts of the Apostles, and all Church history, I have the story of what He continued to do and teach, it becomes manifest that there will be no practical and radical difference between the principles on which He began to do and those on which He has continued to do. In the Gospel I learn what is the passion of His heart, what is the intention of His purpose, and what is the manifestation of His power; and I may test my work, my responsibility, by asking the question, Am I living and serving on the same lines as did the Christ? What He did, He does, only with increased power. He began and He continues on the same lines.

I sometimes hear people say that what we need in Christian service is to see to it that we are on parallel lines with Jesus Christ. Again, I do not want to be hypercritical, but it is a very weak geometrical illustration. Parallel lines are lines which never come together. We do not want to be on parallel lines with Jesus. We want to be on His lines exactly. The perfect geometrical figures illustrative of the methods of God are always those of the pyramid or the square of the circle.

In this case take the circle. At the center is Jesus. In one of those inimitable sermons of Joseph Parker on Jesus in the midst, he spoke of Jesus as in the midst of the doctors, as crucified in the midst of thieves, as in the midst of two or three gathered together in His name, and, finally, as in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain. Always in the midst, always at the center. Go back and take one prophetic word of the past, the word of Isaiah, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"; in the center, God manifest in Christ; the circumference, "all the ends of the earth." Or come once more to the first Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and there find the same great figure. He stands, the center of a very small group of disciples, and they do not understand Him. They are asking foolish questions about the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Jesus is the center. What is the first circle? The disciples. To this first circle of men gathered round Him He says, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be My witnesses." Where? Now watch the circles widening round Him. "In Jerusalem," that is the city close at hand; "and in all Judaea," that is the suburbs; "and in Samaria," that is the country lying out further still. Where does He finish? "Unto the uttermost part of the earth." Those are the circles which sweep around the Christ. How am I to serve the Christ? By serving Jerusalem. How am I to serve Jerusalem? By serving Judaea. How am I to serve Judæa? By serving Samaria. How am I to serve Samaria? By serving the uttermost part of the earth.

Do not forget that we have never obeyed Him yet. The vast part of the world has never heard the Gospel. How shall we fulfil all these responsibilities? By getting on parallel lines? No, by getting on the same lines of service. The radii of a circle may be carried far, but they are the same lines at the uttermost circumference as those which rest in the center.

This is the truth which lies like a burden on my heart today, the great truth I want to bring to others, not so much for instruction as for encouragement. All He began to do He is still doing, and we are His fellow workers; all He began to teach He is still teaching, and we are His messengers.

In looking back at the story of Jesus as we have it in the Gospels, I find general principles of present value. When Jesus began, He attracted the multitudes; when Jesus began, He was attracted by the multitudes; when Jesus began, He knew the multitudes; when Jesus began, the

multitudes knew Him.

First, Jesus began to attract the multitudes. Than this nothing is more obvious. Wherever He came in the days of His public ministry the crowds came too. He was weary and crossed the sea, and when the boat reached the other side of the lake they found waiting for Him vast multitudes who had run round the shore, outrunning the boat, in order to be there when He arrived.

On another occasion He said to His disciples, "Let us go into a desert place, and rest a while." They never reached the desert place; they got into the boat, and crossed the lake; but when they got to the other side vast multitudes were waiting for Him. They thronged Him, they "pressed Him," to use the expression of Mark.

The crowds who came to Jesus in the days of His flesh were not crowds composed of one particular class of people; rulers were in the crowds, fishermen, Pharisees, and publicans were in the crowds. There is a very popular fallacy abroad in the world that Jesus attracted persons of only one class, the poorer people, the working people. It is not true. Now some of you are thinking that "the common people heard Him gladly." Yes, and no! That passage has been much misquoted. To begin with, the Bible never insults that class of people by calling them common in our sense of the word common. That phrase occurs in the Gospel of Mark, and nowhere else. Read Mark's Gospel and put a pencil mark under this phrase "much people." It runs all through the Gospel. Mark seems to be a man always listening to the tramp of the crowds as they thronged on Jesus. Once, in the course of translating the Gospel of Mark, both King James's translators and the Revisers, for some reason, have rendered the same Greek phrase "much people" "common people"; it is exactly the same phrase. "Common" does not mean poor people, working people. It means all sorts and conditions of people, the mixed multitude, the common crowd. It is quite time we got rid of this fallacy; I am quite willing to grant that there were more poor people than rich, because there are always more poor than rich in the world, always more illiterate people than learned. But Jesus Christ attracted all sorts and conditions of people. He was the great Center of attraction. The one thing people could not do with Him was to let Him alone. Wherever He came they came, and they thronged after Him in the country places, in the cities, along the highways.

These were the beginnings. Has that ceased to be true? Has Jesus lost His power to attract, and to attract all sorts and conditions of men? I want to say to you, and I want to say it quietly and finally and deliberately and without apology, that Jesus Christ is just as attractive a personality in the twentieth century as He was at the dawn of the first in old Judaea. He still attracts men and women to Himself.

The problem of the empty church in the midst of a vast population in London, or anywhere else, has a deeper problem still underlying it, the problem of an absent or a hidden Christ. I do not care where it is, I do not care what is the class of people round about it. Find me any empty church in any populous district, and let Jesus Christ be seen and known and preached there, and men will still crowd to Him just as they always crowded to Him. I am not criticizing the ministry, I am criticizing the Church, and I say that wherever you find me the problem we are discussing in conferences and synods, it is not the problem of how to get the crowds into the church, it is the problem of how to show Christ in the church. He will get the crowd; He attracts men always.

Jesus may be hidden by priestism, by ecclesiasticism, by the sordid selfishness of people who take His name on their lips but lack His love in their hearts. He may be hidden by people who deny His Spirit in the way in which they refuse to welcome the outcast if the outcast enters the church. But let the great, warm, living heart of the Christ be shown, and the people will come. The things which hide Him eventually drive Him out. But let Him be present, managing the whole business, impulsing all the service, shining through the lovely eyes of His own children, teaching in gentle language the broken-hearted sinner that comes within the building; let but Christ be seen in His people, let but Christ be manifested, and men will crowd to Him. Jesus is not the Saviour of a caste. He was never attracted by the broad phylactery or the wide border of the garment. He was never repelled by the beggar in rags. I was going to say He never saw the phylactery and rags, and yet He saw everything. In some senses, it is true, He did not see the garment, for, looking at the man, He did not see the accidental trappings of his birth; He saw the immortal soul that dwelt in his house of clay, and when He sees men through our eyes, and touches men with our hands, they will come with their woes and sin and sorrow.

It is not only true that He attracted the crowds, it is also true that He was attracted by the crowds. Where the crowds were He went. What drew Him to the great feasts in Jerusalem, the feast of Tabernacles, the Passover feast, and all the rest? I do not hesitate to say it was the crowd that drew Him, not the ceremony, which was effete, worn out, spoiled by the ritualism and the rationalism of His age. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion." And I say it reverently of my Master, and yet it is true, He could not keep away from the crowds. I see Him one day, tired, going into a house to rest, and immediately after there is this very remarkable statement, "He could not be hid." Why not? Read on, and you will find why. Outside is the crowd, and in the crowd one poor woman is in need, and the sorrows of the woman and the surging sorrows of the crowd dragged Him from the house in order that He might help and serve. Oh, yes, and He was attracted by them as they were, sinful souls and ungrateful. He saw them not only as they were. He saw them as they might be, and He loved them in the midst of their sin and degradation, and what repelled others attracted Him.

Has Christ changed? Nay, verily. The most attractive center to Jesus Christ is not the church half empty. But the theater if it is full. I know men and women are there for amusement, sinning their life away. Thank God when a church has wisdom enough to say, We will reach these people. It shows the Church has caught the Spirit of the Christ. He is attracted by the people. There comes back to my mind a quaint old piece of poetry. It teaches a great lesson in simple form:

The parish priest of austerity

Climbed up in a high church steeple,

To be nearer God, so that he might hand

His word down to the people.

And in sermon script he daily wrote

What he thought was sent from Heaven;

And he dropped it down on the people's heads

Two times one day in seven.

In his age God said, "Come down and die,"

And he cried out from the steeple:

"Where art Thou, Lord?" and the Lord replied,

"Down here among My people."

That is the profound lesson of the life of Jesus. He did not climb away from people to drop the Gospel down on their heads. He is in the midst of the wounding and the woe and the weariness of this present day. Wherever you see a crowd of people the Christ is there. In the Labor Church He is there, not as the Head of the Labor Church, but He is there because men are there; in the fashionable West End, with its veneered rottenness and its cultured deviltry, because He loves the people; in the East, with its overwhelming despair and its terrible wail of suffering and sorrow, He is there. They abuse Him; it does not matter, He loves them. Where the crowds are the Christ is. If we want to live near to Jesus we must get near the crowds, get close by their sorrows, and feel them; near their tears, to dry them; under their burdens, to lift them.

Do not talk to me about coming revivals. The revival has come when the Church has caught the compassion of Christ, and is near the sorrows of the world to lift and heal them.

I go back to my book of Isaiah, and I read that the ancient people of God said, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." And how did God answer them? He answered by saying, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." It is as though God said to His people, Do not ask me to awake; I have never been asleep. You must awake! And while today we cry, "Awake, O arm of the Lord," I hear the answer, I have never been asleep. I have never slumbered. It is you who must awake!

Let me take a step further. Not only is it true that Jesus attracted the crowds, and was attracted by the crowds; it is also true that He knew the crowds. He knew their possibilities; He knew their agonies. Jesus never upbraided the multitudes. He did upbraid the men whose false philosophies were ruining the multitudes; but He never upbraided the multitudes. He knew them in their sin and sorrow, knew them in their capacity, knew them perfectly. You remember the great word in the close of the second Chapter of John's Gospel, "Many believed on His name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." Every broken heart that came to Him, He knew it and all its sorrow.

He knows the crowds today. It was Charles Kingsley who said, "We may choose to look at the masses in the gross as subjects for statistics, and, of course, where possible, for profit, but there is One Who knows every temptation of each slattern and gin-drinker and street boy." Yes, He knows. But you say, Why emphasize it? Because I want to remind you that, knowing all, He loved men, thought they were worth dying for. Oh, God, help us to realize it. When you are tempted by some article in some brilliant magazine to think that the people are not worth living for and dying for, get back to the Christ, and remember that over all the woe and misery of London the shadow of the Cross is the greatest light that shines, as it tells us until this moment, whatever the people may think of Him, He reckoned that they were worth dying for. God help us to have the same estimate.

Finally, my brethren, not only is it true He knew them; it is true they knew Him. Not perfectly, I grant you, but they knew Him by name, by hearing, and by sight; and the more the multitudes of His day came to know Him with that keen, acute, mystic consciousness, the more they were dissatisfied with any save Himself. The Pharisees said, "The world is gone after Him." One came to Him when He came down from the mount of transfiguration, and said, "Master, have mercy on my son, my only begotten son; a devil vexes him sore, and I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him." But the man knew that Jesus could, and this consciousness of the power of Christ swayed the multitudes all through that region. You say that is changed. No, it is not. The multitudes today know the living Christ of God. Believe me, you cannot deceive humanity. They still know the difference between the method of the philosopher and the living, warm, powerful Christ; the multitudes know the difference between a stone, polish it as you will, and bread. And you may preach the Christ, Who is the Founder of a system of ethics, until your church is empty, and you may preach a cold, passionless Christ, Who is the ideal of perfection, until men are driven away by your preaching. But preach the Christ of the Cross and the warm mystery of His shed blood, and that Christ still attracts men, and saves men; and men know Him, and you cannot deceive the multitudes.

He began, and I hear Him speak as He begins. What does He say? "I am the Light of the world." But He is going away, and yet He is going away to come again, and to carry on His work. What does He say now? "Ye are the light of the world"; that is to say, we of the Christian Church, we of the Christian faith, are the instruments through which Christ elects, in great grace and mercy, to carry on His work.

Jesus wants to get to men through us. Are we at His disposal? It is a cheap and sentimental Christianity that sings songs about Heaven and hopes to get there. Are we saints, separated to Him? Are our feet ready to run on His errands? Are our hands ready to minister to His bidding? Are our eyes ready to flash with His love? Are we ready to suffer, to serve, and die with Him? That is the question.

He wants to get men to Himself through us. Are we likely to attract them? I am only asking the question; God help us to answer it alone. Is it possible that the men you pay wages to will be attracted toward the Christ through you? Dear Sunday-school teacher, has Jesus a chance to make the children in your class see how lovely He is?

He is waiting for our feet to run on errands, our hands to touch men with His love, our voices to sing with the tone of His infinite compassion, the Gospel of His grace. Are we at His disposal? That is the question of the hour. May God grant that we shall be able to carry on His victories until even His heart is satisfied.

Acts 1:8. Power For Service.

Acts 1:8.

Power For Service.

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:8

If we know our Lord only at the Cross we know very much, but not all. And if we know Him only in the place of His resurrection, from external observation, we know very much, but not all. After both the Cross and the resurrection He said to the men with whom He had tabernacled for three years, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." His first command to them after resurrection—first in the order of their obedience, last in the order of His actual utterance—was not to go, but to wait; not to hasten, but to tarry. And in that fact lies great significance.

How shall we describe these men? Let us first remember that they were lovers of the Lord, and loyal to Him. I do not think their question was so ignorant as we sometimes imagine it to be. They were not ignorant of God's ultimate intention. They were ignorant of God's present method. They did not understand the meaning of the Cross. They had never understood it. They had shunned it from its first mention. Attempting to escape it, they had been scattered like chaff before the wind. But they had been gathered again by that inexplicable mystery of His resurrection, and they were perforce compelled to new loyalty to the One Who stood amongst them. That explains their inquiry whether He was now about to fulfil the prophecy of the ancient Scriptures. And "He said unto them, It is not for you to know times of seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority." That answer was not a rebuke for their conception of the ultimate. He did not say that the Kingdom was never to be restored to Israel. It is as though Christ had said to these men, I am not authorized of My Father to give you any program, or calendar. The Father hath set the times and seasons within His own authority. Israel will be restored, the Kingdom will be set up, the whole earth must yet be brought into submission to the Kingship of God, and all the beneficent results must come, but it is not for you to know the times of these things.

What, then, was necessary? "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." From the viewpoint of the disciples at that moment this was a very unsatisfactory thing to say. Let us endeavor to understand what this meant to these men. How strange their experiences had been. He had disappointed them in His plan and method. They had been brought to despair by His Cross. Strange new hopes and expectations had arisen in their hearts in the light of His resurrection. These were all again extinguished when He said that it was not for them to know times or seasons. All He told them was that they were to be His witnesses, and in order that they might be, they should receive power. A program without a program! No details, no arrangements, none of the things we love so much, but only an attitude and an

atmosphere, a duty and a dynamic, a responsibility and a resource! Witnesses in the power of the Spirit. Therefore, He said to them, Wait, tarry. He halted them upon the verge of their going, arrested them at the very moment when they would have been away to tell the mystic story of His resurrection. Just as He had demonstrated His Kingship by resurrection so that there could be no doubt to any honest mind, and they were anxious to tell the story, He said, No, not yet, you are not ready, you must wait.

For what were they to wait? The answer is in one word of the text, and that word I desire to emphasize, and deal with some of its suggestions: "power." "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Now in order that we may understand the meaning of the power let us look at these men, for we shall understand the provision by a study of the lack. What did they lack? First of all, they needed a new intellectual power. The use of the word power in that connection is a perfectly accurate one, for we speak of a man of strong mind, and of the strengthening of the mind. These men at the moment lacked the ability to apprehend truth which it was necessary for them to understand if they were indeed to be witnesses of Jesus. This inability they had demonstrated by their attitude toward Him during His public ministry, and by the question they asked as they stood around Him in the light of His resurrection, power and glory. They were ignorant of the very things that they must appreciate intellectually if they were to accomplish the purpose of their Lord. They did not understand the meaning of the halt in the apparent progress of the King to the Kingdom. They did not understand the nature of the Kingdom. They had a correct idea of what its external manifestation would be; but they did not understand all that was necessary to the production thereof. They did not see that the King Who would set up the Kingdom toward which prophets looked, and of which seers sang, must begin, not at the circumference, but at the center. They did not understand that the first movement must be that of spiritual regeneration. They did not understand Him, they did not understand His Cross, they did not understand His resurrection. They did not understand what He was about to do. They needed a new intellectual power. Not long ere He had left them, in those wonderful discourses which are precious to us still, He had said that most remarkable thing, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," which did not mean merely that He had to tell them of coming suffering, of which they would be afraid, but that the things which He had to tell their minds could not grasp. All through the ministry of Jesus He said things they never understood until the Spirit brought them to their remembrance, and they flamed in new light and meaning.

When I am told it is necessary for me to go back to the Gospels and confine my attention to them, I say I cannot do it. They are not complete, final, and perfect. These men in the olden days did not understand the meaning of the Cross. And we never find the Christ in all His fulness until we have passed through the preliminary and necessary study of the Gospels into the spacious and far-reaching splendor of the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles. They needed intellectual power, the quickening of the mind which should enable them to see to the heart of the spiritual mystery.

Then they needed also spiritual power, in the first and simplest sense of the word. Spiritual power as against the power of the carnal life and nature. In the Corinthian letter Paul carefully distinguished between these two things. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ." These men were still in the grip of their own carnal nature, and in order to be witnesses they had to live before the world the life of spiritual victory.

They had to manifest to men the fact that a life can be lived, which never answers the call of the flesh; that it is possible for man, and indeed, it is God's first Divine intention for man, that he should see the upper things, and not the lower; that he should—to use the Apostle's great word—keep the body under, which does not for a moment mean that he is to bruise and chastise and mutilate the body, but that it is to be kept in its proper place, that of subservience. These men had to live that life, and they were unequal to it. The desires of the flesh and of the mind were triumphing within them, and fleshly ideals had undoubtedly crept into their estimate of the work of the Christ. But there came a moment, to quote the great apostle, when he said, "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." But these men had not yet come to that place of spiritual ascendancy and power. They were still living the carnal life, and they needed a power that should set them above the pull of the base and the low, and make them kings over the territory of their own being by spiritual appreciation and spiritual power.

These men needed a new power of the affection and of the will. They were going out to strange days, and He knew it right well. He had told them in some of His earliest discourses of what they would pass through after His crucifixion. He had told them that He would send them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, that men would hunt and persecute them from city to city, and imagine they did God service; and they needed a new power of the affection and of the will, for the world would be against them. See how they had evidenced that need in recent days. No one can deny—and I always try to be careful here—that they loved their Lord. They loved Him with all the affection of their nature before the Cross, and yet when the storm burst about His sacred head, and all the malice of hell, expressing itself through men, was let loose upon Him, where were they? "All the disciples left Him, and fled." I am not inclined to blame them. I say it reverently that I am afraid I would have been one of the first to flee. Oh, it was a tragic hour! But they have to face the storm again. The world desiring to crucify Him will desire to crucify them, and if they incarnate His life of truth and perfection the spirit of evil will be against them. They are not going to an easy softness of life, but to heroism, and conflict, and danger; and if the old life was not strong enough to keep them loyal when He was the Center of the storm, how are they to be kept loyal when they themselves become the center of the storm? They need a new power of the affection and the will.

And, finally, they needed a new power which would be with them, and enable them to do the peculiar and remarkable work committed to them, because He had forbidden them to use the things which men usually consider powerful. They were to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. They were sent forth to proclaim the fact that God's Kingdom centers around God's King, and that God had vindicated the Kingship of Jesus by raising Him from the dead. These men were not sent to preach a theory of God's Kingship. They were sent to bring men into the Kingdom. He did not send these men forth to preach a new philosophy, or a new theory. He sent them to compel wills, and bring men into subjection. And yet—He had already said in the tragic moment of His own rejection, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"—they were not to win His victories by the un-sheathing of the sword. And no victory for Christ has ever been won in that way. To use the sword in order to establish His Kingdom is a blunder and mistake. And, moreover, they were not to establish His Kingdom by policy. They were not to seek the help of other forces, or enter into alliances with them. What, then, were they to do? Tell a story? That was all. The story of the risen, crucified, exalted, coming Christ. There is no

government on earth that would not hold you in contempt if you suggested that they should extend their territory by telling a story. Here I do not desire to be misunderstood. They had a great deal more to do when the people, hearing the story, became obedient to it and submitted to the King. Then there was to be organization; then there was to be the realization of the Kingship of God. But the victories were to be won by the telling of the story. When Paul passed through those Greek cities, they said of him in Athens, "This babbler" cometh hither also. The word "babblers" indicates a teller of stories, and they so called him because he told them of Jesus and the resurrection. That is all these men had to do. They were to establish a Kingdom by telling a tale.

Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

That is the Church's work. It is her initial work. Without banners, or flags, or trumpets, or policies, or sword, she is to go out and tell the story; to herald the evangel.

Now look at these men. Lacking intellectual power, they could not appreciate the meaning; lacking spiritual power, they were not free from the pull of the carnal; weak in their affectional nature, they were not strong enough to stand against the enmity of the world; and devoid of any power upon which they set any value, they were unable to accomplish His work. To them He said, Wait, tarry! It is not for you to have the calendar and the almanac and the program. These things are hidden in the authority of the Father. But you are to be My witnesses, and you will need intellectual power to witness as you should; you will need spiritual power, behind the witness of the lip there must be that of the life; you will need an affectional power if you are to be true to Me amid the storm and stress; you will need a new volitional power in the work committed to you.

We turn for a moment or two, then, to notice the nature of the power promised. We have been attempting to understand it by considering the lack. Now see how this promise of power meets all the need. The power in which these men were to do their work is in no sense of men, and yet it is to be closely united to men. The power in which the Christ triumphed through the testimony of the disciples, and the power in which He still triumphs through their testimony, is entirely apart from the men as to source, but it is closely united to man as to act. And here is the whole philosophy of Christian life, and of service especially. The Spirit of God can do the work of Christ in the world only through human instrumentality. Man can do the work of Christ in the world only through the power of the Spirit. He united forever the souls that trusted Him with the infinite Spirit of power. In them He found a medium for the Spirit to carry on His enterprises and accomplish His victory. In the Spirit He found for them the full and great and gracious equipment which would enable them to do all He was sending them to do. The Holy Spirit, said He, shall come upon you. That promise, so simple, and yet so sublime, stands over against the need of which we have spoken. They lacked intellectual power, but the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God, and discerneth all things. When He came to these men, at once the horizon was flung far back, and the opaque became transparent, and the bloody and brutal Cross flamed into the purple glory of imperial dignity and redemptive power. And no man filled with the Holy Spirit of God ever dares to speak of the Cross in the terms of the human only. These men saw the meaning, and all life was changed in its appearance when God by the Holy Spirit came into intimate and abiding relationship with them. God Himself was new. Christ was new, men were changed, the matters of the moment took on a different appearance. Wherever they looked, they saw the old things, but never again were they the same. Yea, verily.

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries.

These men had been plucking blackberries! But when the Spirit came they saw the flaming bush! It was the same bush, and other men passed it by and saw it only as the scrub bush of the dreary desert, but they saw it flaming with meaning.

And the coming of the Spirit meant, not merely intellectual power, but also spiritual power. It was when their lives became suffused with that spiritual energy which is of God that they reached the plane of holiness of life and character. Holiness is never merely it, it is Him; never merely something into which a man forces Himself by self-will, but something into which a man comes by the unveiling of God by the Holy Ghost. And these men went out to show other men what human life might be, a triumph every day, not because they had won by struggling, but by yielding to the Spirit. They found a power mastering the carnal when the spiritual took possession of them.

And did they need a new power of the affection and the will? The coming of the Spirit meant this, that the love of God was shed abroad in their heart. Is not that another of the phrases that we have done despite to because we have treated it in a temporary and superficial and small way? The love of God was shed abroad in their heart, and when the Spirit came and dwelt in them, He brought God's love for Christ, and made it their love for Christ. And, oh, the change. I need not stay to illustrate it. The Acts of the Apostles is full of revelation. Peter had said, in the presence of the Cross—Spare Thyself! Not that, anything but the Cross. In this new book I turn to the fifth chapter, and I read that he counted it all joy that he was counted worthy to suffer for the Name. I do not read any more of men running from danger. I read of men telling indeed of their troubles, telling how they have been in peril from false brethren, and robbers, on land, and sea, receiving stripes forty save one again and again, being left mauled and half dead by brutal hands; but instead of hearing them speak of suffering in terms of complaint, I hear them say, I glory in my affliction. What is the reason? The Spirit has taken hold of their own weak though loyal affection, and has merged it into the affection of Deity, and the tides of God's love, flowing through them, make them stronger than all the forces that could be against them.

And finally mark this. They have no sword save the sword of the Spirit. They have no program save the orderliness of the Spirit. But when presently I watch these men begin that missionary progress, which has never been completed, and which we are so slow about, I see a group of men who do not impress their age by what they are in themselves. Brethren, remember this, the one thing that puzzled, supremely puzzled priests and Pharisees and rulers was how these men did these things. How do you account for it? was the question asked, and I hear their own answers, "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost." That is the answer. One almost trembles as one reads the words. We have wandered so far from the apostolic conception that we dare hardly use them. I wonder if we dare open our next month's church meeting with the words, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." I am here for contemplation rather than application. But this is the ancient picture, and I look at the beginning of things, and I see Peter, rough,

magnificent, impetuous Peter—I love him with all my heart—as he begins to talk, and I watch the curious multitude of Hebrews gathered from all the district around, listening to him, with their prejudices and pride, and I watch until I see them swept by the wind of God, and the cry goes up, and men and women are being gathered into the Kingdom.

See how great a flame aspires:

Kindled by a spark of grace,

Jesu's love the nations fires,

Sets the kingdoms on a blaze.

To bring fire on earth He came;

Kindled in some hearts it is...

Oh, that all might catch the flame,

All partake the glorious bliss."

How was it done? "We are witnesses, and so is the Holy Ghost." The saints in fellowship with the Spirit need neither sword, nor policy, nor patronage of earthly power. Their victory is an assured victory.

Did I say a moment ago I was not here for purposes of application? Suffer me one or two words by way of application. Christ's word to us here gathered, whether of this particular fellowship or of another, is exactly the same as to these first disciples. I cannot apply it in all its details. I need not. But He is saying to us, "It is not for you to know times or seasons." There are some who are always trying to arrange times and seasons. I have had a letter from San Francisco which tells me the Lord is coming in seven years, and I am to be ready for Him. I do not like to think He is seven years away. He is at the door. He may disturb me at my preaching. Whether He disturbs me at work or play, oh that I may be able to shout, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus." Burn your almanacs, and give up trying to deal with God's arrangements. What is your work? You are My witnesses, so says the King. Yes, but He is also saying this, You shall be endued with power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you. There is a difference between these men and us. They had to wait, for the Spirit was not yet given. You and I have not to wait. The Spirit is given. Yes, we must wait, unless we have the fulness of the Spirit. Unless we have put out of our life the things He forbids, I had better quit my preaching, and you your Sabbath-school Class, and every form of service. Unless we know the power, we had better tarry, but we need not tarry. The upper room at Pentecost was not more full of the Spirit than is this chapel this morning. O'er all the assembly He broods, close to every life is He. Oh, soul of mine, admit Him. And I can admit Him only as in absolute loyalty I crown the Christ, and give Him right of way o'er all the territory of my being. And if I do that, this Spirit, without sound of mighty rushing wind, without sign of fire, will fill and equip, and I, even I, oh, matchless grace of God, may be His witness too.

Acts 2:3. Tongues Like As Of Fire.

Acts 2:3.

Tongues Like As Of Fire.

The Symbol of the Church

And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

Acts 2:3

The Day of Pentecost had come. The week of weeks had run its course. Nine and forty days had passed since Passover. Devout men from every nation under heaven were at Jerusalem for this Feast of Weeks, and in an upper room a few men, insignificant, and yet chosen in the economy of God as witnesses for the initiation of a new world movement, took part in the fulfilment of that of which Pentecost, the Hebrew Feast, had been but a shadow. The Teacher and Master of these men had been crucified at Passover, and by His crucifixion all their hopes had been destroyed, all their aspirations disappointed, their very faith in His ability to do what they had hoped He would do shaken to the foundation, indeed had collapsed. Their faith in Him personally had never faltered, their love of Him had never failed; but by that Cross it had been demonstrated to them in such a way that they found no appeal from the demonstration that He could not set up His Kingdom, and so they had been scattered.

Then the supreme and arresting wonder of the Resurrection had been the means of gathering them together again. By that Resurrection their Lord and Master was declared to them to be far more than they had ever dreamed. He was the Son of God in a profounder sense even than Peter had understood when at Cæsarea Philippi he had confessed His Messiahship. By that Resurrection they were, to use the language of Peter himself in one of his later letters, begotten again unto a living hope. Hope had failed, faith had faltered, love had lived; but now in the resurrection glory hope was renewed, faith in His ability to accomplish His purpose was renewed, and love became nobler, purer, finer.

For many days He had tarried, always near at hand, though mystically and strangely. Sometimes absent from them; and then swiftly and without notice, present among them, right there, where they thought He was not. At other times walking with them by the way, sitting with them at the board; and then suddenly absent from them, not there, where they were quite sure He was. Such were the strange comings and goings of the forty days, appearances and disappearances, appearances in order to strengthen faith and to reassure them that He was alive, disappearance in order to train them to do without the bodily manifestation and the bodily presence.

Then He vanished out of their sight, and for ten days they had been waiting in the upper room. Jerusalem filled with the crowds, devout men from every nation gathering there: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, all with different accents, from varied localities, gathered for the Feast of Pentecost, for

the Feast of Weeks. But the central fact of this particular feast was not wrought out in the temple courts, but in the upper room. It was a moment and an event of untold importance in the history of humanity. We are not gathered here simply to recall to our minds something that happened, or that men imagined happened, two millenniums ago. That which began then is going on still. New forces then began to come into action in human history which within a generation touched the whole known world; they moved the Roman world to its center, influenced the Greek world throughout all its great cities, and scattered the Hebrew world, and, spreading through all these, made revolutions everywhere.

In that hour, in the upper room in Jerusalem, the results of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus were beginning to be applied to the experience of individual souls. The light that broke upon these men in the upper room in that hour was a light in which they saw their Lord as they had never seen Him. The sound of the mighty rushing wind that filled the house where they were assembled was in some mystic sense a tone in which all the voices of the past became articulate with a new message; they heard the voices of other days merging into the ultimate harmony of the speech of the Son. In that upper room all the values, the virtues, and the victories of the life and death and resurrection of the Lord were made to them more than theories, they were rendered experiences. They were in that hour brought into new and vital relationship with Him such as they had never known in the days of His flesh, nor could have known. In that hour was fulfilled the word which Christ Himself had spoken in the upper room, and which had filled them with trouble at the time, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go I will send Him unto you.... When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth.... He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you." That promise was being fulfilled. The new economy of the Spirit of God in human history was beginning. The Church of God, the Christian Church of God, was born in that hour.

In this story there is no sentence or phrase which is not suggestive and worthy of the closest study. From it I select the one visible sign which was granted to these men in that hour of the new and special coming of the Holy Spirit: "Tongues parting asunder, like as of fire."

It is to be observed that the initial hours in this new economy were hours in which it was necessary that there should be certain signs drawing attention to the new facts and symbolizing those new facts. Thus there were the sound of the rushing, mighty wind, the sign of the departing fire into the shape of tongues, and the accompaniment of the strange and wonderful gift of tongues, all which things were merely initial. All these things were sensual, that is, they appealed to the senses. They were introductory, initial, presently to be done away when the larger spiritual truth should be realized. That I think we need to remember. Just as, during the forty days prior to ascension there were signs appealing to the senses given to the disciples, the appearance and disappearances of Christ, all intended to train the disciples to do without these things; so in the first movements of the new era of the Spirit's operation there were signs granted, all intended to cease when they should no longer be needed. I believe that in the history of the Christian Church there have been eras when God has restored men by signs. He may be going to do it now, I do not know. But, remember, whenever it is so, it is in itself a sign of failure preceding it. Spiritual life on its highest level asks no sign, and needs none. Signs are only for the drawing of men spiritually dull into apprehension of spiritual things. God did, in the economy of infinite patience and unsurpassing grace, employ these signs at the beginning. From these earliest of signs, then, I take that of the

visible token given to these men in the upper room.

Let us consider, first, the tongues which these men saw as being the true symbol of the Christian Church. Second, let us consider the material of the symbol, fire, in its valuable and important suggestiveness. Finally, let us consider the teaching of the fact that this is the symbol of the Church.

First, then, I ask you to observe that this was the moment when the Christian Church came into being. I would draw a most careful distinction between the Church and the Hebrew people. I know there are senses in which we may speak of them as constituting in a bygone economy the Church in the wilderness, the assembly, the ecclesia in the wilderness. But here was the birth of the Christian Church. In this moment the units were baptized by the Holy Ghost into unity. From this moment you have no longer a group of individual men brought near geographically, kept near sentimentally; but you have rather a number of units made near and one vitally by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. That is the Christian Church. The Christian Church is not a fortuitous concurrence of individuals admiring an ideal, or who decide, as among themselves, that they will obey an ethic. The Christian Church is a holy company of men and women who have been baptized by the Holy Ghost into living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That baptism of the Spirit took place in the upper room, and these men became the Church. Coincidentally with that baptism they saw tongues parting asunder, as of fire; and by that token God gave unto them, and unto us for all time, the true symbol of the Christian Church. I sometimes feel that we have suffered almost incalculable loss in that we have forgotten this fact, and that the Church of God has made the gravest mistakes by selecting symbols other than the Divine one as representing herself and suggesting her nature and her mission. The Cross is not the symbol of the Christian Church; yet for generations we have made it our symbol, putting it upon our buildings, incorporating it into our art, wearing it as a sign. There are those who wear it as an ornament and at the same time live in ungodliness, that is blasphemy! I am not now thinking of these, but of devout souls who wear it as a sign. I think I am right in saying that the men's movement in the Episcopal Church wear as their sign a Maltese cross. There is a sense in which I like to see them, for I like anything that confesses definite Christianity—that is why I love the Salvation Army uniform—but the Cross is not the true symbol of the Christian Church. In the history of the Christian Church Satan never gained a more signal victory than in the hour in which he made men forget that the tongue is the true symbol of the Church.

Why is it that I thus affirm that the cross is not the symbol of the Church? Because the cross is not the final thing; absolutely necessary, no one will misunderstand me; but not final. The Cross was the instrument in time whereby sin did ultimately manifest itself, and God's central point wherein He did reveal the fact that grace is mightier than sin, and can triumph in love. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, is risen again." If you would have a truer symbol, something nearer to the actuality of the case, you must have a symbol, somehow, of an empty grave with the stone rolled away; but even that is not final. The symbol which suggests at once the nature and office of the Church is the tongue of fire.

Think with me of how simple and remarkable thing this is. Consider the symbolism of the tongue as apart from the fire. It is a theme I can only suggest, I have not the time, nor would it be the place generally, to discuss the power of the tongue. In the broadest outlook, I pray you remember that

man is peculiar in his power in this fact, that he is endowed with language, and that through the medium of thought expressed in language, all things begin to be, of good and of evil, in human history. All the history of human advancement is the history of the use of the tongue. Behind it there is thought, but thought has ever been expressed powerfully and prevailingly by the tongue. Among men there are many different circumstances and surroundings, manners, and maxims and methods, laws and languages, but the fact of the ability to speak and to express by means of the tongue is universal.

Think for a moment of the power of speech. Think what a power the tongue has been in dealing with vast masses of people. Think of the more wonderful power of the tongue in dealing with individuals. Let me take an illustration from English political life. There is a man who is largely out of sight in English political life now, Joseph Chamberlain. I never heard him speak in public, that is my loss. Those who did, know how he was able to influence multitudes. But I have sat with him in quiet committee work, and there he was one of the strongest men in persuasive speech I have ever known. I have known him sit down with a committee of twelve men gathered around him, ten of whom came entirely opposed to his view. Before the hour was over twelve men voted for him. It was the power of speech, the power of a strong man, a strong thinker, having strong convictions, and able so to state his case as to communicate his convictions. You can have a strong man and strong thinking and strong conviction without persuading other men; but the power of speech is that of so presenting conviction and viewpoint as to capture other men. It is but an illustration. I take it from that sphere because I want to indicate the fact that this is one of the greatest powers of humanity, and because we have so largely lost sight of it in the Christian Church. The power of the tongue in the propagation of the evangel of Jesus Christ has been supreme. The history of preaching is in itself enough to make any man proud that God has called him to be a preacher. There is nothing mightier in the history of the world than the history of preaching. Let the mind travel back over the Christian era; mark the great hours, the new movements, the advancements, and you will always find the preacher there!

Think of the power of personal speech, expressing thought, repeating thought, arguing thought, until the central citadel is captured, bent toward the King, and made receptive of the evangel. There is no power like it. This whole company of men and women baptized into living union with the Lord Jesus Christ felt in the thrill of that new baptism the desire to speak, and the symbol of their new office was that of the tongues parting asunder, as of fire, and it sat upon each of them! The use of the tongue in the work of Jesus Christ is supreme, the Church's mission in the world is to make Him known, and she is to do it by the tongue, and that in a threefold exercise: the tongue of praise that sets His glory forth, the tongue of prayer that speaks to Him and through Him to the Father concerning all human need, the tongue of prophecy that declares to men the will of God. In that moment when the Spirit came there was created in history a new institute of praise, of prayer, and of prophecy. The Church of God became the central institute for the praising of His name, that in which all the praise of creation and of the world should become articulate. The Church of God became a new institute of prayer, that in which priests, intercessors, should find the right of way into the very sanctuary of the Most High to speak of the burdens of humanity, and plead the cause of the suffering and oppressed. The Church of God became a new institute of prophecy, an institute made up of men and women who should come from the secret place of the most high, where they had listened to the ways and the will of God, and passing out among men should

proclaim that way and will, and declare the fact of His redemptive mercy.

But whether they praise or pray 01 prophesy, observe that the instrument is the tongue. In that symbol was focused the thought of the purpose of the existence of the Church on earth. The Church is to witness, to speak, in praise and prayer and prophecy, the great things into the experience of which she herself has come. That is the business of the Church, not the business of an order within the Church, but the business of the entire Church. Every individual member of the Church of Jesus Christ baptized into relationship with Him, sharing His life, feeling the thrill of His Spirit, desires to talk about it, unless that desire be quenched, refused, hindered until it perish. In that hour in which you first consciously yielded to the Lord, or felt the mastery of His Lordship, you desired to speak of the experience. I put it in the two ways because I think they cover two kinds of experience. There is a man here somewhere who could take me to the very spot where he gave himself to Christ, he could take me down to a pew in some chapel in the country and say, right there, on such a date, at such an hour, I gave myself to Christ. Another man here has no such experience, but there was some hour somewhere, somewhen, perhaps in the midst of ordinary life, when the consciousness of the relationship to Jesus Christ swept over his soul. Be the experience the first or the second, the first outcome of it was a desire to tell someone, generally the nearest and dearest; the father to tell his boy, the brother to tell sister, friend to tell friend, the desire to talk of these things. The tongue fired by the baptism of the Holy Spirit is God's method for proclaiming to the world the evangel of His Son, and it is the perpetual unchanging symbol of the Christian Church, the symbolic expression of the oft repeated word of our Lord, that we are witnesses.

Of course, as we have often seen, but which it is not our subject now to dwell upon, yet which ought to be mentioned, behind the witness of the lip there must be the witness of the life. But there must also be the witness of the tongue. Have you ever spoken to anyone about your Lord and Master? I should like to dwell upon it at some length. You will be very much surprised, if you begin to speak for your Lord, at how many men are eager to hear you that you thought cared nothing about Him. Talk to multitudes if God calls you; but if not, then to individuals: the power of the tongue in individual speech is ultimately more wonderful than the power of the tongue in dealing with vast audiences.

But now let us notice that the symbol is that of a tongue like as of fire. Let us read our Bibles accurately. Someone wrote to me recently that these were tongues of actual fire, and that men still received them, and knew it because they had experienced burning sensations in their bodies! As though men could ever apprehend a spiritual force carnally! It is the carnality of this modern movement that is its condemnation. "Like as of fire."

One's mind travels back through the Bible and remembers how perpetually and fittingly fire is the symbol of God. This was so in the burning bush, the bush that was burned with fire but not consumed. Out of the mystic flaming glory of the burning bush there came the voice, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." When, presently, the devout, persistent inquirer asked what was the name of the God of the bush, the answer came, "I am that I am." The symbol of Himself by which He chose to arrest the attention of the shepherd in the wilderness was that of fire filling the bush, but not consuming it. The inclusive declaration of the New Testament is full of value: "Our God is a consuming fire." But if I would have the true

interpretation of the fundamental suggestiveness of the symbol I go back once more to the passage I read from Isaiah, which can never be read, it seems to me, without producing in the soul a sense of majesty and awe. The young prophet was in the early part of his ministry, the throne of Judah was vacant for the first time in the life of the prophet: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." What was the consciousness that came to the prophet's soul in the presence of the unveiled glory of God? "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Then there flew one of the seraphim, and bringing the live coal from off the altar touched the lips of the man and said "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." After that came the challenge of God, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" and that man, his lips cleansed by fire, said, "Here am I; send me."

The symbolism of all that is not that the fire is mere inspiration or energy; it is a cleansing agent, it was to cleanse the lips of the man that the seraphim touched them with the live coal. Tongues of fire, the fire is that which cleanses the tongue. Let me read you something by way of contrast from the epistle of James:

"The tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell."

What a strange contrast! What an intended contrast! The tongue is an instrument, needing inspiration, always finding inspiration in fire to make it prevailing; and the fire is always either a polluting or a purifying force, which depends entirely upon whether the origin of the fire is the heaven of God or the hell that is underneath.

How powerful the tongue becomes when set on fire by hell. What mischief it can work in families! What mischief it can work in communities! What reputations it can blast and damn forever! What disaster it can work among the nations! A whispering tongue set on fire by hell can put two nations at war with each other.

Over against all that stands this symbol of the tongue of fire, holy fire, fire of the Divine Being, fire that cleanses, purifies, energizes, inspires with an influence high and holy and noble. What victories it can win! What breaches it can heal! What comfort it can bring! How it can knit man and man, and create the fellowship of believing souls! The tongue of fire—it must be of fire, and it must be of this fire.

That leads us to our last thought, the teaching of the symbol concerning the interrelationship between the tongue and the fire. The tongue is distinctly human, the fire is wholly Divine. The tongue of fire is the human instrument, surcharged, inspired by the Divine nature. It suggests the union of God and man for the specific purpose of witnessing, declaring, beseeching; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. That can be said without producing any effect. It needs the tongue of fire to say it. The human word, the Divine power; the human speech and the Divine power, cleansing, revealing, persuading.

The phrase employed concerning the apportionment of the gift is suggestive. Tongues, plural, "like as of fire; and it," singular, "sat upon each of them." One fire parting asunder into tongues: "It sat

upon each one of them," that is not merely a statement that upon each head there was a tongue of fire, but a statement that upon each head a tongue of that which was one fire.

Upon whom did the symbol rest? Upon men and women. And if you pass on, you have a quotation from Joel which Peter claimed to have been fulfilled in this experience: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.... Yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of My Spirit." What a revolutionary thing the coming of the Spirit of God is!

"Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Visions have to do with things that are still to come; dreams have to do with things that have happened. The old men in the power of the Holy Ghost shall speak of the past so as to enable us to understand it. The young men in the illumination of the Spirit shall speak of the future so as to enable us to act today. Tongues of fire.

What, then, are the great truths of this symbolism? That the Church is God's instrument of declaration and of witness. That every individual member of that Church is responsible in a measure for the proclamation of the power of the Holy Spirit. That human weakness is utter and absolute. That until there be the touch of fire there can be no proclamation that will prevail, but that there is no lack of equipment if we are in very deed children of God. Pentecost is not past; it is present. The day of spiritual power was not yesterday; it is today. While we have, and while we ask, no visible sign such as this, yet in this very hour of our worship we may have the presence and power of the selfsame Holy Spirit. In proportion as we realize what it is to be a member of Christ and of His Church, and are submitted to this indwelling Spirit, the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter, in that proportion we shall be prepared to declare, announce, witness, and by the human tongue cleansed by the fire of God, inspired by the fire of God, He will win His victories and establish His Kingdom.

Acts 2:4. The Filling Of The Spirit.

Acts 2:4.

The Filling Of The Spirit.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4

That is the central and supreme word about the day of Pentecost. The sound of the wind and the sign of the fire were symbolic, and not essential. The ecstatic speech in tongues was an outcome, temporary, transient, and of no permanent value for the purpose of the propagation of the Gospel; for they did not preach in tongues, they offered praises, through the very gladness of their hearts. The supreme fact of which both wind and fire were signs, and of which speech was an immediate outcome, was that recorded in the text; "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." The verb here is a simple one, meaning exactly to fill, but it was used figuratively in the sense of imbuing, supplying, furnishing; and whereas none of these words would convey the full meaning, yet they may help us to an understanding of that meaning. They were all imbued with the Spirit, they were all supplied with the Spirit, they were all furnished with the Spirit.

The emphasis of our text is on the act rather than on the condition of repleteness which resulted. What Luke has chronicled for us here, to which he draws special attention, is that then and there, under the conditions described, this wonder took place. Suddenly these waiting people, the eleven apostles, with the women and the Virgin Mother, and our Lord's brethren in the flesh, those who had been waiting for ten days since last they looked on the glory of the risen face of Jesus, these people were suddenly caught up by the Spirit, penetrated through and through by the Spirit, brought completely under the power of the Spirit. They were now born of the Spirit into a new consciousness of their Master, of themselves, and of all things. Suddenly, and without being able to explain the how of the infinite mystery, they found themselves in a closer companionship with Jesus than they had ever known during the days of His flesh. Suddenly there began to break on them understanding of mysterious things which He had uttered in earlier days; there came to them unveilings of the meaning of things they had watched Him do, but which they had not understood. In that hour the enigma of His own Personality was in a measure solved.

In that hour, moreover, they came to new consciousness of themselves, saw their own weakness as they had never seen it, understood their own foolishness as they had never understood it, mourned over their past blunders, discovered how narrow and incomplete had been their highest understanding of their Lord's ministry as it had expressed itself ten days before, when they asked Him if He was about to restore the Kingdom to Israel. There broke on their astonished souls the vastness of His enterprise, the glory of His mission; they found their hearts stormed by the whole wide world, and Jerusalem was but the center of the concentric circles of Judea and Samaria and the uttermost part of the world to which they found themselves the appointed messengers of their Lord and Master.

In this hour all things became new. God was new, the world was new, and life was new. This little company had been walking in a wonderful light for three years, and yet, in this moment of Pentecostal effusion and spiritual illumination, they looked back, and, lo, the whole landscape was bathed in a glory they had never dreamed of and never before looked on. Life became a rapture, a delight, an infinite possibility; and they were conscious of a power driving them out in the Name and nature of their Lord and Master to begin the great work of proclaiming Him.

That was the daybreak of Christianity. In all the full meaning of our great word "Christianity" there had been none in the world until that moment, apart from Christ Himself. These men had never understood Him, they had never been brought into very close fellowship with Him, and, more than once, as we follow the story of His teaching of them, we are conscious of the sighs that escaped Him, and of His sense of limitation and inability.

Let us reverently attempt to meditate this morning on this experience; first, in its relation to the work of Christ, and, second, in its relation to the experience of the disciples.

Inclusively we may at once say that Pentecost in its relation to the work of Christ was the culmination of the earthly mission of the Son of God and the commencement of the heavenly mission consequent thereupon. An intelligent study of these Gospel narratives and of the fact of Christianity demands that we recognize the difference between the Gospel narratives and this brief story of the book of the Acts. We may remind ourselves that that difference is marked by the very way in which the beloved physician commenced this second treatise to his friend Theophilus. As Luke said to him, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and teach," he suggested the incompleteness and imperfection of all that had gone before. It was complete and perfect in so far as it was within the will and economy of God, but the past had not reached completion. We may say, superlative as the declaration appears to be, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the World, began His work on the Day of Pentecost. Everything else was primary, preparatory, while necessary and fundamental. All through the public ministry, and even in the hour of the Cross, and beyond the Cross until He ascended on high, His own word will accurately describe His experience: "How am I straitened!" This is not for a moment to undervalue all that had preceded. Apart from that which had preceded, this Pentecostal effusion would have been impossible; apart from all that of which we have the narratives in our Gospels, we never could have had the wondrous apostolic service, or the early history of the Christian Church, of which the first fragment is written in this book of the Acts. So while this Pentecostal hour was the culmination of the earthly mission of Jesus, it was the commencement of the heavenly. From that moment in which the Spirit came and filled these men, may I reverently point out, the Lord Jesus could no longer say, "I am straitened." The bonds were broken, the barriers swept away, the limitations at an end, and Christianity began.

Let us trace the work of our Lord rapidly, as it is recorded for us in the New Testament. In order to do so we pass back into the heavenly places and the heavenly ages, recognizing that these are utterly beyond our final apprehension. We cannot express them, we cannot perfectly understand them, but for the illumination of our present life the veil has been drawn aside, and things have been revealed about that past. The very word "past" is a revelation of our human limitation, but we must employ it. Christ's ministry began, not on earth, but in heaven, began in that mysterious and wonderful self-emptying to which Paul referred when in his Philippian letter he spoke of Christ as

being in the form of God, and yet not counting this equality with God a prize to be snatched at or held for His own enrichment. He emptied Himself.

I think it is well that we should immediately say that this is a declaration in the presence of which we must wonder and worship, and confess our inability finally to explain. Much has been said, especially in recent years, concerning that great kenosis, that great self-emptying of the Son of God, and much harm has been done by some interpretations thereof. We are warranted in saying of it so much as Holy Scripture says, that whatever functional relationship Jesus held with essential Deity He laid aside in the interest of humanity. He did not count His right of equality with God something to be held for His own enrichment, but laid it aside. Stooping from sovereignty to submission, from some form of manifestation suited to heavenly beings to a form of manifestation suited to man in the time of limitation, He took upon Him the form of man. As we thus see the work of the Son of God at its commencement as a self-emptying that laid aside all the rights of equality with God and laid aside all co-operation with the Spirit on the basis of equality, consenting in some infinite mystery to be born of the Spirit, and in its continuation consenting throughout the whole period of a life to be an instrument of the Spirit, we touch the profound and infinite things that lie behind the Pentecostal effusion.

The first fact in the ministry of the Son of God for human redemption was that self-emptying, and the final fact was that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." He first emptied Himself, and finally He filled these men with all the pleroma of Deity. This was a new activity in co-operation with the Spirit wherein, according to His own word, He did receive from the Father and pour forth on these men that infinitely mysterious and yet wonderful gift of the Spirit. Then the new day broke, the new life began, and the Christian fact was established in the world.

Between that first fact of self-emptying and that final fact of the filling of these men lay all the processes with which we are most familiar. First, the Incarnation, whereby God, veiled in flesh, manifested Himself to the sons of men; the patient ministry of word and work through which the will of God was revealed to men who had lost their understanding of it, and the glory and the grace of God, which were made to shine again, so that men, seeing these things, found Him. Centrally there was the infinite mystery of the Cross, and beyond it the Day of Resurrection, whereby the bonds of death were broken and the perfection of the atoning work was sealed. Finally there was the Ascension to the right hand of power.

Our Lord emptied Himself, He was made flesh, He went about doing and teaching, He bore our sins in His own Body on the tree, He broke the power of death and arose from among the dead, He ascended to the right hand of the Father, receiving gifts, yea, for the rebellious also; He poured out the Spirit, and "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."

The blessing thus bestowed is suggestively described to us by certain phrases of the New Testament. The work of the Spirit is described as a baptism, as an anointing, and as a sealing. Men are baptized in the Spirit, men are anointed of the Spirit, men are sealed by the Spirit, and these three phrases describe different phases of the one great and inclusive fact. The filling is the supreme matter: the filling is baptizing, the filling is anointing, the filling is sealing.

The filling of the Spirit was, first of all, a baptism, by which phrase is suggested the death into life, which is the peculiar and fundamental fact of all personal Christian experience, a dying to the false

life and rising to the true, a dying to sin and rising to holiness, a dying to the world so far as the world is separated from God, and a rising into the life of the ages which is the life of dominion over all the cosmos. Baptism stands as the sign and symbol of that passing from death unto life which is the fundamental fact in all Christian experience. In that moment when these men and women were filled with the Spirit they were baptized of the Spirit into life.

The anointing of the Spirit ever signifies the preparation of those who are baptized of the Spirit for service. It is the peculiar word of the old economy, made use of in the new, reminding us of that anointing for priestly function and all holy service which men in the old dispensation passed through. The Spirit anoints for service all whom He baptizes into life to the service of God.

The filling is also a sealing. The seal is the sign of a covenant. As the Spirit of God came to these men He came as the seal of a covenant between themselves and Him, a covenant by which they belonged entirely to God and God belonged wholly to them, placing Himself in all His wisdom and all His might entirely and absolutely at their disposal, lifting them to the height of interest in His purpose, descending to the level of interest in their enterprises. In that moment when they were filled with the Spirit, filled with the Spirit as the result of the perfecting of the work of their Lord and Master Christ, they were baptized from death into life, they were anointed for all enterprise and service, and the covenant made between God and themselves was sealed.

So we pass to consider the fact in the experience of the disciples. Here again we may inclusively declare that in this filling of the Spirit men on earth were joined to the Man at God's right hand. Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians said, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." We do no violence to the declaration if we state the selfsame truth from another standpoint, and say, He that is of one Spirit with the Lord is thereby joined to the Lord. This is the mystic side of Christianity which we must not lose. If by the use of the word mystic I suggest something unreal, then I fain would change it. This is the actual essential central fact of Christianity. Who is the Christian man? That man who is living one life with the Lord of glory, not the man who has merely seen a vision of Christ and admires it, not the man who is sentimentally in agreement with the purposes of Jesus of Nazareth, but the man who, in an infinite mystery that is always beyond final explanation, does live one life with the Lord of glory.

"They were filled with the Spirit." The Spirit proceeding from the Father, from the Son, came to them, and in that moment they lived one life with Him, and that is the explanation of the things we referred to at the commencement; a new vision of themselves, His vision of them; a new vision of the world, His vision of the world; a new vision of God, His vision of God. Their eyes were strangely and wonderfully and actually illuminated by the light of His mind and outlook. They had the mind of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit of Christ. Not only is it true that they saw as He saw; it is also true that now through their eyes He was able to look at men, through their hands He was able to touch men, and by the cession of their feet to Him He was able to travel anew through Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. They were joined to the Lord, and the limited and localized Body of Jesus of Nazareth was thereby immediately multiplied a hundredfold, and the multiplication has continued through the centuries. Every new man, woman, boy, girl won from the territory of the world into relation with Him has become a new Body for Jesus, in which He lives, through which He looks, in which He speaks, in which He travels, and through which He comes nearer and yet nearer to the wounds and weariness of humanity, healing the wounds and

resting the weariness.

If this be true, we may pass with great solemnity and reverence over the pathway of this Man as we surveyed it, and declare that now in these men these essential things of His limited ministry are realized anew. These men were filled with the Spirit and lived one life with the Son of God. Then the first principle of their life is that of self-emptying. He emptied Himself; He did not consider that which was His by eternal right something that He must hold for His own enrichment, but laid it aside. That is the story of the Spirit-filled life, that is the fundamental fact in all true Christian life. If I affirm that in any hour, or by any experience, I have been filled with the Spirit and still live a self-centred life, I blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. He emptied Himself. He that is joined to the Lord is of one Spirit; he also empties himself.

Therefore these men filled with the Spirit of God became God—manifesting men. Said Paul to the Corinthians, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost!" That is the meaning of Pentecost. It resulted in such capture of the bodies of men and women that through them in all their habits and all their ways, through all their lives, God shall be manifest to men. I know there is a lonely and unique meaning in the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus, but the great principle is continued through all the Christian era, and every Christian man and woman in their day and opportunity is an incarnation of Christ, Who is the incarnation of God. It was this which Peter meant when describing the Church of God he said, "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

To be filled with the Spirit is to be an instrument for the manifestation of God to the sons of men.

To be filled with the Spirit is to live the life of love and service, in word and in work.

To be filled with the Spirit is to share the suffering that saves. There are lonely and mysterious and infinite elements in the passion of the Son of God that are always beyond us and from which we receive the benefits of the eternal grace. But we can share in His saving work only as we share in His sacrificial love. The fulness of the Spirit is ability to suffer with Christ on behalf of men. The fulness of the Spirit is the unlocking of the gates of life, that the life may be poured out in work and weariness and toil and travail, through which, and through which alone, the Kingdom of God can come.

To be joined to the Lord is to be one spirit with Him, and therefore it is also to have fellowship in the deathless life, to be ready to say with Paul, As dying, but behold we live, as always bearing about in the body the stigmata of Jesus, and yet always being led in triumph in Jesus Christ, so that no forces can destroy. The fulness of the Spirit is the fulness of resurrection life in Jesus.

To be filled with the Spirit is not merely to share in the suffering of the Cross and the power of the Resurrection. It is to reign with Him as the ascended One, to sit with Him in the places of authority in the heavenlies, to wait patiently with Him for the ultimate victory, and all the while with Him to reign over circumstances and happenings and forces.

Again, to be filled with the Spirit is to be able to communicate the Spirit to others. Do you challenge that affirmation? Then I pray you think of our Lord's figurative teaching as given at the Feast in Jerusalem and recorded for us in the seventh chapter of John: "If any man thirst, let him come

unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his inner life shall flow rivers of living water." And John adds, "Thus spake He of the Spirit." There is no power for Christian service that does not consist in the communication of the Spirit of God to other people, and only as we are suffused in the power of the Holy Spirit can we become the media which communicate this Spirit of God to others. He that ascended on high and received the Spirit and poured it forth on others links us to Himself in this holy life so that we also receive the Spirit in order that we may pour it forth on others.

This Pentecostal effusion is not an event of two millenniums ago, but the perpetual rushing forth of the river of life proceeding from the throne of God by the way of the altar; and whithersoever the river comes, there is life. These rivers of living water are to flow from the saints, who themselves being filled to fulness and to overflowing communicate the gift to others.

All this great ministry of the Spirit is suggestively set forth in the symbolic language of the New Testament. The symbols of the Spirit in the New Testament are those of wind, springs and rivers of water, and fire—the great elemental forces. Each has its distinctive features. The wind is in itself the very element of life. The rivers of water are always those that bring satisfaction and renewal to everyday life. The fire is always the emblem of searching purification and of perpetual energy. These are the peculiar symbols that the New Testament employs to give us some understanding of the work of the Spirit. Let us note the ideas common to all these figures of speech, the wind, the water, and the fire. They are forces mighty and mysterious. They are forces capable of destroying life. We are familiar with the hurricane that sweeps the sea, the devastating flood that destroys everything in its path, the conflagration that leaves desolation behind it. Yet all these forces are necessary to life. They demand obedience in order to render service. Obey the law of any of these forces, and the force becomes your servant. Disobey the law of wind or water or fire, and you will be destroyed.

When these men and women were filled with the Spirit they entered not only into a realm of privilege, but also into the place of responsibility. What is our responsibility to the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of wind? That we live on the heights and inhale the breath of God. What is our responsibility in view of the filling of the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of the waters? That we live in the stream and drink. What is our responsibility in view of the filling of the Spirit as suggested by the symbol of the fire? That we dwell in fire, knowing that fire destroys nothing but that which cannot be permeated and filled with its own nature, and that we quench not the Spirit.

We have no responsibility in this Pentecostal age to seek or ask for the Spirit. Our responsibility is to discover the laws of the Spirit and obey them. In proportion as we are careless of the laws of the life of the Spirit the experience fades and the power recedes. In proportion as we obey, the experience grows and the power increases.

To some it may be that all this is an unknown tongue. To them, therefore, I bring the words of Jesus, words spoken to men who had not then received the gift of the Spirit: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." That word is not for those who have received the Spirit, it is for those who never yet have received the gift. If you have never received the gift of the Spirit you may receive it by asking for it now. The Pentecostal effusion is not to be put back two thousand years as something dim and distant and far away. The river of God is moving, the winds of God are

blowing, the fire of God is burning. Then, without sign or sound or confession made to men, ask the gift and receive.

Or it may be that having received, the vision has become dim and the forces weak. Then open again the eastern windows and yield the life once more to that Spirit Who needs no asking to enter but only the unlocking of the doors and the opening of the avenues of life. For those who thus yield there shall be repeated the experience of the first Pentecost, the baptism of fire that destroys the impure and energizes the life, the wind of God

that bloweth lustily

Our sicknesses to heal;

the flowing of the river that quenches our thirst, and then becomes the means of blessing through us to other men.

Acts 2:24. The Resurrection.

Acts 2:24.

The Resurrection.

... it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

Acts 2:24

So far as the records of the New Testament reveal, these words constitute the first Pentecostal comment upon the fact of the Resurrection. They occur in the second part of the discourse delivered upon the Day of Pentecost by Peter. In the early part of that discourse, he set the things upon which men were looking and which were filling their hearts with astonishment, in relation to the prophetic writings of the Hebrew people. Having done this he commenced, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words..."; and then in brief and wonderful sentences, he told the whole story of the mission of Jesus. In this discourse concerning Jesus, there is a main line of argument twice interrupted by parenthetical explanation.

The words of my text constitute the first sentence in the first of these parentheses of exposition. Briefly, the discourse declared that Jesus of Nazareth was a Man, and that He was a Man approved of God unto those among whom He labored by the miracles and wonders which God wrought, approved that is as perfect in His humanity and therefore the instrument of those miracles and wonders and signs. Then the apostle declared that this man was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that He died at the hands of men who were without the law, to whom he had been handed over by the men of Israel. Thus he merged two truths concerning the Cross into one great declaration. It was the ultimate in sin, it was the ultimate in grace. The hands of lawless men crucified Him but this within the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

He then proceeded to declare that God raised this Jesus from the dead and had exalted Him to His own right Hand, and that as the result of that exaltation, the Spirit had been poured forth.

The first word of comment, I say, on the fact of the Resurrection, is this word of my text, "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Its note was that of exultant triumph. Imaginatively one can almost hear Peter saying, "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it." He! and as he thus referred to Him, there was within him the memory of the years he had spent in His company, the shame and sorrow of his own denial, the exultant joy of his own restoration, and supremely the sense of the new life and hope that had come to him by the way of the Resurrection. The whole fact of the Person of his Lord, dawning with new meaning upon his soul as the result of that Resurrection, was in his mind as he said, "He!" It was not possible that "... He should be holden of it." In the presence of that Resurrection fact, which had changed the man at the very center of his being, he spoke of death almost surely with contempt. "It."

Notice the declaration itself, and broadly first of all. It was a declaration made by this man illuminated by the Spirit, seeing things as he had never seen them; that God raised Jesus because it was necessary that He should do so. We may be very bold at this point and declare that here Peter affirmed that God was bound to raise Jesus from the dead. The character of God was involved, the nature of His law was at stake, the interest of eternal order was implicated. "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it." That such an One as He should lie in the power of death irrevocably was impossible. "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Then, having said so daring and so bold a thing, he halted for argument; and for argument he turned to one of the Psalms with which these men of Israel were so perfectly familiar. Citing from the sixteenth Psalm in our arrangement of the psalter—not exactly as we find the words there but from the Septuagint Version, which is exactly the same in spirit and in truth—he gave these words as constituting his argument for the declaration he made.

I beheld the Lord always before my face:

For He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;

Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope:

Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades,

Neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption.

Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;

Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance.

Then, proceeding, he gave the reason for this interpretation of the Psalm, declaring that when David wrote it, he was a prophet and had been lifted to the high places of vision. Looking down through the ages, he saw the fulfilment of God's Kingdom purposes, not in himself, not in his immediate successors, but in the Messiah, and singing through the ages he heard this song, the song of the Messiah.

In this Psalm then we have a revelation of the things that made the Resurrection necessary. First of all, without entering into a discussion as to the authorship of the psalm or as to its first meaning but accepting this inspired interpretation, let us look for a moment or two at its notes and declarations.

First observe the exultant joy of the singer.

My heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;

Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope.

And again:

Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;

Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance.

The reading of the sentence is sufficient to establish the accuracy of the suggestion, that the Psalm is full of exultant joy. Now let us divide these sentences into two parts. First these three:

My heart was glad.

My tongue rejoiced.

My flesh also shall dwell in hope.

Second these:

Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;

Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance.

Between the two sets of exultant notes, we find Hades, Sheol, the underworld of death and darkness, and so far as humanity was concerned, the underworld of despair; and through fear of which, man had all his lifetime been subject to bondage. The first assurances expressed in the declarations, "My heart was glad, my tongue rejoiced, my flesh shall dwell in hope," were assurances in view of Hades and the dark underworld. The second declarations, "Thou madest known unto me the ways of life, Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance," are the result of the realization of the things anticipated. Here is a singer looking toward death who says, "My heart was glad, my tongue rejoiced, my flesh shall dwell in hope, for of this I am assured, Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, nor suffer my soul to see corruption." The soul was approaching Hades and the flesh the grave, and yet the singer sings:

My heart was glad.

My tongue rejoiced.

My flesh also shall dwell in hope.

Then presently, without any reference to an historic event, the same voice is sounding on the other side of Hades.

Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;

Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance.

Now note most carefully that Peter quoted this Psalm on the day of Pentecost as having reference to the Cross and Resurrection. Peter, who had shunned the Cross not for himself but for his Lord, looking back on his Lord's pathway, understood in a moment the attitude of Jesus during the dark days during which He was approaching the Cross; the attitude of mind out of which proceeded such words as these: "Now is My soul troubled"; and such words as these: "My joy I give unto you." Strangely conflicting and apparently contradictory things, which Peter and the rest could not understand, were uttered during that wonderful progress toward Jerusalem which continued in spite of their dissuasions. Luke has chronicled that when He knew the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His Face to go. Peter, in the light of Pentecostal vision, discovered that in the heart of Jesus on all that shadowed pathway there was a song and this was the song:

My heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced:

Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope;

and at last Peter had heard spiritually, the song of the Lord upon the other side of Hades and the dark underworld:

Thou madest known unto me the ways of life;

Thou shalt make me full of gladness with Thy countenance.

Here then is more than the mere recitation of a poem. Here Peter had discovered the deep inner meaning of the death of Jesus and the Resurrection. In this song, he finds the clear declaration of the reason why Christ rose from among the dead.

We have then in the Psalm a revelation of the reason of the singer's joy. First: "I beheld the Lord always before my face." Second: "He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." "Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh shall dwell in hope."

Such an One as set the Lord always before him, such an One as knew God always at his right hand, was able to say, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, nor suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Running through the whole of that Psalm quoted by Peter is a recognition of that which the Bible forever insists upon and which our Christian religion insistently proclaims, the relation between sin and death. Why this hope in the presence of the underworld? Why this hope as approach was made to the deep darkness? "I have set the Lord always before my face. He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." In that twofold declaration we have the real secret of that which Peter now declared. "It was not possible that He should be holden of it."

In this word of Peter then there is a declaration of our Lord's victory in the realm of sin, and by the citation of this Psalm we are given an analysis of that victory. It was a threefold victory that Jesus won over sin, a victory complete and making the Resurrection necessary.

First, the victory was victory over the possibility of originating evil. "I beheld the Lord always before my face" is; the note, not so much of Jesus in His humanity as of Jesus in His relation to God as His Servant. Second, victory over evil as suggested to the soul from without; "For He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." That is victory within the realm of human life and human nature. Finally, victory over evil as responsibility assumed. For I pray you, that where there is victory as the Servant over the possibility of originating evil and victory as a Man over the assault of evil as from without, there is no place for death in the life of such an One. Yet He descended to death and passed to Hades. In that act, He assumed responsibility;

He died to atone

For sins not His own.

Following Him into that underworld of evil and knowing Him as He was revealed by the Spirit and seen in the light of the Resurrection, Peter rose to the height of supreme and final affirmation as he said, "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it."

Let us look a little more closely at these things. First, I have declared that here is the affirmation of victory over the possibility of originating evil; "I beheld the Lord always before my face." We gaze with this man Peter upon Jesus of Nazareth, and we see in Him what Peter saw in Him and what those writers saw in Him, a new Creation, a new Being in human history. Man indeed, yet more than Man; God indeed, but God subject instead of Sovereign. We see Him, the One Who being on equality with God did not consider that equality a prize to be snatched at and held for His own enrichment or aggrandizement; the One Who in some unfathomable mystery emptied Himself and took the form of a Servant. There we halt. That self-emptying was His abandonment of the form and activity of sovereignty and the assumption of the form and activity of subservience. I have already done in a passing phrase what I will now do quite definitely. I admit the mystery. I may be wholly wrong, but the growing conviction of my soul is that we never shall account for these things by human philosophies; but the fact is a declared one, that this Son of God, the eternal, immediate Divine manifestation of God to others, Himself did stoop and bend from the form of Sovereignty to that of Service. In that act, an opportunity was created for a new genesis of evil, for in the moment when a will is placed under control, the possibility of disobedience is created.

Let us illustrate here for a moment, not in the realm of our own human life, but in the realm of angelic life as that is revealed to us in the word of truth. In the Epistle of Jude, we find these words: "... angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation,..." That leaving of the proper habitation was not the penalty of sin but the act of sin. It was the volitional act whereby these angels exercised will as apart from the control of the Divine and in rebellion against the Divine.

It is impossible to conceive of a servant of God within whom that possibility does not exist. Now, listen to the language of the Psalm; "I have set the Lord always before my face." That is the language of One Who kept His principality by abiding in His habitation; the language of One Who never exercised His will under the constraint of personal desire; the language of One Who never turned His back upon God; "I have set the Lord always before my face." Therefore His heart was glad, therefore His tongue rejoiced, therefore His flesh dwelt in hope! Because He, in the divine economy and in the midst of those movements that came from the will of God, remained the Servant of God. He did not fall from His first estate by personal volition. There came no act of disobedience and no deflection from the high and awful integrity of unswerving submission to the will of God. That was perfect victory as the Servant of God.

The second phrase leads us a step further and perhaps brings us into more intimate relationship with the things of our own experience. Not only did He say, "I have set Jehovah ever before my face," but this also: "He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." Quite simply we may declare that the first affirmation means, "I have not moved," while the second declaration is, "I have not been moved." The fall of Lucifer, son of the morning, was the fall of one who moved from his habitation. The fall of Adam was the fall of one who was moved from his habitation as the result of temptation from without. The fall of Satan, so far as that is revealed to us in Holy Scripture, was the fall of a servant in answer not to attacks from without, but to desire from within that turned his face from God. Said Jesus, "I have set the Lord always before My face." The fall of man was different. The sin of man was the response of man to the suggestion of evil that came from without. Now, says this Servant in the great Psalm, "He is on my right hand that I should not be moved." The vision here again is that of the Son of God, but also of the Son of Adam, united to the

race. Mark the possibility created when He was born of the Holy Ghost and by the Virgin Mary. He came to stand where man stood at the beginning; not to stand where I stand by relationship to Adam, but to stand where Adam stood before Adam sinned; and therefore in the midst of opposing forces; in the midst of that dark underworld of evil. He came to stand in a place where it was possible to yield. Peter, looking back on the whole life, catches up the music of the Psalm and says the whole story of the Man Jesus is told thus: "He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." He walked with God and so was upheld. He never exercised will under constraint of suggestion made by others whether high or low, good or evil. He never departed from the side of God, and all the allurements and all the assaults which were presented to His soul and beat against it from without, He mastered because He walked with God. Therefore His heart was glad, His tongue rejoiced, His very flesh dwelt in hope. Therefore, in Him there was neither fear of death nor anticipation of death as for Himself.

So we move to the last phase of this wonderful victory, the most wonderful of all for us men. Why was He glad? Read again the ancient song. He was glad because of the double triumph: "I have set the Lord always before me." "He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved." What was the chief cause of His gladness? Why was He glad because He had thus been victorious? He was glad because of the possibility created by this victory, of yet another victory more wonderful, more profound, more tremendous. He was glad because of the victory in life as creating the possibility of dying vicariously. He was crowned with glory and honor that He might taste death for every man; not because He tasted death for every man, but in order that He might do so. Death had no place in the order of His Being, but because His Being was perfect He was able to die for others. Consequently, there was not only the possibility of dying vicariously for others but of dying victoriously, knowing that when God carried Him into that realm in which He took over responsibility, He could not abandon Him. "... Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hades,... Thou wilt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption...." Even when the soul is in Hades and the body is in the grave, even when the personality is severed and divided by the mystery of death and is thus found in the land of shadows and the place of corruption, even there God cannot abandon. "... Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hades,..." nor "... suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."

Now mark the fact of His dying and the element which we cited before in Peter's inspired declaration. He died by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, therefore He died in fellowship with God. The dying of Jesus was not conflict with God; it was no attempt in the darkness to persuade God to love, but rather cooperation in the darkness with God in order that Love might do His perfect work. Even in His dying He carried forward the double triumph of His living.

What was the first triumph? "I have set Jehovah always before my face...." Cooperation with His will, yielding to it, and never answering the desire of His own soul. Listen to Gethsemane! "... not My will but Thine be done!" It is the same triumph in the face of death.

What was the triumph of His human life? The refusal to listen to any voice that suggested that He should depart: from the Divine pathway. Listen to His answer to the suggestion that He should shun the Cross. "... Get thee behind. Me, Satan,... for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." That answer was the measure of His devotion. So we see the double victory of His living operating in His dying, for in the mystery of death He is still, the Servant of God, originating

no evil, and a Man in right relationship with God refusing to listen to the suggestion of evil.

Again, in His dying, we see Him in cooperation with God, assuming responsibility for the sin of the race, and therefore by His dying creating moral values at the disposal of the race. What then is the victory in the case of such an One? That Hades cannot hold the soul though it possess it, that corruption cannot touch His Body though they lay Him in the grave. We have in this Death and Resurrection of Jesus that in human history which is unique. We cannot account for it by our science, and our philosophies cannot explain it. It was God's interference; God's new mysterious redeeming act; that One died whom Hades could not hold nor corruption touch; and all because of the victory He won over evil in every form. Therefore to Him God made known the ways of life, He was made full of gladness with the countenance of God.

On that Resurrection morning, when He did first reveal Himself to Mary of Magdala and throughout the day to other individual souls and through the forty days of His appearing and disappearing, He was flinging everywhere the sunshine of the gladness of His own heart because of the victory that He had won in His mastery of evil. The risen Lord is Victor over every conceivable form of essential evil, over the possibility of primal genesis from within His own life as the Servant of God. "I have set the Lord always before my face..."; over the possibility of evil resulting from the assault that comes from without; "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved;" and over evil as responsibility assumed. Resurrection demonstrated that victory; "... it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Had death held Him then God had been defeated, or God had been involved. It was not possible that He should be holden of it.

If He be Victor over every conceivable form of essential evil, He is Victor ultimately over all the results of evil, suffering, sorrow, and sinning, as well as sin. How long that ultimate day seems to us in coming! The consciousness of evil remains. We know it, for death and sinning are still with us, and evil lifts its proud head even today threatening goodness. Ah! But my brethren, when that consciousness of evil threatens to oppress the heart overmuch, let us ever condition it by this fact of His victory over evil at its heart and center, knowing that we are taking part in an administrative warfare. The central battle has been fought and won.

If He rose not, then we are of all men most pitiable, for we have seen a vision and indulged a hope which is false. But not with the gloomy foreboding of any such suggestion do we end this meditation, but as men and women who remind our heart amid the travail and the toil that He is risen, and that because it was not possible that He should be holden of death.

Acts 2:32. The Teaching Of The Resurrection.

Acts 2:32.

The Teaching Of The Resurrection.

This Jesus did God raise up.

Acts 2:32

"This Jesus"! That opening word fastens attention upon a particular Person, and compels us to consider Him, even before we pay attention to the declaration of the apostle.

The lesson we read constitutes the second part of the first message delivered by an apostle of Jesus Christ after the Pentecostal effusion. Having claimed that this outpouring of the Spirit was in fulfilment of prophecy, Peter proceeded to declare that this fulfilment was the result of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth. Commencing with words intended to arrest anew the attention of his hearers, he said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words," and his discourse then became descriptive of this Person and His work, up to the statement of our text, "This Jesus did God raise up." Thus, between the opening words of the paragraph which we read for lesson and those of our text, we have the picture of the Person to Whom reference is made by the text.

This description was first historic. Peter drew the attention of these people to One Whom they knew. "Jesus of Nazareth" was the name by which He was well known through all that region.

He reminded them next that the Person of Whom he was speaking was a Man separate and distinct from all other men in the perfections of His humanity, that having been evidenced by the wonders he had wrought, or more accurately, as the apostle put it, by the wonders God had wrought through Him. Finally, he further reminded them that they, the men of Israel, had delivered this Man over to the Gentiles, men without law, who crucified and slew Him. Of Him Peter declared, "This Jesus hath God raised up."

In the course of that description of the Person, the apostle claimed that He was in very deed that Messiah for Whom they had been looking, citing from their own psalms the words of David, and showing that the words David uttered could not have been fulfilled in the experience of David.

This Jesus Whom ye knew; this Jesus Whom ye slew; this Jesus Who is the Messiah for Whom you so long have been waiting; "This Jesus did God raise up."

Let us now consider what this act of God in the case of this Man really meant. Once in the history of the human race, a Man murdered by His enemies was raised from the dead, and exalted by God to the place of universal power. What is the significance of this fact?

Let me at once summarize the things I desire to say. The fact that God raised Jesus of Nazareth from among the dead signifies first, His absolute approbation of Him. It signifies secondly, His rejection of all other men. It signifies finally, the Divine appointment of the approved One to the

right of restoring the rejected many.

Take the first of these facts, the Divine approbation of Jesus of Nazareth. I am constrained to say that this particular phase of our consideration needs emphasizing. Has it occurred to you, or am I wrong in my suspicion, that we are a little in danger of asking too constantly today whether Jesus satisfies us? Thank God for every man and woman in this house who can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want"; but that is not the profoundest question. If this Jesus is to be to me anything other than One Whom I admire, if He is to be to me the central force and fact of my religious life, the profounder question is, "What is God's estimate of Him?"

The whole story of Jesus presents constant and cumulative evidence of the Divine approbation of Jesus. There were remarkable signs of this at His birth. We very often speak of the humility of His coming, but that coming was accompanied by many wonderful signs. All the worlds known to men were moved there at. Angels broke silence and sang over Bethlehem's plain. Kings from afar were moved to follow the guidance of a star and to bring gold, frankincense and myrrh. The underworld of evil was shaken to its very center, and found earthly manifestation in the malice of a king and the murder of innocents. The world was not ready to receive Him, but the Divine approbation of the holy child was manifested by external and material signs of the most surprising nature.

Through the years of His public ministry that approbation was thrice declared. On the day of baptism a voice declared, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." On the holy mount the voice declared, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." A little nearer to the darkness of Calvary, when the Greeks were asking to see Him, out of His sorrowing soul there came the wail, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." The Heaven's silence was again broken, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The Divine approbation was marked in all the miracles of Jesus. That to me is a subject full of fascination. The miracles do not prove His Deity, but the perfection of His humanity. Mark the carefulness of the apostle here when he said, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." The doing of the wonders and signs was the evidence of the perfection of His humanity, not of His Deity. It was through the absolutely perfect Man that God was able to do works which were wonders and signs to imperfect men, because they were operations in realms higher than fallen man had yet discovered, but which were perfectly familiar to the perfect Man. In all these things, we have manifestations of the Divine approbation.

At His death supernatural seals were set upon Him, giving evidence of God's approbation. The quaking earth, the darkened sun, the yawning graves; these were all God's evidences that the thing being done was a thing of sin against the cosmic order.

But the supreme sign, the final manifestation, the ultimate seal was this, that He did raise Him from the dead, and we must always add, what Peter immediately added, "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted." Not merely resurrection from among the dead, but resurrection immediately followed by exaltation. Easter must be linked to Ascension before we understand perfectly the values of this demonstration. Others were brought back from death in the economy of God for purposes of His own, but only to pass back into death. Lazarus was raised by Jesus, but only to

pass back into death and through death to the life beyond. The child of Jairus was raised from the dead, but to pass back into death again. This Man; raised in actual bodily life, not the same as that laid down, but different; exactly the same, but transformed; this Man never saw death again. He tasted death for every man. "Death no more hath dominion over Him." So we must ever add to the resurrection the fact of Ascension when we think of the Divine demonstration.

What then is this demonstration? The resurrection first attests to the perfection of the life of this Man. The resurrection declares in human history that this Man, rejected of men, is accepted of God; that this type of human life, for which the world cannot find any room, is God's type of human life.

What is the type? I can only state the great subject in phrases. God-centered; self-emptying; man-serving. That is the whole story of the life of Jesus. If as rapidly as memory can do its work, you will think of that story from beginning to end, you will find these things include all the facts; and the resurrection declared in the midst of human history, This is the Man of God's right hand. This is the Man of God's pattern, of God's purpose. This is the type of human life that satisfies God.

The resurrection further demonstrates the fact that in this Man the type was triumphant. There was never a single moment in His life when He moved from the true center of His life, which center was God Himself, He never became eccentric. I pause a moment because the worldly man calls the Christian man eccentric; while in reality it is he who is eccentric, away from the true center, not the Christian man. His life then was not eccentric; but always God-centered, though all the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil sought to draw Him aside, out of the true orbit of His life, or in the words of the writer of the New Testament concerning the angels, sought to make Him move out of His proper habitation. This Man was not only the type in the sense of being an idealist in His teaching, He was in His own life triumphant, and the resurrection is the great demonstration of God's approbation of that type of life.

The resurrection attests also to His accomplishment of purpose. Not only personal victory, but relative accomplishment. His purpose in the world according to His own teaching had been that of revelation and of mediation. He was in the world to reveal the Father, to bring men to the Father.

Did He succeed? Was the presentation of God which He made in life true? Was the unveiling of God which He suggested in death true? Has He mediated by true speech, and has He mediated in the mystery of that passion baptism prior to which He declared Himself straitened? Has He been successful? How shall I know? I stand in imagination on the eve of Easter day outside the tomb. I want to know whether He has succeeded in the purposes of revelation and mediation.

Angel hands roll back the stone, and I look in and see those graveclothes, and know that He is risen, and know not only that this is the perfect Man, but that this Man has fulfilled His purposes of revelation and of mediation.

Consequently, the resurrection attests to the completeness of His victory. It was a victory over death, and in this selfsame sermon Peter said, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." This is one of the passages in God's word which I always wish I could recite with the emphasis which would express the emotion the words create in my own heart. I think there was a touch of contempt when Peter said "it" in reference to death; and infinitely more than a touch of reverence and of worship when He said "He," with reference to the Risen Lord. "It was not possible that He

should be holden of it." Why not? Because He had dealt with sin, which is the sting of death. In some unutterable, unfathomable mystery in the darkness, He had taken its power out of death; by dealing with sin, He had robbed it of its sting, and made it forever more a porter at the gate of life. When I see Him raised, exalted, I know that He has won the final, perfect victory over sin, over sorrow, over Satan; and I know it, because I see His victory over death.

All that involves the second matter which I suggested. If God raised Jesus, He did by that act show His rejection of all other men. This is an aspect of the truth which we are in danger of overlooking. We cannot believe in the resurrection without, upon consideration, seeing how true this is. In accepting the perfect One, God rejected all imperfection. Imperfection is to be known by perfection. What is the perfect type? Life God-centered, self-emptying, man-serving. The imperfect type is life, self-centered, self-seeing, and self-serving. God rejects that type of humanity forever. I do not pause to describe the more vulgar manifestations of human sin. Let us keep on levels admittedly somewhat higher. Humanity may be cultured with the culture of the schools, refined with the refinement of aestheticism, but absolutely self-centered; and God rejects that humanity. Morality in the sanctuary is a thing of the spirit. Morality in the economy of God is conformity to the type of humanity revealed in Jesus. We are in danger of being satisfied with something that does not satisfy God in ourselves and in our fellowmen. By that resurrection of Jesus; by that stretching out of the right hand of the Almighty power, and the taking of this Man out of the grave, this Man Who was crucified because of the type He had revealed; by God's taking Him out of death and setting Him at His own right hand; He said to humanity: "This is the one and only type acceptable with God, this is the one and only type of human life that can find entrance into fellowship with God, here or hereafter." The resurrection of Jesus is the severest condemnation of everything else than that which He revealed to men as the true ideal of human life. So that when I am testing my own life, I do so, not by my neighbor, by my friend, or by the averages of failing humanity, but by the one and only Man upon Whom God has set His seal of resurrection.

That is human life. There is a side, in this matter, full of comfort and encouragement, for when by that resurrection, God set His seal upon the type of human life revealed in Jesus, He revealed to every human being the true meaning of human life. When I look upon this Son of man, risen from the dead, and when I contemplate His life in its beauties and perfections and glories, in those glories of grace and truth which John referred to, in all the rich and beautiful character of absolutely unselfish living, I not only know what God's ideal is, but I know of what I am capable by Divine creation. For that life God made me, not for a life of human refinement and human morality which is careless of the woes and wounds and weariness of humanity; not for that self-centered life which is of the very essence of devilism; but for fellowship with Himself and for service of my fellowmen; for that self-emptying which pours out life in order to help others. That is God's humanity, and He rejects every other type. For that He has made every one of us; however hard the heart may be, however blind the eyes in the presence of humanity's woes, however perverse the will that refuses to serve; the heart is made for compassion, the eyes are made for seeing, the will is made to be the driving power of sacrifice. So the resurrection, while it is condemnation of all failure, is the repetition of the fact that God made man for Himself, to be like Himself, in self-emptying love and in sacrificial service.

Finally, in accepting the work of Jesus, God refused all other methods of salvation. He said by the resurrection, "Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein

we must be saved." But we would prefer to work out our own salvation. We would prefer to accept the great Ideal and see if it be not possible, without reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus, to work out our own salvation. God declares by resurrection that this is impossible, for every method of salvation attempted by man is doomed to failure and disaster.

By this resurrection God crowns Him Victor, and reveals the ultimate defeat of everything that is opposed to Him. Take one brief glance at the Cross in the light of resurrection. There, worldly power has won its victory over Him; there, worldly culture laughs at His folly, the Cross is foolishness to the Greek—and the Greeks are with us yet; there, ritualistic religion has put an end to the voice that spoke only of the spiritual, and to the Man who violated the traditions of men. Yet, in that Cross God has revealed to men that not by might of human effort, not by the culture of the human mind, not by religious observance of human invention can man come to victory, because these things have in themselves the elements of their own destruction.

The Resurrection is God's attestation of the perfect victory of His Son; His rejection of every other type, and of every other method of salvation.

The resurrection is the revelation of human failure, when we look back at the historic facts. When they nailed Him to the Cross, they did their last with Him. God never allowed another rude hand to touch the dead body of Jesus; only loving hands touched Him after He was dead, only the hands of loving disciples—secret disciples by the way, for in the day of unutterable tragedy all the confessors were gone—two secret disciples, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, took His body, and with loving touch laid it to rest in the tomb. This is a very gracious and blessed fact to my own heart. Man had done his worst, and his best; not even the disciples witnessed the resurrection. The resurrection was God's act, and in the very blindness which came to the disciples I have a revelation of God's rejection of humanity; they were not permitted to see Him rise.

Then notice how in that resurrection there was rejection of everything that rejected Him. The priests; if the matter were not altogether too sacred one could indulge in satire at the expense of the priests! They went to Pilate and said, "We remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I rise again," and they asked for soldiers to watch the body of a dead Man! Was there ever such confession of impotence? Yet, in spite of their shrewdness, that He be not stolen, He went; went without the unwrapping of the graveclothes, without the rolling away of the stone, without the breaking of Pilate's seal! Wrapped in graveclothes, shut in by a rolling stone, sealed with the Roman governor's authority, watched by soldiers under the inspiration of the priests; but He rose! Therein was demonstrated the truth that God rejects Roman power, Hebrew priestism, Greek culture, and even disciples who were unable to follow. They were all rejected in that great hour of resurrection.

But there is infinite compassion in the story. There, is the unveiling of the Divine love. If God by that resurrection rejects men, why does He do so? Because they are failing to fulfil the meaning of their own lies, as well as failing to satisfy the intention of His will. He only rejects the failure in order that He may make again the marred vessels, restore the years that the cankerworm hath eaten, make the desert blossom as the rose! By way of rejecting me, a failure, He makes possible my remaking, in His own image and likeness.

That resurrection is the Divine ratification of the new and living way. It is the acceptance of the Man Christ Jesus in a representative capacity. That resurrection said to these disciples, and says to us today: "There was more in the Cross than you thought." The Cross; how they had shunned it; how they had been afraid of it from the first mention of it at Caesarea Philippi; through all those weeks how they had shrunk from it! The Cross scattered them, drove them away from Christ. Yet, by the way of resurrection they saw that there was profounder meaning in that Cross than they had known. By the way of resurrection the Cross was seen as something sufficient for rejected men. Take up the New Testament and read the epistles, and see what these writers say of the Cross. What gave them their belief in the Cross? The resurrection. There is no more remarkable word in the whole of them than that of Peter who preached this sermon on the day of Pentecost, when in his letter he declared that they were begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Cross was their despair; it became their hope when they saw it in the light of resurrection; the Cross was the place of defeat, but when they saw Him alive they knew that the Cross was the place of victory.

By resurrection God declares that the Cross has within it healing for all wounds. The risen Man is accepted as the Head of a new race; and the life which He liberated through the mystery of the Cross is accepted in Him as Firstborn, and in all the newborn who enter into life by the touch of this risen Christ. By the resurrection God declares that He accepts man in Christ, and in Christ alone. Crucified with Christ, risen with Christ, seated in the heavens in Christ; these are the apostolic words unveiling the true meaning and value and issue of resurrection.

By this resurrection then God declares to all men everywhere that the humanity for which He looks is the humanity of Jesus. Let us make this thing personal and immediate. Is my humanity His humanity? Are my motives His, my impulses His? If not, then know that this day of resurrection and light and glory is a day that declares my condemnation.

Tear up the New Testament, deny the resurrection, and I have nothing to say; but if this be the central, established fact of Christianity—I am not arguing it, I am accepting it, preaching upon the basis of its actuality—then know this, the resurrection is not merely a song in the night, it is the thunder of an awful severity, forevermore declaring that God will not be satisfied with imperfection or with any type of human life save that which approximates to the type revealed in Jesus.

But know this also, weary heart and disappointed man, confessing your sin; saying, as in the presence of the resurrection glory, "If that be God's accepted type then am I rejected, for I am unlike that"; know this, that resurrection declares to you that the Lord in the very mystery of His dying did make provision for your living. In the cosmic order He never ought to have died. Unless there be this profounder explanation of His dying which the New Testament offers, His dying is the most terrible reflection upon the government of the universe. When these things are seen in the light of the resurrection and we are able to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; then the resurrection is a song and an evangel; the bedrock of my confidence, the refuge of my soul, the assurance in my heart that I am not deceived and that God can, and will, have compassion upon me, and receive me in Christ; and through Christ communicate to me the dynamic force I need for the Christly life.

The resurrection was the end of the first man, the first Adam, and the doom of all the race that sprang from Him. The resurrection was the acceptance of the second Man, the last Adam, and the

birth of a new race. As we believe in Him, we receive His life and we are accepted in the Beloved.

The final note of the resurrection is that of hope for every man however bruised, however spoiled; however in the grip of vice, lust, passion, and sin; however disappointed with himself as he stands in the light of the revelation which Jesus has given to him of the meaning of his own life; for it declares that he can be remade. The resurrection is the proof of the evangel.

Acts 2:33. The Holy Spirit Through Christ, In The Church, For The World.

Acts 2:33.

The Holy Spirit Through Christ, In The Church, For The World.

Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

Acts 2:33

Christianity's supreme credential is Christianity. Of all miracles it is the greatest. There are two historic facts which are indisputable: first, the death of Jesus, and, second, the Church of Jesus. Or to put that in another way, history attests the fact that somehow or other out of death came life, that after the death of Jesus there began in human history a new order of men and women, a new order of society, new ideals, new impulses, new forces. That is the supreme wonder. We look back again to the Cross of our Lord, and we may say of Him reverently in the language of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews concerning Abraham, but with more definiteness, Here is One, not only as good as dead, but dead; nevertheless, His thoughts, His teaching, He Himself, guide and govern those movements of the race which tend toward its perfection and its permanence. This is the supreme wonder, the wonder of all wonders.

When we turn to this last historic pamphlet of the New Testament and read the story of the new beginning of the Christian movement after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord we find the secret of the victories that have resulted. In this second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have the account of the first blaze of light, and the first thrill of power following the resurrection and ascension. The story is always full of fascination. We can never read this chapter without feeling the thrill of it, and the power of it. The ideals suggested and revealed constitute the reason of this perpetual appeal rather than the realization of these things by the men of apostolic times, for the book of the Acts is as surely a revelation of failure as it is of victory. I do not know how far it is wise to take comfort from that fact, but I do find my own heart perpetually comforted by it. In these days of lamentation and wailing over the failure of the Christian Church I go back to the beginning and find the same story still. Through all the centuries victories seem to have been in spite of unfaithfulness rather than as the result of faithfulness.

That which began at Pentecost is abiding. There is no need to pray for a new Pentecost. There can be no new Pentecost. Pentecost was the occasion when the Spirit of God came to create and abide with the Church of God, and He has never been withdrawn. This place of our assembly is as full of the presence and power of that Holy Spirit of God as was the upper room at Jerusalem. We may not hear the sound of a rushing mighty wind, but the Spirit is proceeding from the Father through the Son into the lives of believing men and women, and still is that selfsame Spirit poured upon all flesh.

Then it may be said, Where is the secret of present failure? How is it that we are not conscious of the same experience? In answer to that, two things must be said. First, that there were experiences of the day of Pentecost that were not intended to abide. Things that were necessary at the moment have passed, but the spiritual facts have not passed. We do not ask for the sound of the rushing mighty wind, we do not seek—if we have spiritual apprehension of the true meaning of this Pentecostal effusion—for manifest tongues of fire upon the heads of the assembled saints. But, second, we do ask for the power itself, and we do most earnestly desire to know something of the experience that came to these men, that filled them with ecstasy, with joy; that irradiated their faces and put songs on lips which had perhaps never sung before. We do desire to know the secrets of that power which made prophecy prevailing in those olden days and constrained men to obedience to the Lord Christ. To know the power of this Pentecostal effusion surely we must discover its laws, and any measure of present failure is the result of failure in that particular.

The first symbol of the Christian Church was the tongue of fire. The first experience of the outpoured Spirit was fulness of life and fulness of joy. This fulness of life and joy was expressed in that strange, I had almost said weird, manifestation in which men in various tongues praised God. The tongue was not a gift enabling men to preach or prophesy, it was a gift for praise. The first function of the Christian Church is that of praise. The first function of the Christian priesthood is eucharistic in the true sense of that great word, that of the offering of thanksgiving and praise. When the Spirit of life fell on these men their eyes were opened, and they saw as they never had seen, and understood as they never had understood, things concerning Christ and concerning God; and the multitudes listening heard them in their own tongues showing forth the mighty works of God. They had become a company of priests offering praise. In fulness of life there was fulness of joy, and out of that came the words which magnified the name of God, and sounded His praise abroad.

The first impression this Church produced on the city was that of mental arrest, they were compelled to consider; it was that of mental defeat, they were unable to explain; it was that of mental activity, they attempted to explain. The city was arrested, not by a preacher, but by a Spirit-filled church. That church, manifesting the fulness of its life in great joy, in great ecstasy, and in praise, created the opportunity for the Christian preacher to proclaim the evangel of Jesus.

The first activity in the power of the Spirit on behalf of men outside the company of the saints was that of this discourse of Peter. Observe the scheme of it. The people of the city said, "What meaneth this?" Peter replied, "Be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words," and then proceeded to detailed explanation, of which the central declaration was, "This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel." The address culminated in the word of the text, "He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." The city said, "What meaneth this?" Peter replied, "Be this known unto you;....This is that;....He hath poured forth this."

Now let us confine our attention to the last word of the answer of Peter to the inquiry of the city. We shall dwell on the "He" and on the "this," speaking first of the relation of the Pentecostal baptism to Christ, and, second, of the meaning of the Pentecostal baptism for the world.

The relation of the Pentecostal baptism to Christ is most clearly declared. Having quoted from the prophecy of Joel and having declared that the signs which they saw and the circumstances in the midst of which they found themselves were in fulfilment of that prophecy, Peter arrested the

attention of his hearers anew as he said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words." Then in an orderly sequence he told the story of Jesus. First, he named the Lord, Jesus of Nazareth. This was His most familiar name, the one by which He had been known, the one which had been used by the disciples in love, and by other men in contempt. Second, he declared the witness of the miracles to the perfection of His nature as he spoke of Him as "a man approved of God among you," not a man that God approved, but a man that God demonstrated "by mighty works and wonders and signs," not which He wrought, but "which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." The miracles and wonders were works of God wrought through the absolute perfection of Christ's humanity. Then, immediately, he came to the last fact of which these men had been conscious: "Him"—and after a parenthesis, "being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," which the men who heard him certainly could not understand—"ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay."

In these words so far the Apostle had massed all that these men knew of Jesus, the manifest things—Jesus of Nazareth, a Man demonstrated among you by God in miracles and wonders and signs, a Man crucified. Beyond this these men who listened were unable to go of their own knowledge.

But the Apostle had much more to say. He followed the mission of Jesus into spiritual heights which these men could not understand; he told them, if I may use the terms of time in relation to eternity, of the events which had followed the Cross, which for them had ended the career of Jesus, "whom God raised up"; and "being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this." He has given to these men this fulness of life which expresses itself in the praises which have arrested the city, amazed, and made it critical.

As we read the story there is evident throughout conflict between grace and sin; the Divine activity beneficent in its intention toward men, and human activity in its intention hostile to God. As we watch the course of our Lord's ministry revealed in this wonderful paragraph we see Him as the center of perpetual conflict between sin on the one hand and the grace of God on the other.

Mark the movement of sin. Sin first expressed itself in blindness in the presence of the revelation of the life of Jesus; His words and His works witnessing to truth Himself demonstrated by God by the wonders He wrought; men were blind, not seeing, not understanding. Blinding their own eyes, hardening their own hearts, they moved ever more persistently into the mental mood of definite hostility. Sin expressed itself finally in the Cross, as there it refused the Kingship of the Christ. That Cross was man's answer to everything Christ had said, to His spiritual conceptions, to His severe and awful moral requirements, to His offer of pardon and of grace. The Cross of Jesus Christ is the very center and ultimate of human sin.

At that point in the history sin had done its worst, it had crucified the Lord of glory, and laid His body to rest in the tomb. Sinning man could do no more, he had become impotent, he had wreaked his vengeance on Jesus. One can hardly feel anything other than contempt for the rude superstition that watched the body of a dead man.

But now through all the movement observe the activity of grace. In the life of Jesus grace revealed God and the will of God concerning man. Through that life of Jesus God was calling man back to

Himself. What of the Cross? Has sin there won a victory? Is that the ultimate word, is grace defeated, is the intention of God defeated? In the course of the declaration we find that which was a parenthesis so far as the men who listened were concerned, "being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." None knew the Cross like that until after Pentecost. None saw the Cross so until he looked back at it in the light of the resurrection. But looking back through the resurrection and in the light of the Spirit, Peter and the rest saw God acting in the Cross in determined love, mastering sin in a mystery that baffles us, in darkness that we never can enter, darkness which has at its center light unapproachable. In that hour and mystery of the Cross God is seen dealing with the sin that had expressed itself ultimately therein, and so dealing with it as to be victorious over it.

We now take the next step as suggested in the address of the Apostle. The victory was won, the Lord was raised from the dead and exalted. Then followed the ascension. As in all reverence we follow the Man of Nazareth into the light and glory of the heavenly place, the Spirit through Peter interprets the activity of that sacred hour in words which entirely transcend our explanation. The declaration that the Lord "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost" can be understood only as we follow our Lord into the light of the heavenly place and realize that He passed in as the representative One. In that moment man returned to God, and God returned to man in Christ. By the mystery of the wounds He bore He asked, as He said He would, for the Spirit that He might bestow it upon all trusting souls. Not by right of His sinless humanity did He claim the Spirit, but by the right of His passion. Not for Himself did He claim the Holy Spirit, for was not the whole history of His earthly career the history of fellowship with the Spirit? Born of the Spirit, baptized of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, He entered on His ministry. In the great mystery of the passion was it not also true that through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God? Now risen Man and ascended Lord, in the presence of God He received the Spirit as the representative of those whom He had left behind, representing them by the very wounds He bore, representing them by the passion through which He had passed. When the Father gave Him the Spirit, to use still this mystic figurative language, He gave the Spirit to Him as representing those for whom He had been wounded and bruised, whose place He had taken in the mystery of the Cross by which He had overcome sin. He represented humanity as humanity's Saviour. Then we reach the final word, descriptive of the final movement, "He hath poured forth this."

Thus the Spirit on the day of Pentecost came to these men in answer to the prayer of Jesus, not in answer to their praying, not even in answer to their obedience, but entirely and absolutely in answer to the request in heavenly places of Christ Himself, the One Whose wounds told the story of His conflict, and Whose presence there proclaimed the fact of His victory. The Spirit thus given through the Son united those on whom He fell to the Son in a life of absolute identity, ultimately making those to whom He came like the Son.

If we have received the Spirit we have received it from the Father and through His Son. If we who name His name are receiving His Spirit, we are receiving the Spirit through the Son, not in answer to our praying, not as a reward for some sacrifice we are making. All these may be conditions which we fulfil, but this great Pentecostal gift of the Spirit, making men and women one with the Lord, indwelling them so that the very life of the Lord is dominant within them, expressing the power of the Lord through them, is in answer to the prayer of the Lord and the result of what He did.

What, then, was the meaning and what the value of this Pentecostal baptism for the world? It was the creation of the Christian Church of God. That is a phrase I used carefully, the Christian Church of God. The Church of God, if you will; but there had been a Church of God in some senses before this. In the seventh chapter of this book of the Acts we have mentioned the Church in the wilderness, that is the assembly, the congregation, the ecclesia in the wilderness. This, however, was the Christian Church of God. It is an interesting fact that the phrase, the Church of Christ, is used only once in the New Testament, and then by an apostle speaking of local churches. This Church of God, the Christian Church of God, is a new entity, a new nation, a new people. The differences between this Church of God born at Pentecost and the Church of God existing before are vital differences, but we need not now stay to look at them. In that moment, when those who had been individual disciples were brought into living union with the Lord Himself and so into living union with each other, the Christian Church was born.

What, then, is the Church in the world, considering it as a whole? It is God's institute of praise, God's institute of prayer, and God's institute of prophecy. The whole Church is, first of all, an institute created to praise God. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." The first purpose of the Church is that she shall praise God. I think we need to remember that in its first application and its simplest the first function of the Christian life is that of praising. Yet let us take the larger outlook. The Christian Church exists so to reveal God as to utter forth His praise, so to make God known to men who know Him not that in the presence of the revelation they may be filled with awe, and wonder, and amazement; so to make God known that God shall be attractive to humanity. Whether we are prepared to accept the declaration or not, the experience abides. Men of the world can know God only as God is revealed to them through His people. The Word of God can be powerful only as it is incarnate. Is not that the meaning of the central mystery of our holy religion? God came no nearer to humanity when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but He came into visibility, into manifestation. In proportion as in this Church of Jesus Christ His life is reproduced, God is being revealed anew. Our first business is that of praising Him, praising Him with lip and with life, in the actual songs we sing, in the hallelujahs we lift; praising Him by all the habits of our life, by the perpetual testimony of our ways as they announce the fact of His being, the fact of His love. That was the first effect the Church produced. Filled with life, light flashed from the eyes of the disciples, songs were on their lips, they magnified the mighty works of God, and the city was compelled to listen. In that hour of Pentecost God created for Himself by the coming of the Spirit through Christ a people for His own praise and glory, a kingdom of priests that they might offer to Him sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Unless Pentecost produces in our life fulness of joy and makes us a people filled with praise we are failing sadly. The first function of the Christian Church is that she should be to the praise of God.

In that hour, moreover, God created in the world a great institute of prayer, for the function of the priesthood is not only eucharistic, it is intercessory. By the coming of the Spirit He created a people able to pray. Surely this is what the Apostle meant in his Roman letter when he spoke of creation groaning and travailing in its pain, and then spoke of the Church in the midst of the groaning creation, the Church groaning and travailing together with creation in pain; and at last declared that "the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." The

Spirit of God understanding the pain of creation is grieved thereby, sorrow is caused in the very heart of God by the agony of humanity; that Spirit indwelling a company of people interprets to them the agony of creation, so that they enter into a new compassionate sympathy with all the suffering of the world, and thus in the midst of the groaning creation they constitute an institute of prayer. No man can pray for the world unless the Spirit interpret to him the world's agony, and the Spirit cannot interpret the world's agony to any man unless that man live in the midst of the world's agony. Not by retirement from the world, not by hiding away within a monastic institution, not by seeking to develop my own spiritual life by removing myself from the agony of the world, can I ever pray for the world; but because I live every day in the midst of its busy life, am close to it and know it, and because the Spirit of God in me leads me into the secret of the deepest meaning of the world's agony and pain so that I no longer treat it as a superficial disease that can be dealt with by the nostrums of humanity, but as a great heart trouble that needs blood and sacrifice to deal with it, am I able to pray. Out of that revelation of the meaning of the world's agony created by the Spirit in the hearts of believing men they are able to pray. The Church of God in the economy of God was created an institute of prayer.

But more, not for praise alone was the Church created, not alone for prayer, but also for prophecy, in the highest use of the great word, for proclamation. As with lip and life the saints praise, so by lip and life the saints should preach. The Spirit came uniting these men to the Lord, disannulling orphanage and canceling distance to make the risen and ascended Christ a living bright reality. By so doing He enabled these men to speak to the Lord familiarly as those who have constant comradeship with Him, and by so doing enabled them to reveal the Lord of Whom they spoke in tone and temper and habit and speech, and in all activity. Reverently and superlatively, He came to multiply and unite in the perfect Humanity of Nazareth all the scattered members of the one great Christ o'er all the earth that in the case of all of them, and not only in the case of the overseers, bishops, deacons, both by their preaching and their living they might show forth the glory of God and proclaim the power of His great evangel.

In conclusion, let us recognize that our possession of this power of Pentecost depends on our relation to Christ. Glancing at the description which Peter gave of the progress of our Lord toward the heights, we described it as a conflict between sin and grace. The question for our hearts is this, In such conflict, on which side are we? Are we in true fellowship with God in the determination of His grace to deal with sin in its opposition to the way and will of God, refusing to come in obedience to the revelation of life, refusing to yield ourselves to the claims of the Christ? Such questions must be left unanswered in great assemblies. They are for answer only in the privacy of the individual life.

Perchance the question may be stated in another way. Let it thus be asked in individual lives. What is the influence we exert? The answer to that is the answer to the question whether or not we have this Spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If any man be living still the life of blindness to all the will of God, the life of rebellion against the will of God, the life which in its practical activity refuses to crown Christ, that is demonstration of the fact that such a man lacks the Spirit of God. On the other hand, are we conscious that we have seen the glory, that in some measure at any rate already we have put the crown on the brow of Christ, and that the deepest passion of heart and life is to crown Him and make Him known to others? Then we may take heart and know by that sign that this Spirit of God has been given to us. As to whether

we may be living in all the fulness and privilege of the Spirit is another question. The question that demands our earnest attention is, Are we ministers who praise His name in lip and life, do we know the secret of prayer that prevails in the midst of the world's agony, are we proclaiming the evangel in our words and in our works? If not, then let us search our hearts now and discover whether we have been self-deceived and lack the Spirit of God. As the Spirit comes we receive all that we need in order to praise and pray and prophesy. He comes in response to our belief in the living Lord at the commencement; He perpetually comes and proceeds, flowing in, filling and overflowing, in response to the attitude of belief maintained. The celebration of a festival is of no profit save as we yield ourselves to all the facts which we celebrate. May it be ours, then, to know that union with the Lord in life and service which can come only by the presence and power of the Spirit.

Acts 5:32. Witnesses.

Acts 5:32.

Witnesses.

We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him.

Acts 5:32

In these words Peter was the spokesman of the infant Church, and he was at once answering a challenge and declaring the solution of a problem. We can appreciate the words at their true value only by remembering the occasion upon which they were spoken. In the context a picture full of life and color is presented to the mind. Two groups of men are seen confronting each other. They constitute a striking contrast. On the one hand are all the men of light and leading and position in Jerusalem, "the high priest... and they that were with him... and the council, and all the senate of the children of Israel." On the other hand are men, not one of them known, save by virtue of their association with Jesus of Nazareth, toiling fishermen of the Galilean Lake, no schoolman in their number, no ruler, no priest. I leave it to your imagination to fill in the details, the magnificent robing of the priest and his friends, the phylacteries, and the faces with that fine expression that tells of culture and of strong and passionate conviction; and, on the other hand, the homespun and simple garments, the rough and rugged splendor of hard-working men, and all the light gleaming from eyes newly illumined.

The high priest has challenged these men, and is strangely perplexed. He has accomplished the death of the troublesome prophet of Nazareth, but a strange story is abroad, told first by the keepers of the grave, and then by the disciples who had been scattered by the crucifixion, that this Jesus is alive, that He has been seen. Of course, he considers it a wild and foolish superstition, but it is having its effect upon both the men who had followed Him in the days of His teaching and those who now heard their preaching. They had flung the ringleaders into prison, and in the morning had gathered together that they might deal with them judicially. The message had come that the prison did not contain the men, but that they were in the temple speaking "all the words of this Life."

And now the apostles stand arraigned before priest and rulers. The priest demands of them how they dare continue to preach in the name of Jesus. Peter speaking here, veritably ex cathedra, on behalf of the whole Church, declared in answer, "We must obey God rather than men."... "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

That was an answer to the challenge of unbelief within a few weeks after Pentecost. It is the answer to the challenge of unbelief today, or we have no answer. In this verse there is declared the function and the force of discipleship, the mission and the method of the Church. The function

is declared in these words, "We are witnesses of these things." The force is announced in the words, "We... and so is the Holy Ghost." The mission of the Church, to witness to these things. The method of the Church, to act in perpetual co-operation with the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Church recognizes this as the function and force of discipleship, as the mission and method of her life, the same results follow as followed in Jerusalem. Wherever the Church wanders from this primitive ideal, the early results are wanting. Wherever the Church, and all the disciples that constitute the Church, remember that the main calling of the Church is witness, and that the one and only power of witness is co-operation with the Holy Spirit, then cities are filled with the doctrine, conviction of sin takes hold upon men. The Pentecostal result follows the Pentecostal method.

You will find in this picture, moreover, a contrast of mental attitude. On the one hand we see "the high priest... and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees)." Who were the Sadducees? I think, perhaps, there is no safer way to answer the question than to take the Bible declaration concerning them. "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." These were the men who challenged the apostles, rationalists, men who denied the supernatural element in religion. Resurrection, angel, spirit, they declared to be superstitions of a bygone age. On the other hand, a group of men who testified to the reality of these very things. Said the Sadducee, there is no resurrection. Said the apostles, Christ is risen. Said the Sadducee, there is no angel. Said the apostles, an angel opened the prison doors you shut, and let us out. Said the Sadducee, there is no spirit. Said the apostles, we have entered into partnership with the Holy Spirit. It was the beginning of the long struggle between rationalism and Christianity, the conflict between the affirmation of the spiritual as real and the declaration that there is no spirit, but that man lives merely in dust.

Rationalism is still saying there is no resurrection, not even of Christ; there are no angels, they belong to pictures, to art, and to little children's fancies; there is no spirit, the mind is everything. When you have said psychic, you seem to have said the last word of human intellectuality at the present moment.

On the other hand, the Church is still saying that Christ rose from among the dead; that angels are all "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation," that men are essentially spirits, and that there is one Holy Spirit of God. These are the declarations of the Church, but how is she to demonstrate the truth of them? The text is answer. "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him." Then let us consider these two things, the Church's mission, and the method by which she is able to fulfil that mission.

The Church's mission is declared in that very simple sentence, "We are witnesses of these things." Where do you suppose Peter put the emphasis when he uttered these words? Let me say, first of all, that I am quite sure he did not lay it upon the personal pronoun. He did not say, "We are witnesses of these things." That is where he would have put it before Pentecost, and after Cæsarea Philippi. Not so now. The consciousness of personality expressed in the pronoun is lost in the sense of the importance of the witness to be borne. "We are witnesses."

I do not think we have yet reached the point of the true emphasis. I think if we had heard Peter that day speak we should have heard him lay the emphasis on "these things." What things? "The God

of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree. Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." That is the Evangel! Christ is risen. "God... raised up Jesus": Christ was crucified. "Whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree": Christ is enthroned. "Him did God exalt to be a Prince and a Saviour": Christ is at work, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." The risen Christ, the crucified Christ, the exalted Christ, the working Christ. "These things." "We are witnesses of these things."

That is the Church's mission. The Church does not exist to entertain the masses. She is unequal to competition with the theater. The Church does not exist to educate the masses: she must be interested in education, but this is not her supreme vocation. The Church exists to witness to "these things," the risen Christ, the crucified Christ, the enthroned Christ, the living and working Christ. The world does not want the Church. The Church cannot save the world. The world wants the things that the Church testifies of.

Alas, we have been so anxious about the structure of the lighthouse that we have forgotten often to see that the light is burning. We have been quarreling so busily and with such absolute abandonment concerning forms and garments that we have forgotten the men who wear the garments. We have been more anxious about trappings than about triumph. Find me a man who calls himself a Christian and does not witness to the risen Christ, the crucified Christ, the exalted Christ, the living, working Christ, and he is of use neither to God nor man. Find me a church where the resurrection light is not shining, where the passion of blood is not proclaimed, and the enthroned Lord is not revealed, and the working Lord is not felt, and it is a tomb, an insult to God and to man. "These things," that is the Church's business. "We are witnesses of these things."

Yet let us think of the word "witnesses." A witness is more than a man who talks. Indeed a man may talk and never witness in the New Testament sense of the word. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the word here translated, and translated uniformly throughout the New Testament "witness," is a Greek word which we have anglicized into our word "martyr"; "We are martyrs of these things." What is a martyr? We have come to use the word of such as seal their testimony with their blood. It is a beautiful word for such. When we speak of the "noble army of martyrs," who through flame and fire, through blood and suffering, proved their loyalty to Christ, let us remember that the fires did not make them martyrs. The fires did but reveal them to be martyrs. They were martyrs ere the fires were lit, or they would never have submitted to them. Every day of fiery persecution has been a day when martyrs have been revealed. What, then, is a martyr? He is a confessor. A martyr is one who is first convinced of truth, and then yields his life to the claims of the truth of which he is convinced, and who, therefore, is changed by the truth which he believes, and to which he has yielded himself. So that, finally, a martyr is a specimen, an evidence, a sample, a credential, a proof, a witness. We are the credentials of these things. We are the proof of these things. We say Jesus is risen from the dead. We say the risen Christ is the selfsame Christ Who was crucified. We say this Christ is exalted by God. We say this Christ is at work giving repentance and remission of sins. How are we going to prove these things? We are evidences. We prove the accuracy of our doctrine by the transformation of our lives. The apostle did not merely mean, as he stood in the presence of that august company of rulers and priests, that they bore testimony in words, that they were prepared to argue. He meant rather to say, You deny the resurrection; you deny the value we declare to have been created by the dying of this Christ Whom ye slew; you deny that Jesus of Nazareth is on the throne of God; you deny that He is alive

and working in Jerusalem! Go back and think of us as we were, and behold us as we are. We are what we are by virtue of the things we declare. It is by the risen Christ Who was crucified, is exalted, and is at work, that we are what we are. Rationalism has no right to deny the accuracy of the supernatural claims of Christ until it can account for the wonders wrought in men and women who by Christianity have been changed from all that is base to everything that is noble, from being slaves to sin into being bond-slaves of Christ, from being men consumed by lust and passion to men consumed by zeal for the salvation of men and for the glory of God.

That is the supreme value of my text as it reveals the work of the Church. The Church confronts the age with living witnesses. If she has none, she is useless. If she has none, she has no argument. If she is not able to present to the age in all its rationalism and unbelief, men and women changed, remade, she has no argument to which the age will listen. Such a declaration as that reacts upon the heart and conscience of every Christian man or woman, or ought so to do. Am I a witness? I do not mean am I a preacher. Unless behind the preaching of my lips there is the testimony of my life, my preaching is blasphemy and impertinence. Unless my own life is changed and transformed and transfigured, a revelation of the fact of the risen, crucified, exalted, working Christ, my preaching is as tinkling brass and a clanging cymbal. So with all of us. Any recitation of creed is blasphemy unless the creed is alive in conduct. Your affirmation of the truth of the Christian facts is impertinence unless in the very fiber of your personality these things are wrought out and are shining through in revelation upon the age. "We are witnesses of these things."

I get back at last to the personal pronoun. "We are witnesses of these things." Who were they? As I have said, none of them counted at all by any of the ordinary standards of human measurement. They were fishermen. Do you not think that term was often used of them disdainfully in those days? These Galilean fishermen! Yet they were witnesses of such things as made them makers of empire, and revolutionaries who turned the world upside down! Not they, but the things through them. The very simplest of the men who answered the claims of the things, and became transformed thereby, became also a force. There is no man here so weak but that if these things are by him believed, and he by them is changed, he becomes appointed a witness in apostolic succession, in Christly fellowship, in actual co-operation with God, a part of the Divine movement for bruising the head of the enemy, and destroying the works of the devil, and bringing in the triumph of righteousness.

They were poor Galilean fishermen, of no account, of no value in themselves, but they live in the imagination of this age, while the priests are remembered by their garments and their phylacteries and their folly.

Yes, but how did they do it? "We are witnesses of these things: and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him." The Spirit is witness of the things of Christ. Jesus ere He left His disciples instructed them concerning the days of His absence, and said of the Spirit, "the Paraclete... shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.... He shall bear witness of Me,... He shall glorify Me." He declared that the mission of the Holy Spirit would be the interpretation of Himself. For the sake of the truth being remembered let me try to condense that great doctrine of the Spirit into two of the simplest of all sentences, so simple that there will be the same words in both, but differently arranged for the revelation of a different value.

The Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus only.

Only the Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus.

Think of the first. The Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus only. How we forget it as Christian people! Christian people constantly pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and wait for His coming. In their minds there seems to be the idea that when the Spirit comes to them in fulness they will be conscious of the Spirit. There is no evidence of any such teaching in Scripture. If the Spirit come to us in all fulness, He will make us conscious, not of Himself, but of Christ. "He shall not speak from Himself... He shall take of Mine and declare it unto you," said Christ.

I would like to stay with that in all tenderness, because I think there are sincere souls being misled by their own thinking in this regard. It is not long since a young man came to me and said, I do not quite understand my relationship to Christ. I am a little puzzled by it. I have long been praying for the fulness of the Spirit, and waiting for it, and longing for it, and earnestly desiring it. I have heard of others who have received it, but it does not come to me. I began to talk to him, and I found that he thought when the Spirit came in fulness there would be a flash of light and glory, and a thrill and enthusiasm, and consciousness of fire and of the Holy Ghost. It is not so. All the while, through the days, weeks, months of his sincere seeking, this thing had been happening in his experience, Christ was becoming more precious than He was, far more real! The Spirit was there doing His work, unveiling Christ, yet this man did not recognize that the Spirit was fulfilling His one great function. The Spirit comes to witness to Jesus only. Once, tongues of fire and a mighty rushing wind, evidence to the senses of the coming of the Spirit. From that moment, straight on through generations, He has hidden Himself. The Spirit comes to reveal Jesus only. He has no other message, no other work than the unveiling of the face of Christ, in which we see the unveiling of the face of God.

Take my other sentence for a moment and consider it. Only the Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus. Does this seem to contradict Peter's declaration, "We are witnesses"? By no means. How did they become witnesses? In the hour when they crowned Jesus Lord. Listen, "No man calleth Jesus Lord save by the Holy Spirit." I cannot make you call Him Lord. I can speak of His Lordship, of the perfection of His life, of the passion of His death, of the power of His resurrection, of the program of His reign, and you will hear it all and intellectually consent to the fact that He is Lord, but you never can look into His face and say, "Lord," save as the Spirit of God has unveiled His glory and captured your heart. It is the Spirit of God Who first reveals to the soul the Lordship of Jesus. So these men became witnesses because on the day of Pentecost they had seen Christ as they had never seen Him before. Think of it. They had looked at Christ for three years and had never, never seen Him. They had felt the touch of His human hand and never, never found Him. When the day of Pentecost was come, and the Spirit came as fire and power they saw Him and they became witnesses. Have you seen Him? It is only by the Spirit's unveiling of the face of Christ that He is ever seen, or that men become His witnesses.

When once the Lord has been seen and crowned there is a progressive operation of the Spirit in the life of the believer. The Spirit reveals the Christ to you in some new aspect as you read His Word, as you meditate upon Him, and the moment you see Christ in some new glory, that vision makes a demand upon you. What are you going to do with it? Answer it, obey it, and the Spirit realizes in you the thing you have seen in Christ. Disobey it, and the Spirit has no other message to you until you return to that point of disobedience, and have become obedient. I wonder if you

will be patient if for a moment I pass from advocacy to witnessing. I remember with clear distinctness how more than twenty years ago I read a passage in Matthew's Gospel that I had read hundreds of times, but in that moment it flamed and burned before my eyes. It was this, "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion." I cannot give you what I saw. No man can pass these visions on. You must only hear me patiently, for the lonely vision is for the lonely soul. In that moment to which my own memory goes back, and which lives with me now, I saw the very heart of the Son of God, I saw that compassion as I had never known it, although I had been saved by it. A vision like that is not merely an illumination of the intellect for the entertainment or delight of the soul that sees it. It is a clarion call, a trumpet blast! It said to me—If you are His, and you share His life, you must answer His passion and be willing to follow Him in service which is sacrificial service. Now, let me drop the personal; granted that any man see that as I saw it that night, two pathways open out before him. It is the Spirit's unveiling of the compassion of Christ to the soul. What will the man do who sees it? He can stifle it, admire it merely, and never answer it, until the vision dim and die away, and the Spirit will have no more to say to him. Or he can answer it, give himself to sacrificial service, be willing to die in service, and then the Spirit will lead him further on to higher heights and deeper depths. That is but one illustration. The Spirit is always unveiling Christ. Your responsibility and mine if we would co-operate with Him in witness is that we obey when He speaks. When Christ is seen in a new light, the light is calling you to obey its claim. Answer it and you will become the thing you have seen. Deny it and you will sink to lower levels. This is His method, line upon line, here a little and there a little, grace for grace, beauty after beauty.

Man, you have never seen Christ, nor have I. I have seen something of Him, like a blind man waking to his first vision I have seen men as trees walking. I have seen more and more of the beauty of my Lord as the Spirit has unveiled Him, but I have never seen all the glory. I could not bear it yet. So little by little the Spirit patiently leads us on. Our responsibility is that when light comes we walk in it. When the trumpet call of truth sounds in our souls we must answer it. The Spirit's office—and He never fails—is to reveal Christ. Our duty is to answer the revelation, and when we do so, the Spirit becomes more than illumination, He becomes dynamic and makes us that which we obey.

Soul of mine, answer the light. Obey the Spirit. Do not resist, do not grieve, do not quench the Spirit, and thou, even thou, poor broken man of the dust, shall be made like Him. What is heaven, I pray you tell? Seeing Him and being like Him. To that goal the Spirit leads.

Now hear me as I say this in conclusion. It is when I act in co-operation with this Spirit Who reveals Jesus only, Who only reveals Jesus, that I become His witness. That brings me back to the emphasis I placed a few moments ago upon the word "witness." I pray you now place the emphasis upon "witness" by linking it with that other Witness. The Spirit witnessing in me, I become the instrument through which the Spirit witnesses to the world. Where? Anywhere. When? Everywhen. God deliver us from the heresy of ever imagining that we witness only when we are in the pulpit, from the heresy of imagining that what the world wants is more preaching. Preaching is of no use save as it makes living witnesses. How have I failed, how awfully have I failed, God have mercy upon me, if I have simply held you and interested you for this hour. But if I have sent you back to your office tomorrow, back to your store, back to your home, back to your place in the government, to be more like Christ, I have hastened the coming of the day of God, I have done

something to bring the Kingdom in. He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers—to preach men to heaven? No, no! What, then? To perfect the saints to the work of ministering. The truth I preach is of value in the ultimate issue only as it is incarnate in the lives of the men who listen. London is perishing for lack of living witnesses. The world awaits the evangel of transformed, transfigured lives. Will you be a witness? You say, How can I? The answer is in the text, "the Holy Ghost Whom God hath given to them that obey Him." You have looked into the face of the Lord Christ. Intellectually, you have seen Him and have acknowledged that He is Lord. Crown Him. Submit to Him. Trust Him. Do it with something of heroism, I beseech you. Do it with something of daring, I implore you. The influence of the Church is sadly hindered, the world is sadly hindered by dilettante discipleship. Crown Christ. Obey Him. Cut the last shore rope that binds you to the old life. In the moment that you crown Him the Holy Spirit will baptize you into unity of life with Him, and you will become His witness.

Acts 10:34, 35. Divine Selection.

Acts 10:34, 35.

Divine Selection.

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him.

Acts 10:34-35

The training of the Apostle Peter for the fulfilment of his work in the world may be said to have consisted of a series of revelations of God in Christ, each successive one growing in value and in breadth. When our Lord first met him, he was apprehended by the Personality of Christ. Then, after a period of following Him as one of His disciples; listening to His teaching, watching His work, becoming more and more familiar with the marvel of His Personality; at Caesarea Philippi he made his great confession. Finally, by the way of the resurrection, he came to full apprehension of the truth concerning his Lord; as he himself said in one of his letters, he was born again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through that resurrection and all the glory that followed it, he discovered that Jesus was not only Messiah, according to his interpretation of that word, but that He was the Saviour of His people.

In the story which is told at length in the chapter from which our text is taken, we have the account of how he came to a still larger conception of God through the ministry of Jesus Christ. In the actual words of our text, we have his declaration: "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

His first meeting with Christ brought him no conscious vision of God. As he followed his Lord, heard His teaching, watched the wonder of His working, and at last saw that strange cross from which he had shrunk in dismay, transfigured by the glory and triumph of the resurrection, all the old, narrow prejudice concerning men vanished, by reason of the fact that he came to fuller, profounder understanding of the truth about God.

In the house of Cornelius he made still wider discovery, as his own words show. We need to study the declaration with solemnity, for while it breathes the very spirit of hope, it, nevertheless, utters a warning full of solemnity.

Let us hear the simple terms once more, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." That is the first matter. The second is: "In every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him." The first declaration sweeps away prejudices and barriers; the second sets up the severest of all tests. "No respecter of persons"; Cornelius the Gentile is to be received; but a respecter of character for the Hebrew by blood and ceremonial who does not fear Him, and does not work righteousness, is not acceptable with Him. The text, then, has its negative and positive values.

If the text were all, it is not characterized by comfort. While it seems as though barriers which we have erected are being swept away by its great and gracious declarations, we suddenly find that it is erecting another barrier. While the standards by which men receive other men are set aside, a new standard is erected, the standard by which God receives men; and while our hearts may at first be filled with comfort as we remember that God is no respecter of persons, if we look carefully at the second part of the declaration, we shall need something else, or we shall go away without comfort and without help. Therefore, let me immediately draw attention to the fact that the text without the context is not the gospel, is not the evangel. There is no good news in it if we remove it from its context. If we follow on, remembering that this declaration of perception on the part of Peter prepared the way for his declaration of the evangel, then we shall see the final value of our text.

Let us first notice particularly what is here revealed concerning the principle of Divine selection; God is "No respecter of persons," but He is the acceptor of a certain type of character. Let us secondly consider what this text reveals incidentally concerning human rejection, that where that type of character is lacking, because God is no respecter of persons, He rejects. Finally, let us hear what Peter called the gospel of peace.

We begin, then, with the declaration of the text concerning the principle of the Divine selection. All that is necessary in this connection is emphasis and illustration of the declaration which the apostle made. First: "God is no respecter of persons." Second: "In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."

"God is no respecter of persons." This we have heard affirmed over and over again. In some senses we believe it; yet it is indeed the most startling and most gracious assertion. God is not a capricious selector of men upon the basis of anything accidental in their circumstances. Things which appeal to men, make no appeal to God. God is not interested in any man because of his wealth. It is equally true that the poverty of the poor man makes no appeal to Him. No man of wealth is loved by God on account of his wealth. No poor man is more welcome in the presence of God than is the rich man. The morality of the moral—using these words in their commonly accepted sense—makes no appeal to God. Morality in the estimate of heaven is the application of spiritual convictions to everyday life. A great deal of the morality in which men make their boast is simply that habit of life which makes it possible for them to escape the grasp of the policeman. That morality makes no appeal to God. Neither, on the other hand, does the sin of the sinful make appeal to Him. I think that also needs emphasis. I have sometimes felt as though, especially in evangelistic preaching, we are in danger of so preaching the gospel as to lead men to think that it is the man who is steeped in vulgar pollution that makes especial appeal to God. It is not so. The status of the privileged, the destitution of the despised, make no appeal to Him. He does not select persons on the basis of any of the things that are accidental. God has no favourites among men. Temperament, capacity, tendencies, temptations; none of these creates a claim upon the Divine attention. God does not select men of given capacities; poets, artists, students, workers. He knows all these things. He is profoundly interested in them; they are His own creations in the lives of men. God is interested in every man because he is a man. Perhaps here, as everywhere, we may be helped by thinking of our Lord because He revealed the Father. In a certain sense, He never saw the garments that men wore. He was not attracted to a man because upon his brow and around the borders of his garment there were phylacteries of breadth and bulk. He was not repelled by the

rags of a beggar. He saw neither the phylacteries nor the rags. The clothing was nothing, the man wearing the clothing was everything.

No man is acceptable to God by reason of any accidental thing. Some of you were born into such circumstances that it has been possible for you to become educated men and women. Some never had that opportunity. God is not attracted by the culture of the educated man. He is not attracted by the ignorance of the ignorant man. He is interested in the man.

He is no respecter of persons. He has no one nation that He loves more than the rest. That was the thing Peter had to learn. It was a surprising thing to Peter. Peter had believed that God loved Israel and no other nation. Upon the rock of that false conception, Israel went to pieces. Today, we often subconsciously imagine that God loves an Englishman better than any other man. Of course we know that it is not true. When the preacher refers to it we smile at it. Then let us remember it. God profoundly loves man because he is man. He is interested in man as man. Incidentals are not noticed. The essential is not only noticed, it is known, watched, dealt with. He is no respecter of persons.

Why all this emphasis? Because we err perpetually, both in thinking of other men and in thinking of ourselves, through interpreting the attitude of God toward humanity by our own attitude toward our fellow men. If you see coming into your assembly, said the practical and ethical writer of the New Testament, a man wearing goodly apparel, and shall hasten to find him the chief seat, you are violating the Christian principle. We still respect persons. If I may say this without being misunderstood, all the method by which the Church is specializing in its work in the homeland is illustration. Special missions for special kinds of men. I will not criticize you if you feel led that way, but I have very little use for the method. Find me a man, apart from the incidentals, of temperament, or birth, or calling in life, or capacity, and I will preach to him, I care not whether he be rich or poor, high or low, learned or illiterate, moral or debased. "God is no respecter of persons." He is interested in man as man; for He sees in every man, despite the purple or the rags, notwithstanding the culture or the vulgarity, His own image, His own likeness. He sees in every human life possibilities which if set in right relation to Himself will be for His glory. He knows that in the life of the man whom we hold in supreme contempt there are vast forces, which if they are rescued, redeemed, remade, will make heaven richer and all the ages more glorious.

Now let us take the second part of this declaration. If we left it there we might be inclined to imagine that the apostle meant that God receives men into fellowship with Himself, in spite of what they are in themselves. It might seem as though God looks at human life in all its incidentals as though the incidentals did not exist, dealing with humanity ideally, and not actually and practically. But that is not the declaration of my text. He selects. I am quite willing to use the other word; He elects. He does accept some, and reject others. There is a condition of life which He respects though He respects no person. There is a condition of life for which He has no respect.

What, then, is the condition that He respects, selects, elects? The apostle tells us. "He that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him." Simple words, but as I bring my soul to their test, as I compel my spirit to their measurement, I am appalled. "He that feareth Him." Let me take you back to definitions found in the Old Testament of what that means: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." The fear of the Lord is a condition of the inward life, producing conduct in the outward life. The condition of the inward life is that of

hating evil. The condition of the outward life is that of departing from evil. To fear the Lord is to be pure in heart. To fear the Lord is to be pure in conduct. If a man shall declare that he fear the Lord and love sin, he lies and the truth is not in him. If a man shall declare that he fear the Lord and shall continue in sin, persistently walking in the ways of evil, he is deceiving himself; he never deceives God. "He that feareth the Lord" is he upon whose spirit there forever rests the consciousness of God, in holiness, in truth, in absolute rectitude; a man in whose spirit there is perfect harmony with God. He loves the pure, the noble, the holy, and because of these things, hates the evil. As a result of this inward purity of heart, he departs from evil. Immediately, the second part of the definition follows, he that "worketh righteousness." The man who hates wrong departs from wrong, and does right.

How many of us are acceptable with God on the basis of that conception? All barriers of nationality, position, colour, sex capacity, are swept away, but this is erected. Character is supreme, character according to pattern; and the pattern is that of heart purity expressing itself in the life that departs from evil and does right. God is no respecter of persons, and no accident of birth or environment or temperament can exclude us from His attention, or prevent us from being received. Of whatever nation or people, or tongue or position in society—using the word in our degraded sense of it—we may come to Him; and as we come, the barriers men erect are gone; but a flaming sword is before us, we are halted; only those are acceptable who fear God, and do right. How many of us dare go on?

That leads me immediately to the second thought. In the light of the text, I am brought face to face with the appalling fact of human unfitness and consequent rejection. These are hard and fast lines of Divine requirement. No pity can overlook them. We cannot plead our weakness and folly, or our foolhardiness in the past, as excuse for the things which unfit us for the company and fellowship of God. I would put this case as superlatively as I can, and declare that if God can receive into fellowship with Himself, and hold in respect the impure, the vulgar, the demoralized, then He must be the Author of eternal disorder. It is because He is love, and His love is holiness and rectitude; and because His love is set upon the establishment of high and abiding conditions of life that this standard must be maintained. He cannot admit into His heaven the man in whose heart sin reigns supreme. Where is His heaven? Where He is. In London for the men and women who know Him and live in fellowship with Him. He cannot admit you thereto while evil reigns in your heart and sin is permitted, condoned, excused, persisted in. God help us not to hear this as a theory. It is a flaming fire. The thing in your life, in my life, permitted to remain, which we know is sinful; the evil that we do not hate, but love; the impure thing that we will not depart from, but give room to within the chambers of our personality; these are the things that shut us out from God. I affirm, therefore, that there is no comfort in this text if there be no more than the text.

That once again prompts me to go forward. This is not all that Peter said in the house of Cornelius. The background brings into living relief the gospel message. The sweeping simoon is followed by the gentle wind of God with healing in its every breath. If you think my language is overdrawn, or that there is over-emphasis in it, when I speak of the sweeping simoon, I can only say that that is how I feel. I speak with you more than to you. I will speak alone if you so will. In the sight of heaven I say if that text is all, then I am undone; I am excluded from the company and fellowship of God. I thought I was coming nearer when the Gentile might come as well as the Jew, I thought perchance there was an opportunity for me when I discovered that neither wealth nor poverty make appeal to

Him. I was rejoiced to think that perchance I might be admitted to His fellowship when I discovered that it was not the man of special capacity whom He receives; and as I was coming, the light shone, and the word said, "He that feareth Him and worketh right." I am a sinning man, I have done the wrong. I will not waste your time or my own discussing and blaming my environment. I have done the wrong when I need not have done it. I have loved the evil and refused to depart from it. The stain and scar and paralysis of it are with me still. How am I to come? To me the declaration is a sweeping simoon, no song in it, no deliverance in it. It is awful with the awfulness of unsullied holiness, and unbending righteousness; and all I can do is put my hand upon my lip and cry unclean, unclean. I am a sinning man.

Let us hear the apostle finish. What is the next thing that he says? "The Word which He sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ"; and then the parenthesis which was necessary, because the word was said to Israel, and he was speaking in the house of Cornelius, "He is Lord of all"; no respecter of persons, rich or poor, bond or free, high or low, He is Lord of all, "That saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth." Why the introduction of that word "even"? Because Jesus of Nazareth is the Word of the gospel.

The declaration already made revealed distance and the necessity for reconciliation between God and man. Peter knew full well that such a declaration would halt the soul, and create a sense of conflict, distance, difficulty, estrangement, and therefore he went on: "the Word which He sent." I wonder sometimes why they have not capitalized that initial letter all through the Acts of the Apostles, "the Word which He sent." What is that? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh." The Word that was sent.

Let us group the things he said about the Word. He was perfect Man. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and went about doing good. He was crucified. He was raised from the dead. He is appointed to judge. The perfect One, Who died, rose, and is Judge. And all this for what purpose? To grant unto men remission of sins. That is the gospel.

Let us see what it means in the light of the declaration of our text. God is no respecter of persons, but He does accept the man who fears Him and works righteousness, Now behold the Man. Here is the Type, the Pattern, the Revelation. This Man went about doing good. He feared God and hated evil; He departed from evil, and wrought righteousness. Mark, I pray you first of all, this great fact, that in the Person of Jesus presented by Peter upon this occasion you have the fulfilment of the ideal suggested in our text. He feared God and wrought righteousness. Do I need to stay to prove it? Surely not! I need hardly stay to illustrate it. Think of the life of Christ and see how true it is. He feared God and hated evil. He was "tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart." "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" Such was the negative challenge which His purity made. Here is its positive challenge. "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil." Doing good, when? Always. That means He wrought miracles? Oh no, that is specifically stated afterwards. He went about doing good, all the time, everywhere, and in the records I challenge you to find me a single picture of Him when He was not doing good. Look through the window that Mark has opened for us, and see Him during the long years in Nazareth making yokes and ploughs and building houses, for the carpenter in Nazareth was the builder also; He was doing good as surely there, as when presently in the midst

of the crowds He spoke and devils fled; He touched, and diseases vanished; He whispered, and the dead woke; doing good, doing right. A human life in the midst of my circumstances, in the midst of my temptations; but adjusted to the measurements of eternity, taking into account the infinite and eternal. That is the Pattern, and if that is all, I am more than ever filled with fear. The abstract terminology of my text appals me. The living revelation of that ideal paralyzes me with panic. I cannot so live. Oh my masters, you who tell me in this day that all I need to do is to preach Christ as an Example, you have never seen Him. I say that without any apology or reserve. The man who tells me that all I have to do is to follow Him, imitate Him, has never seen His glory. The perfection of the Son of God captures my mind, compels my admiration, and paralyzes my hope!

Is there anything else? Yes, there is another thing. They slew Him. But, there is still something more. God raised Him. The light of the resurrection flashes back upon the cross. I do not understand it. There is an awful, appalling mystery in the cross. I see more and more of its shame. I feel more and more the profundity of its agony. But there are depths I cannot fathom, heights I cannot reach, mysteries that overwhelm me. God raised Him. The light of resurrection is flashed upon the cross, the cruel, rugged, bloody cross has become beautiful with the promise of new life. I, rejected by the severity of God's holiness, see myself in the mystery of that dying; but I see my salvation in the triumph of that rising.

Preaching peace, this is the great evangel. Peace by the way of the cross. That risen One is demonstration of the fact that the cross is infinitely more than we can encompass by human measurement. It is a transaction with God, and of God; and God's final act is the resurrection, and in the words of Peter, the risen One is made "Judge of the quick and dead."

Oh trembling heart, affrighted by the severity of God's holiness, behold your Judge! He is wounded in hands and feet and side. I come to Him and look into His face, the face awful with the awfulness of holiness, and that shames me; yet I look at Him again and say, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"; and I am loosed from my sins through the mystery of what He is, and what He has done.

At that point I may begin my new life. Now I dare go back to my text. That is the character, and God has not abandoned it; He is still seeking it, but He has provided the force that will realize it in men who lack it.

Would God that the truth might take possession of your heart. You listen to me patiently, reverently, and say, I am with the preacher, I also have sinned. Then hear the preacher to the end, as he declares the whole message of the text. You can be all God demands through Jesus Christ the Lord. He will give you first of all in the deepest of your life the fear of God which will make you hate evil. Is it not so? Are there not hundreds of men and women who hate evil? The struggle is not over; the conflict is going forward; the battle is often fierce against the allurements and temptations of the world; but in the deepest of them there is the master-principle of the hatred of evil. Already they are beginning to depart from it. The principle of goodness is there, because Christ is there. Let Him have possession and He will never end until He lead you, and lead me, hopeless, helpless people; and present us in the unsullied and awful light of the holiness of God, without spot or blemish.

Let us submit to His measurement, and we shall be ashamed and condemned. Let us yield to Him, and we shall be remade and shall triumph.

Acts 16:25, 26. Songs In Prison.

Acts 16:25, 26.

Songs In Prison.

... about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed.

Acts 16:25-26

This is an arresting and wonderful story, and the more carefully it is considered the more the wonder grows. At first we wonder at the singing. Then we wonder so much at that which inspired the singing, that we should wonder more if these men had not sung. At first we are amazed with the cheerfulness and heroism of these men, and then we find out that their singing was not abnormal but normal. It was not the result of a transient emotion. It was the expression of a constant experience of the soul.

Let us, then, first look at the picture presented by these two verses; second, recognize the one central value of the story in order that third and finally, we may consider some of its particular teaching.

These are the things that arrest attention. First the men, Paul and Silas, then the circumstances in the midst of which we see them, then their occupation in the midst of the circumstances and finally, the issue of the story as it is contained in all that remains of the chapter.

Paul and Silas were Jews and were held in contempt in Philippi because they were Jews, as is most evident from this story. Yet, as emerges in the course of the story, they were Roman citizens. But preeminently they were Christians, the one an apostle and the other a prophet.

Their ministry and their message necessarily challenged effete Judaism and paganism wherever they came. They were calling men to a new way of life both as to ideal and power. Consequently, wherever they went they created disturbances. "... These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also!" That is always the note of true Christianity. It always challenges effete religions and paganism. Organized Christianity which fails to make a disturbance is dead. It is equally true that they created love for themselves wherever they came. What tender heart affections fastened around this man Paul!

Now observe their circumstances at this time. "But about midnight..." That disjunctive sends us back as it suggests all that had gone before. They had been charged with sedition. They had been beaten with many stripes. Beating with rods was a terrible experience. When Paul was writing to the Corinthians, he referred to such beatings as amongst the things he had endured. "Thrice was I beaten with rods..." It was physical brutality of the worst kind. Their backs were bruised and

bleeding and unwashed. They were cast into the inner prison, some inner chamber or dungeon from which light was excluded and probably almost all air was shut out. The final barbarity was that their feet were made fast in the stocks. All that before the "But." Immediately following it are the words, "At midnight!" That accentuates everything. It accentuates the loneliness, the weariness, the suffering.

We now come to that which is central; the occupation of these men. They were praying and singing hymns. This is not a description of two exercises. It does not mean that they were offering petitions and also singing hymns of praise. The word translated praying covers the whole ground of worship; asking for gifts, rendering of adoration, continued supplication, offering of thanksgiving. In this story the word "worship" is qualified by the word that follows. They were hymning the praises of God. The Greek word here employed is one that had long been reserved to represent the praises offered to heroes or gods or to the one God. The worship of these men was that of adoration. It was the expression of the gladness of their hearts. Two were gathered together in the Name and in the midst was the Lord; all unseen by the eyes of sense, unapprehended by any who were round about, undiscovered even after the jailer himself had come back to look at the prisoners. That Presence was the supreme sense of these men. They did not ask for anything, they gave. They were exercising their Christian priesthood on its highest level, which is not intercessory but eucharistic, the priesthood of thanksgiving. In the dungeon, in the darkness of the night, their feet fast in the stocks, their backs all bloody, they offered praises. They gave and their giving was the outcome of their gladness.

Immediately we ask, "What was there to make them glad?" I am inclined to answer the inquiry by saying that if we had asked them they probably would have said, "Nay, what is there to make us sad?"

Finally, we must glance at the issues. The prisoners were listening! Here again a word arrests us. It indicates attentive listening. It is a word that is almost invariably employed for that listening which gives pleasure, the word used when men listened to perfect music and were charmed by its sounds, or when men listened to some oration that swept them away.

In all this story there is revealed that which is peculiarly Christian, the victory of the soul over all adverse circumstances and the transmutation of all opposing forces into allies of the soul. Think of some of the sayings of this man Paul who sang that night. He (in paraphrase) says: "Tribulation worketh patience, therefore rejoice in tribulation." He says: "Afflictions work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, therefore we will rejoice in our afflictions." Yet again he says: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." These are all the things from which the soul of man shrinks; tribulation, affliction, sorrow! These things are made the allies of the soul, they work on behalf of the soul. Out of tribulation comes patience which leads on to confidence and hope of ultimate victory. Afflictions which can be dismissed in the light of eternity as light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are seen working out the weight of glory. Sorrows of the soul are working toward the change of mind which means its transformation into perfect harmony with the mind of Christ Himself. This is the central value of the story. This is the central truth concerning Christian experience.

What then was the secret of this experience in the case of these men? It was the outcome of their knowledge of God. He was known as compelling all things to work together for good to those who

love Him. The experience is not stoicism. The Christian man does not say: "What cannot be cured must be endured." I am afraid I have often said it, but when I have done so, it has been because for the moment I have forgotten my Christianity. To say that what cannot be cured must be endured is paganism. It is wonderful that paganism ever climbed to that height. It is a great attitude, it is heroic up to a certain point, but it is not Christianity. Christianity does not say what cannot be cured must be endured; it says, rather, that these things must be endured because they are part of the cure. These things are to be cheerfully borne because they have the strange and mystic power to make whole and strong and so to lead on to victory and the final glory. Christianity is never the dour pessimism which submits. Christianity is the cheerful optimism which cooperates with the process, because it sees that through suffering and weakness, joy and triumph must come. That always and only results from a clear vision of God. Wherever this clear vision of God comes to the soul through Christ—through Whom alone it can come—there follows the ending of bondage to all secondary causes, and the sense of relationship to the primary and final cause is supreme. Two men were in Philippi, in prison, in the inner prison, in the stocks, in suffering, in sorrow! All true, but the final thing is not said. They were in God! Their supreme consciousness was not that of the prison, or the stocks, or the pain, but of God. They were not callous or indifferent; pain was pain to them; confinement was confinement; loneliness was loneliness; but they realized how all these things were yet held in the grasp of the King of the perfect order, Whom they knew as their Lord and Master and, consequently, they sang praises. They did not ask for anything, not even for an earthquake. They gave Him praises. That is Christianity. Because of this vision of God and because of this sense of the soul, the experiences which otherwise would have depressed and led to despair became wings of hope, the inspiration of song.

All this took place at midnight! That accentuates all the difficulty, the loneliness and weariness and pain. Yet the phrase is not really "At midnight." This very slight alteration in the Revised Version is not to be passed over lightly. "About midnight!" To these men midnight was not a definite moment at all. Midnight is never a stopping place. It is coming, and lo! it is gone before we know it. Time is transfigured. There is no long, deadly moment with all the agony of eternity pressed into it to these men. They are traveling, and they are traveling in the spirit of the hymn:

We are marching through Immanuel's ground

To fairer worlds on high.

Through Immanuel's land; not to Immanuel's land, but through it. John Bunyan puts the river his pilgrim had to cross in Immanuel's land. The pilgrim did not cross the river to reach Immanuel's land; the river was in it and ere he knew it, he had passed the river. So to these men all these things were in Immanuel's land. Midnight, that deadly hour, that most terrible hour, wherein some people seem forever to dwell; anticipation of it makes it a perpetual presence, and the memory of it an abounding agony. But for these men there was no such actual time. It was about midnight, and then they sang, and they sang praises to God.

What then are the things of value here for ourselves? In attempting to answer this inquiry let us keep our mind upon these men. First, we learn that men who sing while they suffer are men who have learned the profound secret that suffering is the method by which joy is perfected. That declaration is limited by human history as we know it. I am not prepared to say that we can make a statement like that, and apply it to the whole universe of God. It is conceivable that there may be

abounding joys in God's great universe that have never been reached through suffering. I cannot tell. I do not know. I do not ask to know. I am dealing with humanity as the result of our own experience and in the light of the biblical unveiling. Suffering is always the method by which joy is perfected. In the midst of the Paschal discourses our Lord said: "... your sorrow shall be turned into joy." That is an entirely different thing from saying that your sorrow shall be exchanged for joy. Without desiring for a moment to be censorious in criticism, yet it is true that half our hymns suggest that we should look on to heaven where we shall find a joy which is a compensation for the sorrows of life. There is truth in that view, but it does not get to the heart of the Christian revelation. The truth is that all the ultimate joys of the heavenly state are joys that have come out of the agonies of the earthly tribulation. Is that a startling thing to say? Then listen to these most revealing words: "... Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame...." With infinite reverence I say that He had never reached that joy save through His sorrows. That which was wrought out in the experience of our Lord on our behalf is a revelation of what all this pain means—this abounding, palpitating, poignant agony. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Again and again we have glimpses of it, outworking into the present of immediate experience. Look back over the years. There they are, travel-worn years; much of light is upon them, but much of darkness also; many days of triumph, marching with the band playing and the flags flying, and many days of disaster and defeat. Already you know that the greatest things of life have come, not out of the sunlit days, but out of the darkened hours. Your sorrow has already been turned into joy. When your sorrow that seemed unendurable at the hour, blossomed with beauty, your sorrow was turned into joy. Christianity as an experience is the ability to know that this will be so even while the agony is upon us, and so we are able to sing in the midst of it. Men who sing while they suffer are men who have learned the profound secret that suffering is the method by which joy is perfected in human life and human history.

But again, men who sing in prison are men who cannot be imprisoned. It was impossible to imprison Paul and Silas. But they were imprisoned. They could be shown in that prison, in that inner chamber, with their feet fast in the stocks. Ah, but they were not imprisoned. Fellowship with God is the franchise of eternity. You may put these men within your stone walls, you may make their feet fast in the wood of your brutal stocks, but they are not there. They are sitting with Christ in the heavenly places. They are ranging themselves with the living ones. They are swinging the censers of their heavenly priesthood in high and holy places. As to bodily presence, they are there in the prison, but as to spiritual essence they are with God. Men who sing in prison are men who cannot be imprisoned.

Therefore we may add: men who sing at midnight are citizens of that city of which it is said they need no light of sun or moon, for the Lord and the Lamb are the light of it. But they are in Philippi! Yes, as to bodily presence but not as to spiritual experience. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to find a city but never found it. He died without seeing it. Those who have followed in his steps have still been seeking it. It has never been found. It is not found yet. But it is clearly seen; it will be built; it will be established. Abraham lived in it though he never saw it; he walked its streets though it was never built; he held communion with its inhabitants though he never reached it. Paul and Silas, where are you living just now? In Philippi? No, in the City of God! In the City of God there is no night. These men were children of light, they were stars of the morning, and the morning stars sang together long ago, and they will sing together through all earth's midnight until the last

shadow is melted. Men who sing at midnight are citizens of the city in which there is no night.

And finally, men who sing when their work is stopped are men whose work is never stopped.

They have put Paul in prison. His beloved work is stopped. He cannot preach in prison. But they sang praises, and the prisoners were listening. A man who can sing in prison is a man whose work is never done. When the missionary journey has to be abandoned and the preaching services are all canceled and there is nothing more to do, he will sing and the prisoners will hear his singing. The singing of a prisoner is a message to prisoners and they will listen. I cannot go any further. I do not know what happened to those prisoners afterwards. If you will allow the speculation, I believe that some of them were brought to Jesus Christ as the result of that singing. Cancel that if you do not agree. At least one man was won for Christ; the hard brutalized man who had been able to put these men in the stocks in the inner prison and leave them all bleeding from the rods and faint with loss of blood. He had left them and gone to sleep. He was asleep. If you want to know how brutalized he was, get that upon your heart. What is the next thing we see him doing? Washing their stripes, his whole nature revolutionized, his whole being completely changed with a suddenness equal to that of the earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. He is washing their stripes; he is putting food before them. Men who sing in prison when their work is stopped are given to see that their work is never stopped; it runs on through bondage to liberty, and the gospel is preached anew.

All I have so far said has had to do with one verse of my text. There is another verse. "... suddenly there was a great earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed." That was very wonderful, but we will not dwell upon it. I made it part of the text in order to say that it does not matter. It does not at all affect our story. It does not rob from it; it does not add to it. The glory of our consideration is in the other verse. That earthquake does not always come. We shall miss a great deal if we imagine that when we are in prison and sing, there will be an earthquake. Prison doors may not be opened at all. Thousands have been left in prison and died there, but they sang, and they sang through until they joined the new song on the other side. That earthquake does not matter. Do not let us fix our minds upon the earthquake. Probably we shall never have a deliverance like that. That is not the point of the story at all. Two or three years passed away and Paul was in prison in Rome, and then he wrote to these very people, to this jailer, and these Philippians. Read his letter, the letter he wrote to these very people from another prison. It is a song from beginning to end. He was still singing, and there was no earthquake. But probably he was liberated. Yes, I agree. Possibly he expected to be liberated. Indeed, he surely did as that letter shows. But he was not singing because he was to be liberated. Read the letter through, and you will see that the inspiration of his song was not the expectation of deliverance. It was the realization while he was in prison of the fact that he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. That is the secret of the singing in the Philippian letter. That sense of relationship to Jesus Christ transfigured everything else. The chain? He looked at it, but it flashed with light. He was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. Let us go on. Presently, he was in prison again, and he was never coming out, and he knew it. His last writing was the letter of a man in prison never to escape. He knew it perfectly well. Things had not gone well with him in the first part of his trial, and he was assured that the issue of the second part of it would be death. How then did he write? What is he doing? Listen to him for a moment:

For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing.

He was singing still; still an anthem, still a paeon of praise!

They were very dark days. Listen!

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:... Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering. But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. (It is colder here.) The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil....

Do you see the conflicting circumstances? Was he singing now?

At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom: to Whom be glory for ever and ever....

He was singing still. Ah yes! and the singing that we have listened to in Philippi was before the earthquake. He had no idea that the earthquake was coming. He did not sing because he was to be let out of prison. He sang because prison did not matter.

Your harps, ye trembling saints,

Down from the willows take;

Loud to the praise of Love divine,

Bid every string awake.

His Grace will to the end,

Stronger and brighter shine;

Nor present things, nor things to come,

Shall quench the spark divine.

When we in darkness walk,

Nor feel the heavenly flame,

Then is the time to trust our God,

And rest upon His Name.

Blest is the man, O God,

That stays himself on Thee!

Who wait for Thy salvation, Lord,
Shall Thy salvation see!

Acts 17:29. Humanity And Deity.

Acts 17:29.

Humanity And Deity.

Being then the offspring of God.

Acts 17:29

The text occurs in the course of the address which Paul delivered on Mars Hill. I am quite conscious that Paul has been somewhat criticized for the method he adopted at Athens. It has been said that he attempted to adapt himself to local conditions and surroundings and signally failed. Moreover, it has been affirmed that when presently he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, and said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," he was in his own mind reflecting upon the mistake he had made when, coming to Athens, he had attempted to speak to the Athenian listeners in a language which they would be most likely to understand. I have made reference to this view of Paul's attitude simply to say that I hold it to be utterly unwarrantable and false. He always manifested his great sense of the need of adapting the manner of his message to the men who listened, while he was careful never to change its essential note or lower its highest claim by one single hair's breadth. I submit to you that when he wrote to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," he neither intended to put his message to them into comparison with his method at Athens, nor did he mean that the only message he had to deliver to men anywhere was the message of the cross. His reason for so writing was that they were still living a carnal life, and he could not pass away from the first principles of Christianity because they had not made response to the claims of that earliest declaration. The cross was not Paul's ultimate and final message. "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead." All the spaciousness of his message was created by the fact that while he never forgot the fundamental truth of Christianity, that of the cross, he left the first principles and passed on to the perfection of teaching as he attempted to lead men to see how in resurrection life they had possession of all that was necessary for the realization of the purpose of God within them.

If Paul's method at Athens is not to be criticized, it must be examined and understood. I ask you to notice that in the words of the text, "Being then the offspring of God," the Apostle was reaffirming the truth of which these people were already in possession intellectually. He was protesting against their attempting to make to themselves likenesses of God. His whole spirit had been stirred within him as he found them to be not—as the Authorized Version incorrectly rendered it—"too superstitious," but "very religious." He discovered all through Athens evidences of the religious character of the people. That was the great thing which moved his heart. Their deep, underlying interest in religion was manifest in their temples, their altars, their idols. So much was this so that they had even erected an altar to "the unknown god." Recognizing the underlying religious capacity of the Athenians, Paul protested against the way in which they were attempting

to satisfy it. He tells them God "is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." This "unknown god" to whom you have erected an altar I declare unto you. You have said that I am "a setter forth of strange gods." I am the setter forth of the God to Whom you have already erected your altar. "He is not far from each one of us... as even certain of your own poets have said. For we are also His offspring."

Of set purpose, quietly and deliberately he reaffirmed this truth, and proceeded to make the application which was necessary at the moment. "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone," that is, we ought not to imagine that we can make something like Him of something which is less than ourselves. When you make likenesses of God in gold or silver or stone, you degrade the God Whom you yet know to be the One of Whom you are the offspring. So much for the setting of the text.

I bring you this message today, although its application is a different one. Being then the offspring of God, ye ought not to degrade yourselves by being satisfied with anything less than that which Christ laid down as the supreme and final injunction of His ethic, "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Being then the offspring of God, the one true passion of every human life ought to be to become like Him, and so to be true to the underlying fact and force of personal life.

It is a great truth, though I am inclined to say, improperly used by some people. False deductions have been made from it, and still are being made, and because improperly used by some, it is feared by others. I believe that as we see this truth individually, we shall be prepared to listen to the call of Christ to come to Him for life; as we understand this truth collectively we shall be busy in the enterprise of making known the great Evangel to the men at home and in the far distant places of the earth. I do not hesitate to say that it is this conviction which is the driving inspiration of all my life and ministry and work.

Man is the offspring of God. What is this word "offspring"? It occurs about twenty times in the New Testament and is translated in seven ways. It is translated "race" seven times. It is translated "offspring," as in our text, three times; "kinds," three times; "kind," twice; "countrymen," twice; "stock," twice, and "kindred," once. You will at once see that running through all these words there is one thought, or one particular quantity, and it is to that I desire to draw your attention. I think perhaps we come nearer to the true sense of the Greek word here translated "offspring" by using the Latin word which has come into the common speech of today, genus. A genus includes all the species which, differing in proportion and color, are yet of the same life essence, and there you have the thought in the word translated "offspring."

I shall do no violence to the text if I change the word and say the poets declared and Paul reaffirmed that man is kin of God, that by first creation he is intimately related to God. Man is not in any essential power of his personality the creation of the devil. Man is in every essential power of his personality the creation of God. Every man is a thought of God, created, wrought out into visibility. Every man is made, according to the teaching of Scripture, in the likeness of God, in the image of God, and every man has entered into the power of his own life by the inbreathing of the breath of God. The life I live now—I am not speaking of my Christian life, that inner mystic life which gave me a new vision and a new understanding, and a new capacity for realizing myself—I am speaking of my first life—call it natural if you will—is God created. It is life which is kin to the life

of God, so that when I am told that all humanity is of God, I am told that which is perfectly true according to the teaching of Scripture. Yet, let us follow this. Where does it lead us?

There are three lines I shall attempt to follow. First, the evidences of Deity in humanity. Second, the failure of the Divine in the human, and, finally, the restoration of man to God. To omit any one of these is to omit something of Christian truth and doctrine. To begin by the declaration of man's restoration to that which he has never lost is illogical and foolish. To begin by declaring that man has failed to realize the possibility of his own being, and to deny the possibility is again illogical. On the other hand, to begin by declaring that man is essentially kin of God, and to deny the fact of wrong and sin and evil, is to contradict the common experience of every man who has lived an ordinary life in the midst of the things of this world. The three things are necessary if we would understand what Christ has to say to this and every age concerning man.

First, then, the evidences of Deity in humanity. When Wordsworth sang

Trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God who is our home

he sang as one of the seers. A study of humanity in the light of God's self-revelation results in an almost overwhelming mass of evidence for the kinship of man to God. The ultimate conviction of such consideration is that all the essentials of humanity are kin to Deity. Only the accidentals are unlike God. Do not read into my word accidental anything less than ought to be in it. An accident may be a tragedy, a catastrophe. Only the accidentals are unlike God. Take some few of the evidences.

You will find in every human being a passion for life.

Have you ever asked yourself what the passion for life really means? How is it that everywhere, in all circumstances, in all ages, all men manifest a hunger for life; that the deep cries of humanity which are recorded for us in the simple terms of Holy Scripture are the cries of humanity everywhere; that when the young ruler looked into the face of Jesus and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit age-abiding life?" he was simply speaking out of the depth of his humanity? He was saying what every man says sooner or later. Wherever you find a human being you find a being in revolt against death asking for life. What is this passion for life? It is born of the consciousness of the infinite. It is born of the fact that in the soul of man there is a profound consciousness from which he never escapes, of the fact of age-abiding life. His mind encompasses infinitely more than he can understand. He tells you he cannot grasp the thought of the infinite either as to time or space; but the man who knows a thing is unknowable has grasped that thing. In the moment when I know that I stand at the center of infinite reaches and stretches and forces, there is born within me a passion to hold, to possess, to grasp. It is that which puts man into the attitude of revolt against death.

Wherever you go you will find men characterized by a passion for dominion. The campaigns of humanity demonstrate the truth of it. Man is forevermore attempting to win his territory and reign over it. Wherever you find me a man determined to hold the scepter I show you one of whom the psalmist sang long ago. "Thou hast made him but little lower than God"—for dominion. The passion for dominion which is in the human heart is demonstration of man's relation to God.

Again, wherever you find man, you find a thirst for knowledge. If you have any children in your home and will listen to them you will learn wonderful lessons. You will find in those days when they are first beginning to talk that the words which most often pass their lips are "Why?" "How?" "What?" In asking these questions the child proves its capacity for knowing, and if you will follow that child through all its years, to youth and manhood and even old age, you will find it asking the same questions. Man is asking to know. He begins as a little child: "Why do flowers grow, mother?" and when he is an old man he has not answered that question unless he has listened to Christ as He says to him, "Consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin, yet your Father garbs them with a glory which Solomon never knew." That is the answer. Christ summarizes all truth about knowledge when he says, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Wherever you see a man seeking knowledge—he may be seeking it wrongfully, but the fact that he seeks it demonstrates him the offspring of God.

Again, take man's eagerness to create. All the inventions of the centuries demonstrate man's eagerness to make a new thing. The artist will tell you that art is a passion for creation. The passion for the new is always evidence of man's desire to create. It may be journalism, it may be theology. Man, foolishly, or otherwise, is after the making of something new. The passion for creation is demonstration of man's kinship to God.

Take yet another illustration. The appreciation of beauty which you will find everywhere in the world is demonstration of the same thing, whether in art, sculpture, poetry, or music. Of course, I take it for granted that no one will say to me, "What has beauty to do with God?" If you do ask that question, I remind you of the words of the ancient prophet who, in an ecstasy of worship cried out, "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty." The admiration of beauty is everywhere. It is demonstration of the fact that humanity is offspring of God.

Take another illustration on a higher level. Man's admiration for goodness. You say, "Is that universal?" Absolutely universal. Remember, I said "admiration"! I do not mean that all men are good. Far from it. I do mean that you cannot find me a man in all the circle of your acquaintanceship who in the deepest of him does not admire goodness. He may affect not to admire it, but in the deepest of him he knows that it is high and noble. It is there—the conviction of the goodness of goodness, the beauty of holiness.

Once again, man's capacity for love is an evidence of his relationship to Deity.

None of these things has come into human life as the result of the influence of sin, evil, and the devil. All these are found in humanity as a whole. In some measure they are found in every man. In some men some one essential is more prominent than the others. These facts are demonstrations of the truth which the poets sang and which Paul reaffirmed, that man is the offspring of God.

If I sent you away with that as the only message I should be false not only to the Bible, but to all your experience. Think for a moment of the failure of the Divine in the human. When Heber sang

Where all the prospect pleases

And only man is vile,

he uttered the most tragic and awful truth. He sang a thing we would fain blot out of our hymnbooks, but we dare not. It is true. It is when I see man in his magnificence as offspring of God that I really understand his ruin. It is the sense of man's true kinship to God which reveals his awful failure as nothing else can do. Inter-human comparison may satisfy me, but this dignity of which I have been speaking demonstrates the degradation which I find all about me. If man is not kin of God in specific and special manner by creation, what is he? If he be merely of the dust and only of the dust, only so much related to God as the flowers are related to God, I quit my preaching. If that is all the truth about man, then man is doing very well. If indeed man is the outcome of the dust by the force of the one life common in the flower and man and God, then let me find an honest occupation; because man is climbing up, let me leave him to his climb. Why should I interfere? If that be true, there may still be room for the ethical cult, but the vocation of preaching the Evangel is a past vocation, and has been a ghastly mistake and an awful failure. But when I see in every human face the stamp of the image of God, and when I know that man is more kin of God than any other form of creation, then I begin to see man's degradation, and in every one of the illustrations I have taken to prove man's relation to Deity I have evidence of man's failure in that respect. Man's passion for life is confronted with the necessity for death, and he cannot by any means escape. Man's desire for dominion is defeated by a sense of slavery. The thirst for knowledge is intensified by the feverishness of agnosticism. Agnosticism never has been and never can be an intellectual resting place. No man who is an intellectual can rest there. He may have to declare his agnosticism, but it will make him more than ever restless. If he be indeed intellectual his thirst for knowledge is forever answered by a point beyond which he cannot go, until the Word of God has spoken the mystic secret in his ear.

Man's eagerness to create is ever unsatisfied in that nothing is ever new. The love of the beautiful is ever conscious of an unattained beauty, and here is the principal point, the admiration of goodness is the agony of inability to realize. Is it true that men everywhere see how good goodness is? It is equally true as Paul wrote—and he voiced not merely a theological creed but the actual experience of life—"The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice." If it is true that when a man takes strong drink he is engaged in a quest for God—and I believe it is true—is he finding God that way? The man stooping over the stagnant pool is seeking water, but is he finding water? Is it not unutterable folly for that man to attempt to satisfy his thirst with the water of the stagnant pool when the living streams are gushing from the rock just at hand. All these are demonstrations of a degradation which needs some power to lift it. In every human life there is this paralysis. There is the vision of goodness but no virtue that can translate the vision into history. The capacity for love is ever suffering for lack of the final center. The sum total is failure. All fail in greater or less degree in every man. Flaming exceptions are all partial. Every demonstration of man's kinship to God is evidence of his degradation, his failure.

What message has the Christ of the New Testament to this double fact in human life? I make my answer first by saying that Christ recognizes the double fact. It was His recognition of the double fact which created the passion of His heart. When He saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd He saw them in their ruin, and at the back of the ruin He saw the Divine intention. Let no man imagine that he has recently discovered the fact of man's relationship to God. Christ proclaimed it long ago. He saw not merely the great capacity, He saw also its paralysis, and His heart was moved with compassion in the presence of it. The whole meaning of Christ's mission in

the world is that He addressed Himself to the two facts, the fact of man's kinship to God, and the fact of man's degradation. When Isaac Watts sang,

In Him the sons of Adam boast

More blessings than their father lost,

he sang a solo with all the infinite harmonies of the Evangel sounding behind and through it. Jesus confronts man in his kinship and ruin and makes possible the realization of the kinship of God by the negation of the forces of wrong which have brought man to the place of degradation. How does He do it?

First, consider this fact. The things I have said of man are true of Christ in part, but only in part. The things I said first of man are all true of Him. The things I said of man secondly are not true of Him. Remember that first of all He realized all that which man feels himself capable of by creation, and yet never can realize in actual experience. Men feel the passion for life. Jesus possessed it so that He could say, "No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." They are words He actually uttered. If I cannot understand all the depth of their meaning, I can understand the first simplicity of them, and in that simplicity I find that Christ declares that no man can take His life from Him. In the laying down of it He will do it voluntarily and take it again. Did He take it again? On your answer to that question depends your relation to the Christian fact. If you say, No, then He did not rise. "Then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain... we are of all men most pitiable." If you say Yes, He did take it again, then His taking of it again demonstrates the fact that He laid it down and that no man could have taken it from Him had it not been His will to lay it down.

Man seeks dominion: He exercises dominion. Standing once upon the mountain heights, Christ said to a group of fishermen, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations." They started, and all the triumphs of Christianity have been won in the name and power of Christ. He rose from the dead and grasped the scepter of universal empire.

We speak of knowledge and the desire to know. Our knowledge is limited. Jesus said, "This is the age-abiding life, to know God." He also said, "Father, I have known Thee." He possessed the ultimate secrets. I speak of the desire to create: He said, "I make all things new." We speak of man's admiration for beauty and his inability to overtake it: He declared—and the centuries demonstrate the truth of it—"I am the bright and morning star." Other men admire goodness and cannot realize it. He stands challenging the ages by His words, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." Other men have capacity for love. He stands in the center, the flaming, eternal vision, and says, "I... abide in His love." So that all man is in kinship to God by first nature, this Man is. All that man is in degradation, this Man is not. Identified with the essential human nature of the sinner, He is separated by infinite distances from all the sin of the sinner and all the limitation of knowledge resulting from the sin of the sinner. The lonely Man! But I am not saved by that fact. The contemplation of the great ideal never communicates dynamic to a paralyzed man. I may gaze upon the beauty but I am not thereby transformed into it. I may see the perfection of His life, and all it does for me is to bow me to the dust in shame Have you seen it? Then do you not know it in your own experience? I say to you

tonight, in the name of God, that the man who tells me that he has seen Christ, and hopes within his own life by some effort of his own to reach Him, has never seen Him.

To see the vision, to see the spotless, matchless purity, to see human life in Christ is to know how weak I am, how low I am in the scale, how far off I am from Him, it is to know the power of the poison that paralyzes me, and to cry out in agony of soul, "If that Man has done none other for me than to reveal to me the beauty of human life He leaves me upon the highway bruised and helpless."

Thank God, I have an Evangel! The Evangel tells me that this Man perfect in realization in His life entered into all the limitations resulting from sin, was numbered with the transgressors in birth and baptism, and all the circumstances of poverty and pain, and yet I am not so saved, for by sympathy no man can save his brother. I follow Him reverently until I see Him in the hour of a great cross—a cross that grows upon my vision in its height and depth, and in the wide sweep of its outstretched arms, the cross upon which I once saw the Galilean carpenter, but upon which I now see God manifest in flesh. There in the mystery of that cross I know that He has entered into the very place of the ultimate issue of my sin. When you are told that we of the Evangelical faith declare that one man by dying saved the race, say it is not true. We make no such affirmation. We do affirm that the one lonely Personality in all the ages Who was man and God, God and man, God-man, God manifest, by dying provided plenteous redemption for the whole race. There in the cross, in which there is wrought out into visibility the eternal verities which I never could have known otherwise, I see how I, kin of God, yet ruined, may lift my face again toward the light, for by the sacred, hallowed, overwhelming mystery of the cross I have life.

Every man is capable of Deity. When Christ calls He calls to the deepest in man. No man can realize the possibility of his first creation who has once sinned a sin that leads him into distance and paralysis, save as he is born again, born anew of the Spirit, and as he abandons himself to the grace of God.

Acts 19:2. The Lack Of The Spirit.

Acts 19:2.

The Lack Of The Spirit.

Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?

Acts 19:2

"Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" not, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" There is no warrant for the introduction of that word "since" into the Authorized Version. The tense is the same in both the verbs. "The Holy Ghost received ye when ye believed?" The only difference is that the one is a question and the other an affirmation. Received ye? Ye believed. This is a distinction rendered necessary by a difference. The introduction of the word "since" makes the Apostle's question mean, "Subsequently to believing, have ye received the Holy Ghost?" The inquiry which he raised really was, "Coincidentally with believing, did ye receive the Holy Ghost?" The Apostle's question was not whether these people had received a second blessing. It was rather an inquiry into the nature of the first blessing. An examination of the context will, I think, throw light upon the meaning of this question and enable us to make that personal and present application of it which is important to us.

Apollos was a Jew, that is, a proselyte, for he was an Alexandrian by race. He was "a learned man," and he was "mighty in the Scriptures." This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, which does not mean that he was perfectly familiar with all the facts concerning the mission of Jesus. He had been, as the margin more accurately has it, instructed by word of mouth in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, not all of them, for he did not know all the things concerning Jesus, "knowing only the baptism of John." In all likelihood, upon some occasion Apollos had listened to the voice of the forerunner, had heard him as he foretold the coming of Another. He knew the One of Whom John spoke through what John had said, and he knew no more. He knew that One was to come after John, whose fan was to be in His hand, Who was to thoroughly purge His floor: One so Kingly that John said of Him that He was not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of His shoe, One Who would baptize men with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Knowing these things and being fervent in spirit, Apollos taught carefully what he knew. Listening to him were Priscilla and Aquila, who knew a great deal more than the preacher. They recognized his power and sincerity, but they knew his lack. I never know whether to admire Aquila and Priscilla or Apollos more for what follows. They heard him, and "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately." I admire them because they did not write letters to the newspapers about him, but took him unto themselves. I admire him because he was willing to listen to two persons who were members of his congregation. After this instruction he appears to have passed on to Achaia. There his message was changed. He knew far more than when he had begun to preach in Ephesus. "He helped them much that had believed through

grace, for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

He had persuaded men during the early days of his preaching to take a certain position—the one he himself had taken. He had told them about John and his message, about the One Who was to come after, the One Who was to come with His fan in His hand to purge His floor, to gather the wheat into a garner and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. Some of them had believed and had been baptized with John's baptism, but nothing more. No preacher ever lifts his hearers above the level of his own spiritual attainment.

When Paul came into contact with these men he saw that something was lacking. They had a great deal, but not everything. They had come a certain distance, but had halted. Paul discovered that they lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. There were certain inimitable evidences of the Spirit's presence in human lives which were lacking in these people, and he said to them suddenly, and I think with a note of surprise in his voice, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" They said, "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given," which does not mean that they did not know of the existence of the Holy Ghost, because John had preached the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the fact that One was coming Who would baptize them with the Spirit. It does mean, as our rendering gives us to understand, that they had not heard whether the Holy Spirit was given. John's teaching had declared that it should be given, but they had not heard whether the promise had been fulfilled. Then Paul asked another question, "Into what then were ye baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." "Then," said Paul, in effect, "if you were baptized into John's baptism, you have not been obedient to John's message. John told you that you must repent, but he also told you that you were to believe on the One who was to come." Then most evidently Paul told them He had come, told them the story of His coming, of His work, and led them further on. They were then baptized in the name of Jesus. It was an act of faith, and following that, Paul laid his hands on them, symbolically, not sacramentally, and in that moment, as they were baptized because they believed in the name of Jesus, while Paul's fatherly hands lay still upon them, the Holy Spirit fell upon them.

Now look and listen. They spake with tongues, they prophesied, and from that day forward no apostle could ask them, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" The signs have come. The evidences are present. The something lacking is lacking no more. The inner life bubbles up into joy, ecstatic speech, tongues. The inner life pours itself out in testimony, prophecy. They had received the Holy Ghost because they had believed on Jesus in all the fullness of the apostolic message concerning Him. They had not until that moment received the Holy Ghost, because they had believed on Jesus only within the narrow limits of John's message concerning Him.

Now, I think with the light of that context upon the text, we see how this may be a very pertinent and absolutely important question today.

I am speaking to an audience the vast majority of which believes in Jesus. There may be some few here who have lost their faith in Him, and have lost their faith in revealed religion. With all sincere and honest respect for them, they are outside the scope of my present message. Were I to go from pew to pew and speak individually to man, woman, and little child, asking the same question, "Do you believe in Jesus?" the answer would be naturally, honestly, truthfully, "Yes." Therefore I bring you the Apostle's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" Is

your belief of that nature which has resulted in the actual reception in your own life of the Holy Spirit of God?

If in the economy of God some of these apostles of the Early Church were called upon to face congregations such as we have to face, I think they would pause in astonishment in the first ten minutes, and would say, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" There are hundreds and thousands of people who in some measure believe in Jesus Christ who have never received the Spirit, who have never been baptized with the Spirit, who have never been born again, for the terms are synonymous. Ethic without enthusiasm, principle without passion, desire without dynamic, negation of the wrong things without position in the soil of the new life—this is a perilous state in which to live. It is a perilous state because to continue in that state is to become in the one tremendous word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, "hardened."

The ethic merely accepted as true becomes traditional bondage. The principle obeyed with no passion of fire burning through it becomes heartlessness. Desire for the higher life and the broadening of the outlook long unfulfilled become cynicism. The negation becomes chaos. This is what is happening everywhere. You believe on Jesus, yes, and you believe on Jesus very reverently; you have never taken His name in vain. So far from that, you have always attended what we call the means of grace, you have sung the hymns of the sanctuary, you have attentively listened to the message delivered by the servants of God. You have come so far as to believe the ideals of Jesus, you accept them; but there is no passion, no fire, no force, no light upon the mountains, no song in the heart.

Faultily faultless, icily regular,

Splendidly null.

Dead while you live. Our churches are crowded with such people, who have never received the Holy Ghost, who, if you begin to speak to them, will say, "We are not sure about this doctrine of the Holy Ghost. We do not even know whether the Holy Ghost is!"

May I press the examination of this passage of Scripture a little further for our own profit. What was the fault of the attitude of these people? They had halted. John had pointed them on to Jesus. They had not fully obeyed. I do not know that it would be fair for me to criticize them or to attempt to say they were blameworthy in this matter. It may have been that they had never heard the final facts about Jesus. Perchance Apollos had never heard them. It may have been that in the darkness which resulted from the crucifixion all hope in Jesus had been eclipsed. They may have heard of the death of Jesus, and may have heard rumors of His resurrection. They may have said, "We are not certain that this is the One. John said there was One to come, but this may not be the One." Be all that as it may, this is certain, they had halted after repentance. They had never taken the second step which John had commanded—to believe on Him Who was to come. When Paul came he preached Jesus to them in all the fulness of the apostolic message. They went beyond the messenger John to One of whom he spoke, and thus passed into the realm of life. They no longer waited for the operation of the fan and the operation of the fire, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they gave themselves over thereto, and immediately they did so, they felt the burning of the fire, the sweeping wind of the fan, the touch of a new life. The horizon was flung back, the windows were opened, the thrill of life for which they had waited came to them when they abandoned

themselves to Jesus Christ.

What is the one thing lacking in all such as believe in His ethic, in His ideal, who come so far as recognition of the beauty and glory of His purpose? In order to come into touch with His life, what is the one thing needful? Just the step further. Hand the life over to Him by an act of faith. In the case of these people it was an act which expressed itself in baptism. I do not think for a moment that the method of expression matters. I do think that the act of faith which drives a man to a method of expression is the important thing. I do not believe that these men received the Holy Ghost because they received water baptism. Nobody believes that the immersion in water was the medium of the baptism of the Spirit. By that baptism into the name of Jesus they gave expression to their faith in Christ. Answering that faith expressed in that act, the Spirit came upon them.

That is what you need. You have been for years on the confines of Emmanuel's land. You are familiar with all the songs, but you cannot sing them and feel the rapture of them. You are familiar with all the phrasing of Christianity, but it has never become the phrasing which beats your heart into infinite music. You need that faith which abandons itself absolutely and wholly, not to an ideal you would like to realize, but to a Person who will realize in you every ideal after which your heart is seeking. In order to receive the Holy Ghost we have to add to our conviction, confidence; to our repentance, faith; to our hope, appropriation, and all these things in relation to Jesus Christ. The living Christ has come. The Spirit has been poured out. Westminster Chapel, London, tonight is as full in every part of the Holy Spirit of God as was the upper room on the day of Pentecost. The mistake you have been making for years is that you have been waiting for Him to come in nights of prayer and lonely vigil, in speculative inquiry; waiting while you have been attending conventions and reading books about the Holy Ghost. The Spirit has come. He is here. Every man, woman, and little child in this house is surrounded by the beneficent Spirit of God, waiting to come in, waiting to teach you the deeper music of life, its vision and glory. "How is it that I do not feel the thrill and do not see the light?" you ask. Because you have never believed in Jesus Christ. Convinced of the perfection of His ideal, put confidence in Him, and rank yourself by His side and under His banner. Repenting of sin, changing your mind about it, trust Him to give you victory in every department of life. Hoping for a better day, appropriate the day that has come. Wishing that you could be delivered, be delivered now by trusting Jesus Christ. Just where you sit, hoping, wishing, wondering, cast yourself upon Jesus Christ and say, "Here I am, now, just as I am." The Spirit of God will bring the living Christ into your own inner experience. That will end your infidelity, your skepticism, your wonder. You will pass into the realm of life, and all the signs following will be granted to you.

What were the signs following? "They spake with tongues and prophesied." I am not going to inflict upon you any elaborate discussion as to that "spake with tongues." It was a repetition of the Pentecostal experience, and yet not a repetition, but to them the very Pentecostal experience. Just what Peter, James and John and the rest received at Pentecost these men received then. Just as Peter, James and John, waiting for the Spirit when Christ's work was done, received it, and immediately spake with tongues and prophesied, so these men who had been waiting, when they received the Holy Spirit, did the same thing—they spake with tongues. My own conviction—and here is a speculation with which you need not waste time—is that the miracle of Pentecost was not a miracle of talking in different languages, but of hearing in different languages. I believe these were the same tongues of which you read in Corinthians, notwithstanding other opinions. I believe

the gift of tongues was the gift of ecstatic utterance, in praise, in prayer, in gladness. Somebody said, "Hallelujah," a little while ago, and you did not like it. I am afraid it was a sign that you have not received the Holy Ghost. I do not mean to say that if you have received the Holy Ghost you will say, "Hallelujah," but you will be in sympathy with the man who is bound to say it. The deadly dullness of half our services is proof of the fact that we lack the Spirit of God. If that fire is within me I burn, and, somehow or other, either in the volume of congregational song or some other way, it must flame forth. "They spake with tongues." They could not help it. Don't you, dear intellectual soul of this twentieth century, be cynical with the man who breaks out into tongues. You know the story; it is told of half a dozen different painters. I do not know of which one it is really true. I will fix it on Turner. He was showing one of his pictures to a friend, who said, "Oh, but that is not real. I have never seen colors like these." Turner replied, "No, but don't you wish you could?" Do you, in your cold intellectualism, say you never feel inclined to shout? Don't you wish you could? There is pathos in my question. The dead, hard, cold profession of the present day is tragic, pathetic. We need again to hear the outburst of song, of praise. When these men received the Holy Ghost they spake with tongues. There were only twelve of them most likely, all speaking the same language. The rigidity of repentance had merged into the renewal of remission. All the hardness of waiting and longing had passed into the gladness of receiving. That is the difference between believing in Jesus intellectually and believing in Him so that the answer is the answer of the Spirit creating ecstasy that speaks with tongues and conviction that utters itself in prophecy.

That was not the only sign. Read the chapter further, and you will find that these people created an atmosphere of apostolic testimony; they became a propagative center from which the Word of God sounded forth through all Asia. You will find also that they became the objects of imitation. You will find, finally, that their presence in Ephesus meant the undermining of idolatry, and presently we see the flaming fires at which men are burning the things of their witchcraft. Even until this hour the same thing is true. Let there fall upon us tonight the great constraint to go a little further, a little beyond the repentance which is change of mind about sin, a little beyond the long, lonely waiting for something that comes not, a little beyond into personal definite submission to Christ, what then? First tongues and then prophecy, and then an atmosphere in which the preacher can preach in the coming months so that men shall be saved, and then a propagative center from which the Word of God shall sound through all the neighborhood, then spurious imitation and the force that lights fires which destroy the witchery and wizardry which are cursing our age.

In the name of God do not let us talk of the Day of Pentecost as though it were a day that came and went nineteen hundred years ago. This is the day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God is here. If I am not singing, living, prophesying, it is because I am like the twelve men at Ephesus—I have come so far and have halted. Man, dare to go further. Add to your present position the final thing of belief in Jesus Christ.

If we have received the Spirit, there is yet responsibility. I can express it in one word, Yield. Take that step of faith in Jesus Christ tonight, and the Spirit will come upon you, and immediately you will feel the burning of the fire, the rising of the song, the driving of the power. In the name of God do not quench that fire. "Quench not the Spirit." Do not stifle that song. "Grieve not the Spirit." In the name of God do not resist that power. Resist not the Spirit. Hear the ancient words again, hear them upon the fringe of a new winter's work, while doors of opportunity are opening before you. "Quench not the Spirit." "Grieve not the Spirit." "Resist not the Spirit."

What answer do you give to the Apostle's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" If you say honestly, in this hour of clear vision, "No," then receive Him now. You say, "How can I receive Him?" Not by opening your heart to the Spirit, but by opening your heart to Jesus Christ. Not by believing that Christ is the perfect example, but by enlisting under His banner and putting your whole life at His disposal. By trusting Him for yesterday, today, tomorrow, and the infinite forever, with your whole life, physical, mental, and spiritual. If your answer to the Apostle's question be "Yes," then in God's name remember your peril, for we are all in peril. If we have received the Holy Ghost and the tongues have begun to speak and prophecy has begun, what is our peril?

That was the foundation of the Ephesian Church. It was a wonderful church, so great a church that Paul wrote the last flaming glory of his letters to it. But that is not all about the church. There is another letter to the Church of Ephesus, which the great Lord, believing in whom, they had received the Spirit, sent to them through John from Patmos. In that letter He says such tragic things as these, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." As God is my witness, I can hardly take up my Bible and read these words without my heart being ready to break. It is the sigh of Christ over the lost love of people who had received the Spirit, and who once had tongues and prophesied. Is Christ sighing over your lost first love? Some of you business men years ago, before you were so well off, felt the fervor and passion of the Spirit's power. Have you lost it? Are you just a wee bit impatient with me tonight because I have taken this line? You would not have been ten years ago. You have lost your first love.

What did Christ say to the church that had lost its first love? "Repent and do the first works." I love that. It is His new opportunity for backsliding souls. "Go back. Begin where you began before. Repent; change your mind once more. Get back to the place where you stood when you left me. Do over again the thing you did at Ephesus when the sky became glorious and the song burst forth." Will you do it tonight? Many of you, lost lovers of Jesus, are you coming to Him tonight?

Hear me again patiently. Do not think this harsh, unkind. I deliver it as the message that is on my heart. I am not half as anxious about you as I am about the multitudes who are outside. I want you in order to reach them. I would far rather see this place in ashes than see it the tomb of a dead, lifeless mob that admires Jesus and feels nothing of His life pulsating in them. We stand upon the threshold of tremendous opportunities. Are we ready for them? The question we are to ask our own souls is, "Did we receive the Holy Ghost when we believed?" If not, here and now, let us yield ourselves to Christ, and we shall receive. If we have received and have lost the thrill, and the saffron of morning has become the gray of eventide, let us go back. Though the way be rough, even though it means the cross, even if shame attend our going, let us go back to the first works, and out of the valley of humiliation shall rise Emmanuel's land of light and love and service for every one of us.

Acts 20:21. The Conditions Of Renewal.

Acts 20:21.

The Conditions Of Renewal.

Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:21

We at once recognize that this is not a sentence, as a matter of fact, the text consists of two phrases, incidentally employed in the course of apostolic discourse. Paul halted at Miletus in order that he might meet the elders of the church at Ephesus and speak to them, as he did not expect to see them again. In the course of his address, delivered to those elders, in the interest of the church at Ephesus, and therefore as always, in the interest of Ephesus itself, he reviewed the ministry which he had conducted in that city during three years, reminding them that he had not shrunk from declaring to them anything that was profitable, teaching them publicly and from house to house, testifying to both the Jews and the Greeks of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

In these phrases the Apostle summarized the burden of his message in Ephesus in so far as that message emphasized personal and individual responsibility concerning the gospel of the grace of God which he had proclaimed there. I have taken the words because they seem to me to give the simplest formula concerning human responsibility in the presence of the preaching of that gospel of grace.

You will immediately see that the terms are those of spiritual things, spiritual relationships. It is quite easy, I think, to discover behind the words the apostolic outlook, the apostolic conception. It is quite evident that these phrases take for granted certain facts, while they reveal the immediate responsibility of men. There can be no meaning in them apart from certain facts which most evidently were present in the mind of the Apostle, facts, moreover, which he took for granted as being received and believed in by those to whom at this particular moment he was speaking.

What, then, are these underlying facts? First, the fact of God; second, the fact of man's relationship to God; third, the fact of man's being out of harmony with God; and, finally, the fact that a man out of harmony with God is a failure.

If we blot God out of our thinking or out of our belief, then there is no meaning in this text at all. It is only as we become conscious that the deep, true thing concerning ourselves is that we have relationship with God, that such relationship is at fault, and that therefore we are at fault, that there can be any appeal in such phrases as these.

Let us, then, proceed on the assumption that we take for granted the God of the Bible, the God from Whom all things have proceeded, the God by Whose power all things are upheld, from Whose government nothing can ever by any possible chance escape.

Let us take for granted, in the second place, that man is spiritual, that the deepest, profoundest truth concerning man is that he is offspring of God, that the word which Ezekiel uttered long ago for the correction of false proverbs, "All souls are Mine," is a profound truth; that the deepest thing in each individual life is not the material, is not even the moral, but the spiritual; that, therefore, the things of change in the midst of which we find ourselves today cannot be the things which find us in the deepest of our lives; that, therefore, if we live only in relation to things seen and temporal, things that pass and vanish and perish even while we look on them, touch and handle them, we are ruining ourselves in that we are failing to realize the whole meaning of our lives.

Let us take for granted that we are children of the ages and not of the passing day, that we are in our essential being related to Deity and are not wholly of the dust; that to make the order of our life such as expresses itself in such words as, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," is to fail entirely to understand ourselves. Let us further take for granted that if these things be so, then we are moving inevitably toward some change through which we shall come to a yet clearer apprehension of the reality of spiritual things and stand in the light of the Divine presence, in the nakedness of our spiritual life, stripped of all those things which today hide the spiritual from us, hide us so largely from each other, and hide us so perpetually from ourselves. If someone should say, Why do you not say plainly that we are all going to die? I would reply, Very well, let it be so stated—we are all approaching death! What is death? Death is but transition. Death is but the process of change by which personality passes from existence limited, hindered, probationary, into that which is larger, where the light is clearer, and the understanding perfected, and being comes to its fulness in some form or fashion. The reason for the fear of death is simply stated: "The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law." Men do fear death, all their lifetime men are subject to bondage through the fear of death. The fear of death that rests on the heart of humanity is born of the fact that man is conscious that if he pass away from this life, with its limitations, into larger life, he is unprepared, he has not taken sufficient account of the larger life, has neglected the true aspiration of his nature, has not turned a listening ear to the voice forever sounding within him that he is immortal, eternal. Man lives within the narrow realm of the things that are near, and when he approaches the end, or things of the end, and imagines himself as passing out to some bourne whence no traveler returns, to some unknown state of being, he is filled with fear because of sin.

What, then, is sin? I pray you notice most carefully that this fear of death is not peculiar to men and women who have been guilty of what we sometimes term vulgar sins. Indeed, it is strange and yet true that the vulgar sensualist is often free from the fear of death, and that because of that he has so completely blunted the spiritual sense in his sensuality that he has no consciousness of it whatever. The fear of death comes to finer souls—using the expression in the common language of our everyday speech.

What, then, is sin? Sin is failure. I use the word almost with bated breath, because to say that seems to rob sin of its terror. Yet consider it carefully. If the Bible, by the language of which it makes use, means anything, it conveys that idea. Confining ourselves for the moment to the New Testament, with which we are all familiar, the commonest Greek word for sin, hamartia, means coming short, missing the mark. It is a Greek word which was used when a marksman shot an arrow at a target and failed to hit the center. Sin is failure. Sin is being less than I ought to be. Sin is failure to realize the meaning of my own life. Sin is failure to realize the forces that are within me.

It is this sense of failure, this sense of limitation, this inner conviction that perchance never expresses itself in the language of a preacher, but, nevertheless, haunts the soul; this sense that the years are wasted, that the energies of life have not brought any true return to the personality—it is all this that overshadows man when he thinks of death. It is the true Divine instinct within the soul telling it that when it sloughs off this mortal coil, and passes in the nakedness of its personality into the light of the uncreated beam, it will be seen crippled, dwarfed, atrophied, having failed to realize the profound meaning of life. That is the sense of sin.

There is in that sense of sin, moreover, the sense of pollution; or—use the word that helps you most—guilt, defilement, uncleanness. It is that sense that fills the heart with fear when death is spoken of.

For the sake of illustration, imagine a man who has no sense of failure, a man who has not failed, a man whose life has been clean, pure, straight, noble, and infinitely more than all these virtues, which mark conditions rather than realizations, a man who has found out the secret of his own being and has adjusted his life to its true center, who has filled his own vocation—that man never trembles at the thought of death. To him death is entrance on life. To him death is the hour in which, crossing the border line, he shall find himself in the presence of the uncreated beam. That is the goal of life, the high ecstasy toward which life is forever moving, the final moment when he will be able to stand unafraid in the presence of God and see the beatific vision, and find the last solution of all the problems of his own life as he rests in the presence of God. When such a man thinks of death, he says, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In those final words of the apostolic challenge and affirmation I have introduced the gospel of grace, and the real meaning of the Christian fact.

It is in the presence of such conceptions as these that the phrases of my text begin to have meaning. As a man shall say, I believe in God, and I believe that I am indeed in His likeness and image, of His very being, offspring of Deity, and I am approaching the bound of life where the burdens of time are laid down, coming to the hour in which I pass out into the nakedness of my essential life into the very presence of God, and I am unprepared. Then he inquires, Is there any way by which I can be prepared? Is there any way by which I can overtake the tragedy of lost years and expended strength? Is there any way by which I can be born anew? Nicodemus's difficulty was not a surface difficulty: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" That is, can he force himself back through the years and undo the things that have been done, and change the set and tendency of his life? Can he begin again? That is the great cry of the human soul when the soul comes to consciousness of God, of its own spiritual nature, of the fact that this life is transient, probationary, and that the revolving wheels of time are bearing it ever closer to the moment when it stands alone in the presence of the God from Whom it came. The Christian evangel is the answer to that cry.

What, then, is the way of salvation? We may omit from our consideration from this moment forward the man who has no sense of sin. I would do it respectfully, reverently, but I would say earnestly to that man, From now on I have no message for you. I am here as the messenger of my Master, and He Himself said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

What, then, shall I do to be saved? some soul is asking. It may be that the soul that asks will never utter those words in my hearing, will never make application with this great spiritual inquiry to any prophet, priest, or teacher. It is a question of the inner life. What, then, shall I do to be saved? The great phrases of the Apostle are the perfect and final answer, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we are to understand such simple phrases as these we must approach them in the simplest way. What is repentance? That is the first inquiry. Repentance is not self-reformation. Repentance is not sorrow for sin. Repentance is a change of mind, and a change of mind when it is true and deep necessarily and inevitably issues in change of attitude and change of conduct. The word of my text does not suggest sorrow—do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that repentance is unaccompanied by sorrow, but I want you to clearly understand that repentance is not sorrow. I have known men and women who have truly repented toward God, who at the moment had no deep sorrow for sin, but it came, and it grew and deepened with the passing years. I venture to affirm most solemnly, as a matter of profound conviction, that there are men who have been following the Lord Jesus Christ for half a century whose sorrow for sin is profounder now than when they commenced the Christian life. On the other hand, I have known men who have been genuinely sorry for sin but have not repented. There may be contrition, there may be lamenting over the thing done that cannot be undone, there may be the agony that cries out with Lady Macbeth,

Out damned spot!

Not all the perfumes of Araby will sweeten this little hand.

Yet there may be no repentance. Repentance is a change of mind. That is fundamental. The changed conception always expresses itself in change of attitude, and the change of attitude produces change of conduct. So that ultimately repentance is the turning of the back deliberately on everything that is out of harmony with the will of God. Fundamentally it is turning to God. This same Apostle, in one of the first, perhaps the very first, of his letters, that to the Thessalonians, gives a remarkable description of the commencement of the Christian life, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." In that description you have an exact account of what repentance is. It is turning to God.

But here is our difficulty. Let me say it with all the faithfulness of which I am capable: it is the peculiar difficulty of such a congregation as this. I have preached to congregations to whom the matter is understood in a moment, a congregation of men and women in the depths. It was quite easy to talk to them about repentance; such sinners understand that repentance means turning round and facing God. The difficulty in such an audience as this is that faces look up into the face of the preacher and say, Why emphasize this? We are not turned from God. But are we not turned from God? Godlessness has many manifestations. It is not the peculiar quality of the penitentiary. It is found in the university. It does not dwell alone in the slum. It is found in the suburb. It is not peculiar to vulgarized humanity. It is the more subtle wrong of cultured humanity. Godlessness! What is godlessness? Leaving God out of account in all the actualities of life. Intellectual search that does not take account of Him. Emotional outgoing that does not seek the purifying of His fire. Especially, the central volitional activity of choice that never thinks of Him until the choice is made. Life that lives as though there were no God and yet occasionally confesses God is godless. The

man who conducts his business six days a week as though there were no God and comes here and worships, profanes the sanctuary and blasphemes. Repentance is turning round and facing God, recognizing the throne, submitting thereto, asking at the gates of the high place for the orders of every day and every hour. That is godly life. Repentance is toward God, the change of the mind back toward Him, that He may be taken into account; the change of the conduct so that it may square with that master conception of life that the will of God is supreme.

Let me say, further, that repentance is induced by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but that repentance depends entirely on the choice of the human soul. It is induced by the Spirit. The Spirit of God induces repentance in the heart of a man by revealing to him the true nature of his sin, by revealing to him the attitude of God toward sin and toward himself. By the proclamation of the Evangel, by the enunciation of the Divine ethic, the Spirit induces man toward repentance. The Spirit reveals to man what sin is, showing him that sin mars the life, that no man can come to fulfilment of his own life who forgets God; that, because the very forces of life are God-created forces and life cannot come to highest realization or fullest meaning save within His will and under His law, sin therefore spoils the life. The Spirit reveals to man that such sin spreads insidiously. The forgetting of God which is casual becomes the forgetting of God which is habitual.

Trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God Who is our home,

and the little child, granted that its surroundings are what they ought to be, is familiar with God. How wonderfully familiar a little child is with God, but with the passing of the days there is, first, the casual forgetfulness, the failure to recognize God in the hour of volitional choice, then the forgetfulness that hardens into a habit until God is shut out of life, and the finest things of life are blunted, spoiled. The Spirit brings home to man this sense of failure.

I know the things whereof I speak; I know them in my experience, and I know them in this ministry of dealing with men and women personally that God has committed to me. Not many days ago a cultured, refined man, brilliant in scholarship, looked into my eyes, and I never shall forget the look of haunting fear on his face as he said, "Oh God, what a failure I am!" It was the sense of sin, of the spoiled life. I am inclined to think that this man might have said with the rich young ruler of old, in the presence of every commandment in the second table of the decalogue, I have broken none of them. It was the sense of failure that swept his soul. The Spirit of God thus brings a man—to use an old phrase, the phrase of our fathers, may it come to us with power—to conviction of sin.

The Spirit of God comes revealing to man not merely what sin is and that he is a sinner, but also revealing the attitude of God toward sin and the attitude of God toward the sinner. What has the Spirit to say concerning God's attitude toward sin? "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness." What has the Spirit to say about God's attitude toward sinners? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." The attitude of God toward sin is that of relentless hostility, because sin spoils man. God's attitude toward the sinner is that of love stronger than death, mightier than the grave, so infinite and wonderful and profound that it stoops to the level of the ruined man, and, gathering to itself all the pain and agony resulting from sin, cancels it in the passion of His own heart.

By this ministry of unveiling the Spirit induces repentance, but if repentance be induced by the work of the Spirit it must be a human act. Here is the realm of tragedy. Men come to this point, the Spirit revealing the fact of sin to them—not always in the hour of Christian worship, sometimes suddenly unexpectedly, right in the midst of daily business, sometimes in the presence of a great bereavement, sometimes when hope is springing within them and some new joy is coming to them—and, tragedy of all tragedies, there are men who do not respond to the Spirit and decline to repent, and turn back again to the beggarly elements of sin. For the advantage of the moment, for the sup-posed advantage of the moment, they shut out the vision of the infinite and bend themselves to the immediate. That is what some of you have done over and over again.

Yet we must go further. A man repenting is not a man saved. I may turn my back on sin and my face toward God, resolutely and with determination; but something more is needed. Change of attitude does not undo the past, neither can it alter the nature. Given a man repenting in answer to the Spirit's illumination, what does he really need? What he needs most of all is forgiveness, absolution. He cries for forgiveness for the past, does not believe it possible at first, cannot see how he can be forgiven; but he asks it, and I believe I interpret the deepest feeling of your heart as I speak out of my own experience and say, If you could persuade me that God simply says, We will say no more about the past—then I want more than that! I want loosing from the past, some cleansing from its defilement, I want something that shall purge me as hyssop cannot. I want some hand to blot out the past.

I need more. I want to be sure, when I turn my face to God, that He will receive me again. I who have rebelled against His throne, I want to know whether He will take me home again. I need more than that. And here is the profoundest thing of all, to me at least, I want to know how I shall be able to manage to-morrow, for, so help me God, I speak out of my own experience, if salvation means simply sin forgiven, and I am left paralyzed, it is hardly worth while. I have to face the same temptations, Can I be enabled? I have to go back from this quiet hour in the sanctuary to the city, to hear the thousand siren voices, to be lured by the glitter of the straw in the dust! Can I be made strong so that I shall stand erect? Whether I look back or within or on, while I repent I am still a needy soul.

This sense of need is met in the Apostle's second phrase: "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As he said the words I venture to affirm that before his eyes there gleamed the glory of Christ Himself, and he saw how that Christ stands confronting the repentant soul, bringing to that soul everything for which it asks. What about this past? "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree." I had better leave it there. To try to explain that would but be to darken counsel with a multiplicity of words. To attempt to tell how in some infinite transaction in the darkness God has made possible the blotting out of sin is beyond me and increasingly beyond me. The longer I live, the less I can understand its mystery and the more I know its power. Christ confronts the soul and says He will put His hand, His pierced hand, across the page of the past and blot it out.

What about God's acceptance of me? Christ tells me that I need have no fear in this matter, that God never turned His face away from me, it was I who turned my face away from Him. In the one matchless picture that Jesus gives us of the Father in that old familiar parable in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's gospel that fact is revealed: "While he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." That is God. That is what Christ came to show us. Christ

did not come to persuade God to love us, but to show us that God never ceased to love us. He did not come to make God change His mind; He came to make me change my mind, and to tell me that when I turn back to God, God is far more than halfway to meet me. Even the parable of Jesus breaks down—I say it reverently—for God in Christ came all the way to the far country to find me, and now

My God is reconciled,

His pardoning voice I hear.

He owns me for His child;

I can no longer fear.

With confidence I now draw nigh,

And Father, Abba Father, cry.

What about to-morrow? How am I to stand erect who have so often fallen by the way? How am I to master the things that so long have mastered me? Again the Christ stands before me and says, I Who have blotted out thy sin, I Who have revealed the Father to thee so that thou mayest know His face is toward thee still in love, "lo, I am with thee all the days." A quaint yet beautiful story comes to my mind. To an old Scotsman his master said one day: "Donald, I am going to give you that little cottage and bit of land for your own." The Scotsman looked into the face of his master and said, "Master, I don't think I want it." "Why not?" "Well, I have saved nothing, and I can't stock it, and I can't work it." "Oh," said the master, "I think we can arrange that. I will invest a little capital, and give you the stock." The man looked up into his master's face and said, "If it's you and me together for it I think we can manage." Christ says, I give you back your birthright, I bring you back to God, blot out your sin, readmit you to the fellowship that you turned your back upon. I say, I am afraid, I am weak, I have failed! He says, "I am with you all the days." Then, reverently employing my parable, I say, With Christ I can. "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened! me." If He will be with me in the coming days, then verily I can.

Faith is more than intellectual assent to the accuracy of a gospel. It is the venture of the soul on the gospel. Here is a check. I hold it in my hand signed. I believe in that check; but I really believe in it when I endorse it and cash it. Here is an enterprise. I believe in it. I really believe in it when I share in its processes. Then join it, and we shall know you believe in it.

Venture on Him, venture wholly,

Let no other trust intrude.

Look into the eyes of Christ and say, I repent, I turn to God, I come, oh, Christ, to Thee. I trust in Thy promise. I yield myself to Thy command. Lead on, and I will follow Thee. That is faith.

Wherever a man shall thus venture on the word of this Christ, having faith toward Him, having repented toward God, then life begins anew. If the vessel hath been marred in the hand of the Potter He will make it again another vessel.

Acts 20:24. The Evangel Of Grace.

Acts 20:24.

The Evangel Of Grace.

The gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:24

The text is not a complete sentence; it is only a phrase, but what a phrase it is! The mere reading of it lifts the soul to the highest levels of thought; the horizons are set further back, and the sense of the spirit is that of space, beauty, and strength.

The three outstanding words suggest the supreme things of man's hope and confidence: Gospel, Grace, God. The seven words leave the three shining in a connected glory: "the Gospel of the Grace of God." The music is in an ascending scale. "The gospel," and the word is suggestive of hope and expectation, "of the grace," and immediately we are in the presence of the mystic melodies that merge into the ultimate harmonies: "of God," and once again the music ascends into the sublimity of unuttered silence. "The gospel of the grace of God."

"The gospel," good news as to the things that are possible to sinning men, to the sons of sorrow, to souls burdened with the silences of the unexplained things. Grace, the attitude and activity making these things possible to the sons of men. God, the source whence all the gracious gospel proceeds.

"The gospel of the grace of God"—not a sentence, but a phrase. Yet what a phrase, a phrase which is in itself a theme, a phrase which I reverently affirm might be written on the cover of the Divine Library as its title, "The gospel of the grace of God": a message, the supreme burden of all Christian preaching and teaching, from the days of our Lord Himself, through the period of apostolic exposition, and on through the centuries of prophetic utterance, evangelistic appeal, and perpetual application, and a burden to all such as have entered experimentally into the things suggested by the phrase.

The phrase was used by Paul at Miletus in his farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus. He was on his way to Jerusalem. At the time his experience of the communion of the Holy Ghost was that of the Spirit's witness that bonds and affliction awaited him. The sky was dark with gathering clouds of trouble, yet he did not count his life dear to him, but he did count it of supreme importance that he should fulfil his ministry of testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. He had received that ministry in personal experience, and by the direct, immediate command of his Lord. This is his own account of how it was received: "The Lord said, I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the

power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me." Thus, according to his own account, in those solemn hours of first communion with the risen and glorified Lord he had been called to testify to "the gospel of the grace of God." His first preparation for this work was his own experience of that gospel as it was revealed to him, not by an apostle, but in the Person of the Lord Himself. Now, after a period of well nigh a generation of faithful service, he was looking back over the way, and he crystallized the burden of his wonderful apostolic ministry into this phrase, "the gospel of the grace of God."

What is that gospel? The text does not declare it; the text refers to it. I cannot take this text and deal with it statement by statement; for while it is flashing with the splendor of the central words of Christianity, it makes no statement, but it assumes the burden of the apostle's ministry, the message of all Christian prophets, the great love story of the evangelists, "the gospel of the grace of God."

I have already touched on the significance of the words by way of introduction. I refer to them briefly again. The gospel is good news. There is not a note of anger in this message. There is no syllable of judgment within this gospel. It may be necessary sometimes to strike severer notes, and to tell foolish, wayward men what must be the inevitable result of refusing to listen to the message of the gospel; but no condemnation is in the gospel itself, it is the way of escape from condemnation. There is no judgment here, it is the message of the infinite compassion and mercy of our God.

It is good news of grace. Grace defies definition as surely as love defies definition, and as certainly as God defies definition. Grace is love in itself and in all its abounding activities, and love is God in Himself and in all His wondrous attributes. Who, then, can define grace? In its application to human need our fathers defined grace perfectly when they declared that grace is free, unmerited favor. But grace existed before favor was needed. Grace was in the heart of God before it was necessary that it should be operative in the interests of men. There is no definition of grace save by the way of the activity of grace. I know what grace is when I observe what grace accomplishes. I understand the real meaning of the grace of God only when I am brought to an apprehension of what grace does. So, leaving the word in its mystic glory, in that mystery which is revelation, and that revelation which ever enfolds itself again in infinite mystery, we proceed to inquire what grace has done for its own self-revelation.

I propose to say three things concerning this inclusive gospel. First, the gospel of the grace of God is a declaration concerning the attitude of God toward sinning men. Second, the gospel of the grace of God is a revelation of the activity of God on behalf of sinning men. Finally, the gospel of the grace of God is a proclamation of the fact that man, sinning man, may be accepted by God.

But let it be remembered that the gospel of the grace of God is centered in the Son of God, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," so opens one of the evangelists' stories. If it be the gospel of the grace of God it is the gospel of the Son of God. This good news to humanity has come through the Son of God. There is no gospel to be found anywhere for sinning men apart from the Son of God. There is no gospel in nature; law is there; beauty, glory, strength, are there. As I observe nature I discover God in His might and in His wisdom. I so discover God in nature that I am quite able to sing with the psalmist in profound astonishment,

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,

The moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained;

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?

The glory of God revealed in nature is such that I am amazed as I think within my own limited experience of myself that God can have any thought for me, or visit me; but when, turning my eyes from the wonders of the Divine revelation in nature, and looking within, I know my sin, not merely the inherited poison, but the actual rebellion, that I myself have chosen evil when I have known good, I turn back to nature and I ask for good news, I find that nature has no good news for the one who breaks law! To break law is to be broken by law. To sin against the rhythmic operations of nature is to be ground to powder by the magnificent forces of nature. There is no gospel in nature. Poets may tell you that nature weeps. Nature has no tears of pity for the breaker of law. We speak of the gentle kisses of the sun. The sun on the man who breaks law is scorching, flaming, destructive. There is no gospel in nature.

There is no gospel in human religion. Human religion may be perfectly sincere. Human religion may have certain values. These things I am not now discussing. But there is no gospel in human religion. The sincerest souls of men that have groped after some form of religion have confessed that they found no gospel. The ultimate note is always one of hopelessness. After many reincarnations the soul at last may reach forgetfulness, nothingness, loss of individuality! That is not a gospel. It may be the last speculation of despair; but there is no gospel in it. There is no gospel in human religion.

If we would have a gospel we must come to the Son of God, for it is only in and through Him that we hear its music, know its promise, or are brought to understanding of all its gracious facts and forces.

This gospel of the grace of God, which is the gospel of the Son of God, is the declaration of the attitude of God toward men. In this regard Christ is Revealer. Christ did not come into this world of ours in order to create a new attitude on the part of God toward man. He did not come to change the mind of God. He did not come to persuade God to be gracious. He did not come to propitiate God, and turn Him back again to the sons of men. He did not come to reconcile God to man. There is never a note in all the New Testament that declares He did. I care nothing for the casuistries in which you tell me that if I am reconciled to God it is the same thing. It is not the same thing. It is a fundamentally false conception of the mission of our Lord and of the terms of the gospel to declare that Jesus Christ came into human history to change the mind of God. He came to reveal to man the mind of God, to reveal the abiding attitude of God toward men. In Him God was unveiled, not changed. Through Him God spoke no new message, but the perpetual message of His heart. The gospel of the grace of God is first of all a declaration on the part of our Lord of the attitude of God toward men.

Is it possible to summarize that declaration in brief phrases? I shall attempt to summarize by saying that in the declaration there are three things. The gospel declares God's love for the sinner. The gospel declares God's hostility to the sin of the sinner. The gospel declares God's determinate counsel and purpose to make possible the canceling of sin, in order to gain the peace and the purity of the sinner.

In the first place, the gospel declares that God's attitude toward the sinning man is that of love. That is fundamental. All this gospel is contained in that one verse, the simplest and profoundest in all the New Testament, the most familiar to this congregation, and the least explored as to all its rich and varied values, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." The gospel reveals the fact that during these probationary days no man can put himself outside the love of God by whatever he may do. It is an old and familiar story; doubtless you have heard it from me: a Sunday-school teacher was asked by a boy in his class, Teacher, does God love naughty boys? The teacher said, No, certainly not. What blasphemy, unintentioned and quite thoughtless, but absolutely untrue! My dear Sunday-school teacher, that boy who worried you most today, God loves him, and loves him in his naughtiness. The gospel of the grace of God is, first, a declaration in the history of the world that God loves men however they have sinned, however far they have wandered, however deep the stain may be, however polluted is the heart. God loves men. Oh that we knew how to preach it, that we knew how to say it, that we knew how to proclaim it to men fast bound in sin and nature's night, this great and gracious fact, the first value of the gospel, its fundamental message: God loves the sinner in his sin.

If that be fundamental the resultant truth is that the gospel teaches us God's hostility to sin. That is not to contradict the first statement but to give true exposition to it. Because he loves man God cannot compromise with the poison that destroys. The intensity of the Divine hostility to sin is the Divine love for the sinner. The white heat of God's anger against every form of iniquity is the abiding fire of His infinite love for man. So that no man can be at peace with God and with sin at the same moment. The gospel declares that; that is its burden, its message. It was the message of the life of our Lord, the message of His perpetual teaching; it was the last and awful message of the Cross, that if a man be at peace with sin God is at war with him for very love of him. No man can be at peace with his sin and with God at the same moment. I do not say that no man can sin and be at peace with God. A man may be at peace with God, and yet blunder by the way, fall into sin, but the moment he has sinned the sin he is at war with himself and with his sin. That is evidence that he is at peace with God. The gospel reveals fundamentally the fact that God loves the sinner, and necessarily the resultant fact that God is at war with sin.

But that is not all the gospel declares concerning God. If the gospel did not reveal to us these attitudes, love toward the sinner, and hostility to sin, there is no message of hope in it. The attitude of God revealed in the gospel is an attitude essentially of purpose and of power in order that the sin against which His wrath is kindled may be removed, so that the sinner for whom His love burns may be delivered.

God cannot rest in the presence of sin without making possible its removal. That is the heart of the gospel, the reason of it; that is the grace of God. God hates sin, and therefore all the resources of His might and of His wisdom must provide a way of salvation, and the must depends, not on any human standard of right and wrong, not on any claim that man can have on God; the must depends on God's nature, His being, His heart; He must, because of what He is in Himself, make a way by which His banished ones may return, He must accomplish the possibility of human redemption. Grace in God is compassion, and compassion is sorrow, and compassion is passion in action.

The gospel of the grace of God is, first of all, a declaration of these attitudes toward men in their sin. It may be that unfallen angels need no gospel. It may be that in some sweet morning by and by, when we have done with the trammels of the flesh and have entered into that larger life, we shall discover other worlds peopled by wondrous beings of whom we have never heard, and of whom we have never dreamed, who never, never sinned, and therefore never needed a gospel. But the phrase of my evening message is a phrase for this world, sin-stricken, sin-smitten, a phrase for men who are conscious of evil in their own lives, of crimes committed, of sin permitted; and it unveils before the wondering and astonished sinner's sight the heart of God toward himself. Toward men who are out of time with the rhythm of the universe, who by their own pollution have introduced discord into its order. God is full of love, and hates only that in men which spoils them; and the moving of His compassion makes it necessary for Him—necessary, in order to be true to the profoundest, deepest things in His own nature—to make possible the putting away of sins that the sinner may be restored to the fulfilment of life.

Our second declaration grows immediately from our first. The gospel not only reveals the attitude of God, it declares His activity on behalf of sinning men. If compassion is passion in action, the gospel declares what that action is. Here, again, Christ is at the center. As He is the Revealer of the Divine attitude, He is the Redeemer in the Divine activity. He came to accomplish in time and in human history the determinate counsel of God in eternity. He came from the Father, into the world, and returned to the Father. He came from the Father in order to carry out in human history and in time and in human observation for the purpose of the capture of the human will the things which are in the very nature of God, and which in the presence of sin, are eternal verities and not merely the accidentals of time.

Man awakened to a sense of his spiritual life is always awakened to the consciousness of sin. Man awakened to the consciousness of sin through being awakened to a sense of his spiritual life, looks back, looks in, and looks on. He looks back and there is with him the burden of the past; he remembers the sins of the years, and asks what can he do with them. He looks within and is conscious of the importance of the present, the inability not to do again the thing he did yesterday. The sin of yesterday, how it burns; like a phantom of the night it haunts the soul; in the gay hour of brightness and frivolity the sin of yesterday passes before the vision, and the sun is eclipsed and the whole world is plunged in darkness. But the agony of all agonies is that the man, conscious of that sin of yesterday as guilt, is yet more conscious that it is in him as power mastering him. He vows in the silence of the night that he will never sin the sin again and ere twenty-four hours have passed over his head he has sinned it, and knows he will sin it again, and yet again.

The guilt of the thing done yesterday, God have mercy on my soul, how terrible a thing is that! It is that sense of sin that the greatest master of English poetry expressed in the tragic and awful language of Lady Macbeth, "Out, out damned spot." You do not need to go to a theater to see that acted, it is acted in your own soul. Yes, but keener than that, more terrible is this, that I shall put another stain there, and I cannot help it! That is the tragedy of sin.

With that sense of the past on the soul, and the sense of present incompetence weighing on the spirit, the eyes are lifted to the great future with its terrors; they are inevitable, they are the results of these things of yesterday and today, the guilt of past sin, the power of present sin; all the future is lurid with the gray of gathered thunder clouds. That is the tragedy of a soul conscious of sin! If

the gospel is worth anything it must deal with all that.

"The gospel of the grace of God" first proclaims pardon for the sinner, the forgiveness of sins. You tell me it is a moral impossibility, and over against your moral impossibility I place the mystery of the Cross. If you can explain the Cross in the terms of time, if you reduce the Cross to the level of a Roman gibbet on a green hill in Palestine and a dying man, of course it can never deal with moral guilt to the satisfaction of a human soul, to say nothing of the satisfaction of an eternal, holy God. But when the Cross is seen as a mystery, a mere unveiling in time of that which is eternal in principle, an unveiling in the awfulness of a vulgar tragedy in blood of the breaking, crushed heart of the God Who suffers because men sin, then I begin to feel that the spot will come out, I begin to know what can be expressed only in the imperfect language of material symbolism, but which is in itself the essential mystery of redemption, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The gospel reveals the Divine passion, pain, agony, sorrow, whereby the past is canceled, made not to be, put away, forgiven.

But that is not enough, I must be superlative; this is a superlative theme. I will speak for myself. Hear me as a witness rather than as an advocate. It is not enough that the thing I did yesterday is forgiven. Unless the power that compelled me to do it is broken within me, it is not enough. If the message for the past is the mystery of the Cross, the message for the present is the might of the resurrection. The one lonely, supreme event in human history is that He rose from among the dead, and that by way of that resurrection He revealed to men the fact, not only that His life was perfect, and that by His passion it is possible for Him to forgive sin, but that His life, perfect within itself, bruised in the mystery of the great atoning work, is liberated that it may be bestowed upon sinning men, that they may share His purity in power, and that by living relationship with the risen Lord they may obey His sweet and mighty word, "Go and sin no more." The gospel proclaims not merely pardon for the past, it proclaims power for the present. If not, it is not a sufficient gospel. But it is sufficient. The witnesses are here. It is not the habit to call witnesses in this building; I sometimes wish it were, but they are here, men and women, young men and young women, who know that the power of Christ is equal to snapping chains, putting out fires, and setting their feet in the high way of holiness that leads to life.

The witness of the power is the demonstration of the pardon. If I preached simply the great mystery of the Cross whereby men are pardoned, and then I saw men who professed to believe it continue in their sin, I would doubt my gospel. But when the process from pardon is that of power over sin, then I am convinced of the actuality of the pardon our Lord pronounces.

Finally, has the gospel anything to say to me about tomorrow? For I call the testimony of the saints, wherein I bear my part, that whereas we know the joy of sin forgiven and whereas in part we know the power that triumphs over sin, we also have to say, as this same apostle said when he wrote to his Philippian children, I am not yet perfected, I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended in Christ. Is there to be ultimate deliverance? Is there to be a day of full realization? Will all the powers of my personality one day harmonize with the good and perfect and acceptable will of God? Let my question be answered from the same letter. He has already said, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect.... I count not myself yet to have apprehended." But he did not sit down and sigh. What did he do? "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards

the goal." What goal? Read to the end of the great paragraph. He speaks of a day in which the Lord shall "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." That is the last and final perfecting of the life. All my life, mysterious, complex, made more wonderful than ever by the revelation of His gospel, will harmonize with Himself, and I shall see God and be satisfied, and shall stand unashamed in the light of the heavenly spaces: "He shall present me faultless before the throne of His glory."

The last word may be spoken very briefly. "The gospel of the grace of God" not only reveals the attitude and proclaims the activity of God, it declares the acceptance of men by God; Jesus Christ is the Revealer and the Redeemer, therefore He is the Reconciler. He came to bring God to man's consciousness, and to bring man to God's fellowship. If God may be brought to the actual consciousness of man, then man will be brought to fellowship with God.

This phase of our gospel again is threefold. It declares, first of all, our reception by God in and through Jesus Christ, in Christ Jesus made nigh, accepted in the Beloved. Such are the rich and gracious phrases of the New Testament revelation.

It declares also our regeneration, re-creation. In Christ Jesus we are made one with the Father, "partakers of the Divine nature." He Who condescended in infinite mystery to tabernacle in flesh as the result of the operation of that incarnation consents to tabernacle in flesh today, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

Consequently, acceptance with God means renewal in Christ Jesus; we are heirs of God, and therefore all His resources are at our disposal, and so we "grow up into Him in all things."

We may be acquainted with the terminology of the gospel, with the terms of the gospel, yet we may be lost. It is not enough to hear the evangel. It is not enough to apprehend some of its spacious meaning. If you will go back in that address of Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus you will find the conditions on which men may enter on all the virtues and values of the great gospel. "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," repentance, change of mind which is active, determined. The gospel is the message that calls men to that. "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," the attitude and activity of risk, venture. The gospel is the argument for that.

What of my yesterday? Jesus promises me pardon, forgiveness. What of my present incompetence? He declares that He has power sufficient to enable me to go and sin no more. What of tomorrow? He illumines tomorrow with the promise of His own advent and of my resurrection and of ultimate fulfilment of all God's purpose in my creation.

Shall I venture on Him? Shall I make trial of His word? And the answer yes is the activity of faith. When a man hearing the gospel shall answer its call to repent, and its argument for faith, then, presently, "the gospel of the grace of God" shall be to that man not theory merely, but the joy of his life, the strength of his endeavor, the peace and assurance of his soul.

Acts 20:28. Church Ideals: The Church Instituted.

Acts 20:28.

Church Ideals: The Church Instituted.

The Church of God.

Acts 20:28

In the course of his charge to the elders of the Ephesian Church, Paul made use of this particular phrase; and I propose to spend four Sunday mornings in considering certain matters which it suggests; speaking of the Church of God as revealed in the New Testament as to its constitution, its government, its discipline, and its work; our theme this morning being that of the first of these four considerations, the constitution of the Church.

We are arrested in the first place by the word itself, which is by no means common in earlier books of the New Testament; being found in the Gospel of Matthew only twice, in the other Gospels not at all, and for the first time in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles in its fifth chapter. (In the Authorized Version, the word is found in the second chapter, where it declares that, "The Lord added to the Church"; but the reading of the Revision is "The Lord added to them"; and as a matter of fact the actual statement is that "The Lord added"; meaning, as I believe, that these people were added, not to the Church, but to the Lord.) At this point in the twentieth chapter is the final occurrence of the word in this book.

Let me remind you that our word Church has no true connection with the word of which it is a translation, save in a secondary sense. Our word is a word full of beauty, coming to us through Old English from the Greek word which signifies the Lord; our word, therefore, simply meaning the Lord's house. It was first used of the place where Christian people assembled for worship, and presently, came to be used in a higher spiritual sense of the people who assembled for worship in such a place.

The word in which we are now interested, the true word of the passage, the word of which Church is a translation, is a word occurring often subsequently, especially in the writings of Paul. The word "ecclesia" literally means called out, and is used of some company of people separated from others. In this Book of the Acts, it is used once of the congregation of the Hebrew people in the wilderness; and once it is used, though not there translated church, in the sense in which the men who first heard it would be most likely to understand it, of the governing body in one of the Greek cities. On the occasion of the uproar at Ephesus there was called together the Church at Ephesus, not the Christian Church, but the Church of Ephesus, that is, the assembly, the governing body, in which no slave could possibly hold office.

Such is the word itself. Suffice it to say it is one of those words which Christianity apprehended, and transfiguring, consecrated to its own purpose. As to its essential meaning, it signifies a people called out into separation; and as to its uses, it suggested to the men who first heard it, two ideas;

the Hebrew idea of the congregation, the nation itself, the Theocracy, the people God-governed; and the Greek idea of a company of free men, elected to the business of civic government. The two ideas, therefore, most probably suggested by the word to the men who first heard it from the lips of our Lord, were those of a people under the direct government of God, and a people exercising in the world an authority derived from their submission to the throne of God.

Now this word is used in our New Testament about thirteen times in its catholic sense, having reference to the whole Church of God; and about nine times in reference to the local assemblies of the people of God; the church in Thessalonica, the church in Corinth, the church in Ephesus, the church at Smyrna, and so on. Yet the words are used so interchangeably that it becomes evident that the New Testament writers always looked upon the local assembly as a microcosm of the catholic Church; and all the things declared concerning the catholic Church are true concerning the local assembly.

In approaching our study of the New Testament conception of the Church, we are compelled to take time with what is perhaps a somewhat old and often debated matter, that, namely, of the distinction that it is quite necessary to draw between the Kingdom of God and the Church of God.

There is a distinction, and before we can understand the nature or the function of the Church, it is necessary that we recognize that distinction quite clearly.

Let me begin with that very constantly recurring phrase of our Bibles, and that constantly recurring phrase of the present day, "the Kingdom of God," and inquire as to what it really means.

I personally am always a little afraid lest we read into it an altogether too narrow meaning. Consequently, let us first attempt to grasp something of the breadth and spaciousness of the suggestion of the phrase itself. So far as is possible, let us free our minds from all ordinary interpretation of the meaning of the phrase, from all application of the value of the phrase; and consider the phrase itself, in order that we may understand that to which it refers.

The Kingdom of God suggests first the actual rule and reign of God; secondly, the realm over which God rules and reigns; and finally—and it is within this final thought that we generally confine our thinking—the realization of this Kingdom in the history of men, and in this world in which we live. We pray "Thy Kingdom come," and our Master taught us so to pray; and when we pray, we are thinking of an actual and experimental and conscious establishment of His Kingdom in the world. It is right that we should so pray, we must continue so to pray, and we must work as we pray toward the establishment of the Kingdom. But there is a sense in which that Kingdom has already come, in which that Kingdom is already established. We come into the most true understanding of the teaching of our Bible when we remember that the phrase itself means the rule and reign of God. Included within the phrase is a theology, a science of God, a doctrine of God. It assumes the Divine transcendence, the fact that God is seated high above all the affairs of the universe. Included in it also is the fact of the Divine immanence, His nearness to and perpetual sustenance of every atom of the universe over which He sits enthroned. It involves also the doctrine of a personal God.

I know the difficulty of using the word personal in this relationship; a difficulty born of the fact that we are constantly postulating the Divine Personality upon the basis of our own personality, which I submit is a wrong process of reasoning. Personality is only perfect in God. It is never perfect in

man. Man is but a shadow of the Divine, a likeness, an image, a representation; and so in the matter of personality there is imperfection in man, while there is perfection in God.

This phrase of the Kingdom of God involves the doctrine of the personality of God; intelligence, emotion, volition; all the essential things of our own personality, but in absolute and infinite perfection.

The phrase reminds us that of this universe, of which we know so little and can know so little, God is the Creator, the Sustainer; arranging beforehand, as Paul said in Athens, the bounds of human habitation; fashioning, as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews declared, all the ages as they come, giving them all their tones and qualities and quantities. The whole universe is the realm over which God reigns. The Kingdom of God is a fact established from which there can be no escape on the part of angels or men or demons. All are within the grasp of His government, all are compelled to yield themselves, whether willingly or unwillingly, to the sway of His power, and to the ultimate purposes of His wisdom.

These are the profoundest things, the most spacious things, suggested by a phrase which we too often use as though it only had reference to things of this earth.

And at last, the phrase does stand for the establishment in this world of the Kingdom, where today we are supremely impressed by sin, and sorrow, and sighing; there will be established the Kingdom of our God, a Kingdom of love and joy and peace, of perfect human well-being in individual and social, national and international relationships. The establishment of the Kingdom, or Kingship of God in the world, is the last idea suggested by the phrase itself.

Now this great thought is the fundamental truth of Biblical revelation. The first chapters of the first book in the Bible suggest these things preeminently. Whatever difficulties we may have concerning what we are pleased to speak of as the authenticity or the historicity of these chapters, at least we must be perfectly agreed that they teach that all things have had their origin in the will and by the power of this one God. That as I understand it, is the fundamental teaching of the earliest chapters of the Book of Genesis. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And in all that remains of the Old Testament, that is the perpetual chord of the dominant strain; and all the music, sometimes in major and sometimes in minor cadences, is true to that underlying chord; proclaiming the throne of God, and the government of God. The whole history of the Hebrew people is the history of the creation of a people recognizing that fact; and by obedience to it come to power and influence in the world; or by forgetting it, becoming a people scattered and peeled over the face of the whole earth. This throne and government of God, this sovereignty of God, is the great truth that runs through all the Old Testament.

When I turn to the New Testament, I find that this is still the theme. The first word falling from the lips of the forerunner of the Christ is, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The first words falling from the lips of the Christ Himself as He commenced His ministry of preaching is, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." The whole of His administration—judged by His ethical standards, and His spiritual interpretations, by His works as well as His words—circles around this one word, "Seek ye first His Kingdom, do His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The supreme passion of His heart, as crystallized in the prayer which He taught His disciples, and which we constantly repeat, is the same. He did not teach us to pray first

for the things we need individually, but for the coming of God's Kingdom in this world, and its establishment here.

If we watch the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and observe His dealing with His own nation after the flesh, we find that there came a solemn and awful moment, when with quiet dignity, in the metropolis of the nation, and in the Temple, the center of the metropolitan life, He said this most significant thing to the rulers of the people, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Or, if we remind ourselves of the first occasion upon which He used the word "Church," let us note very carefully, not all the values of His announcement, but one particular emphasis thereof. To the confessor Peter, He said, "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." In other words, I will make My Church the standard of moral interpretation, binding or loosing the standards of conduct among the affairs of men; the keys of the Kingdom were thus committed to the men who for the moment stood as the sole representation of that Church which He was about to build.

Or, if we turn to those pages in the New Testament which deal with the sacred ministry of the Spirit, the fundamental fact is still that of the Kingdom of God; interpreted through the Christ as the Spirit unveils the Christ; realized within the Church as the Spirit creates a race of men who will say, in answer to all opposition and all persecution and all criticism, "We must obey God rather than men." That was Peter's answer on behalf of the apostles and the whole Christian community to the criticism and opposition and persecution of the Sadducean high priest and governing board. "How dare you," said the priest, "preach in the name of Jesus when we straitly charged you not to do so?" And the answer was, "We must obey God rather than men"; or, in other words, we are in the Kingdom of God, submissive to His throne, recognizing no other authority that we can allow to interfere as between us and Himself. We must obey God.

As we glance on at what the New Testament says concerning the future, we find that it declares that this Kingdom is to be preached and realized beyond the age of the Church; and eventually in one mystic passage the apostle declares that when He, the Lord Christ, has subdued all rule and authority and power to His own sway, having reigned until even death is put beneath His feet: then He shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, that God may be all and in all.

Now we come to the phrase, "The Church of God," which is not of the Old Testament, which no prophet ever understood; and to the fact, to which no prophecy of the Old Testament has any reference whatever; a fact hidden in the past, revealed in these times, the fact of the Church. The Church according to this New Testament teaching is an elect race, a company of people called out, and unified by a common life; to create which, Christ came, and the Spirit came to abide; an entity, which ultimately is to be complete within itself; an entity, the full and glorious vocation of which does not begin in this age, but in the ages to come; an entity, nevertheless, which has most intimate relationship with that Master principle of the Kingdom, to which we have been giving our thought; a company of those in the world today in whom that Kingdom principle is realized, through whom that Kingdom principle is manifested, through whom that Kingdom fact is to be propagated amongst men.

Let me again refer to words of our Lord already quoted: He said to the Hebrew people, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"; and when Peter wrote his letter, he described the Church among other phrases, by this suggestive one, "a holy nation." The Church of God then is that holy nation in the history of the world; realizing the Kingdom principle; manifesting the Kingdom value; proclaiming the Kingdom fact; propagating the Kingdom forces.

Then if that be so, let us now ask, What is the constitution of this Church?

The two references made to it by our Lord I have already referred to, and do not propose to deal with at any length, but I am compelled to commerce with them, because in them I find in germ, all truth concerning this elect company, the Church. He said, "Thou art Peter"—and I should much prefer to render with absolute literalness of translation, "Thou art rock, and upon this rock I will build My Church." Do not forget to link that word of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi with the first thing He ever said to this man. When He first met him, He said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called rock." At Caesarea Philippi He said, "Thou art rock, and upon this rock I will build My Church." What rock? That master principle which, obtaining in the life of this man, had changed him from weakness to massive and perpetual strength. Not the man, not the man's humanity, not the apostle, blundering and failing; but that principle which had made him rock. And what was the principle that had made him rock? His discovery of God in Christ, and of the administration of the Kingship of God in Christ; Thou art the Christ, that is, the Messiah; the Son, that is, One showing the essential being of the living God. So that the ultimate word in the confession of Peter was the living God; and he recognized in Jesus the revelation of the living God; the Son; and he recognized in Him, the administration of the will of the living God, the Messiah. Upon that rock, that essential rock of Deity, of Deity revealed, of Deity administered, so as to change Simon from the weak changing man that he was into the man of rock, "upon that rock I will build My Church."

Or more briefly, to take the second reference to the Church on the part of our Lord, when speaking of the Church's discipline and power in prayer, He declared, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." That reveals the fact that the Church consists of all those who are gathered about the living Lord, and who by the administration of His Holy Spirit share His very life and nature, and are the instruments of His discipline, as He is the medium of their prevailing prayer.

The next historic reference to the Church is found in the fifth chapter of the Acts. What has happened? Our Lord foretold the Church, and now I find the Church referred to as an existing entity; great fear came upon the whole Church when the fiery discipline that purged the fellowship of the presence of Ananias and Sapphira was manifested. Then suddenly, without introduction, the Church is referred to as existing. Whence came it? The answer is to be found in the second chapter of the book. By the coming of the Spirit upon a company of waiting disciples, that company was baptized into a living unity. They became one; they were joined to the Lord; and became one Spirit with the Lord; and being one Spirit with the Lord, they were also so with one another. It was a baptism into life, the dawn of a new light, the power of a new love taking possession of them; and the life was the life of the Christ; and the light was the light of the Christ; and the love was the love of the Christ. Not that they loved Him, but that He loved them, and that love took possession

of them, and became the impulse of all their doing and serving and suffering. Behold in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, after the coming of the Spirit, a company of men and women, no longer geographically near to the Lord, for He was absent as to all human appearance and presence; no longer one sentimentally with the Lord; but one with Him by the mystic tie of spiritual life. His life and their life made one by the baptism of the Spirit. So the Church came to be.

In view of that, the apostle wrote that which we read as lesson in the Corinthian letter, "In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." That is the Church; the Christ Himself the Head; and all individual believing men and women, baptized by the Spirit into relationship with Him, the members; quite independent of nationality, Jews or Greeks; quite independent of social position, bondslaves or free men. The great baptism of the Spirit destroys the differences, and creates the unity; the great baptism of the Spirit whelms human life, and brings it to the realization of its own powers, by linking it to the Master life, the life of the Lord and Master Himself. So was the Church originally constituted. And so the Church has grown through all the ages.

Paul, when in the Ephesian letter, dealing with the great theme of unity, which is the theme of our morning meditation, said, "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit," and the great vision of the catholic Church filled his mind as he wrote that. Then he suddenly breaks it up, that we may see and understand it, showing us the way of entrance into this new and holy relationship; "one Lord," that is the Lord Jesus Christ presented to the vision of the individual man; "one faith," that is the faith of the man who sees the Lord, ventures everything upon Him, trusts in Him; "one baptism," that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby that believing soul is made a member of that one Lord. So the Church has grown through all the ages. No man has ever been made a member of the Church by the vote of a Church meeting, or having his name written upon a Society Class book. All these things may be valuable in their place; but they are external and accidental. Men become members of this great Church of God when the Lord is presented, and they call Him Lord by Faith, and as a result of the Spirit's interpretation; and then by the Spirit's baptism are made sharers of His very life, sharers of His very nature.

And what is the purpose of this Church? Let Paul finish that which I have partially quoted in the Ephesian paragraph, and we shall know. "One God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all." The Church is the one Body, the members and the Christ; the way into the Church, one Lord presented, one faith exercised, one baptism received; the issue of the Church, the Kingdom of God, "one God and Father, over all and through all and in all." The Kingdom of God realized, manifested, proclaimed.

Therefore, I am a member of this catholic Church, if I have believed on this one Lord, and have received the baptism of the Spirit whereby I am made a member of this Lord. The baptism of the Spirit is not a second blessing; the filling may be; the enduement for power certainly is; but we cannot interpret our doctrine of the Spirit, in the light of the New Testament, without recognizing that the baptism, the whelming into life, is in answer to that faith, whereby a man becomes a member of the Lord.

The first practical value of this teaching is that of a recognition on our part of the unity of the Church. Brethren, are we praying as we ought, for that recognition? Are we living as we ought in order to the realization of it? To the passage already twice quoted, let me refer again. "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." And how shall we do it? First "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; and I always feel that I want to change that translation a little. Not that it is inaccurate, but that we have such strange ideas of what keeping may mean. "Giving diligence to keep" does not mean to guard as with a garrison. That is the thought when Paul says, "I know Him Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep," the word there means to guard as with a garrison. But that is not the word here; and I do no violence, nay, I illuminate the passage by translating thus, "Giving diligence to keep in view the unity of the Spirit," not to create it. We cannot create unity; we can keep it in view, never forget it, and live in the power of the fact of it. Then remember, it is the unity of the Spirit, not the unanimity of the mind. There may be many mental moods and methods of approach to the great fact of the Lord Himself and His Church. Not the uniformity of the body. I care very little, less and less for that; but the unity, the oneness of the Spirit. In proportion as the Church of God comes to that recognition, that keeping in view, with the corresponding answer of life to the fact of the unity of the Spirit, in that proportion we shall be content to sympathize with the differing mental convictions and bodily manifestations that the Church may take. These are the great lessons of study; the unity of the Church, and the continuity of the Church, and the certainty that the Church will at last be completed, and be presented to the Father for all that high and awe-inspiring vocation that lies beyond the present age.

Another practical lesson that we need to remember is that membership of the Church consists in fellowship with the life of the Lord of the Church. That life is light, and all the outlook is changed wherever it comes. That life is love, and the central passion and impulse of life is changed wherever it comes.

We have no right to hold any lower conception of the Church than this; and no lower conception of the nature of Church membership than this; and if that with which I commenced be true, that the local church is, or ever should be a microcosm of the Church catholic, the realization within a limited area of all the great truth which applies to the whole fellowship; then the local church should be one consisting of all those who have seen this Lord, and yielded to Him; and who have received by the Spirit's baptism the gift of His life; and whose central, burning, consuming passion therefore is the Kingdom of God established in the individual life, revealed to the world, proclaimed to men; and toward the ultimate victory of which all endeavor is consecrated.

May we be, so much as is possible to us, such a church; and to this end, may we who form the fellowship, be such men and women as sharing His life, yield to it, for the glory of His name. Amen.

Romans 1:4. Horized By Resurrection.

Romans 1:4.

Horized By Resurrection.

Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Romans 1:4

These words constitute the second part of a double statement concerning one Person. That Person is indicated by a reference preceding the statement and by an explanation following it. The reference you will discover in the beginning of verse three:—"concerning His Son." The explanation is contained in the closing part of verse four:—"even Jesus Christ our Lord." Between this reference and this explanation we find the twofold statement concerning the Person thus referred to.

Born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

If for purposes of illumination, I may take from each of the two parts of the words necessary to discover the simple contrast, we have this result. Paul says concerning this Person Whom he first designates "Son of God" and finally refers to as "Jesus Christ our Lord," two things. First, according to the flesh He was "born of the seed of David." Secondly, according to the spirit He was "declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead."

The first part of the apostolic declaration is simple and needs neither argument nor explanation, "of the seed of David, according to the flesh." The second part of the declaration was sublime and it was impossible—if I may thus interpret the method of the apostle—for him to write the second part without some qualification. "Of the seed of David according to the flesh," is a perfectly simple and natural declaration; but when he turns to the other side, "according to the spirit," he has to qualify, "according to the spirit of holiness"; or even more accurately as I think, "according to a holy spirit." "According to the flesh" He was of the seed of David, and Paul knew that no argument of that fact was needed. But, "according to the spirit," the essential matter in that human life, there was a difference. The spirit of this Person was holy. All the values of this differentiation are discovered when we reach the eighth chapter of the epistle. Therein the apostle is careful to distinguish between flesh and spirit in every life. In flesh, and in spirit, are the two sides of every human life. They were both present in the life of Jesus. His flesh was "born of the seed of David." His spirit must be described. It stands alone. There never was such another. It was a holy spirit, the spirit of holiness. In flesh He was absolutely of our humanity. In spirit also, and yet different. Numbered with transgressors, separated from sinners. In flesh, of our humanity. In spirit essentially the same, but in character different—holy.

The evidence of His being of the seed of David was abundant and convincing. The evidences of His being the Son of God were abundant but not convincing. The evidence did not convince because those who observed were incapable of judging, for they were spiritually blind. The men who looked at Jesus in the days of His flesh were quite capable of judging material things, fleshly things; they could trace genealogies, and discover racial traits; "according to the flesh, born of the seed of David."

According to the spirit—they said He was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. They did not know Him. They could not be sure of Him. The evidence of Divine Sonship were those of holiness. His thoughts, His words, His deeds, all of them were the vehicles through which the essential and awful purity of God sounded and shone upon the ways of men. "When we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Not that He was devoid of beauty, but that men were so blind they could not see it. The evidences of fleshly relationship were abundant and convincing. The evidences of Divine relationship were abundant, but not convincing, because men had lost their spiritual vision and were incapable of judgment. If you object to that interpretation, how do you find it in the world today? Is the man of the world of today capable of judging of the beauty of holiness? Is not the sanctified life still the sport of the worldly man? If you dare to season your daily speech with the salt that tells that you have traffic with eternity, the worldly man sees nothing beautiful in it. He shrugs his shoulders. That is the new method of persecution, seeing that the rack has gone out of fashion. He smiles, and perhaps holds you in contempt. Some of you hold the saints in contempt because you are blind and cannot discover the beauty of holiness.

How shall this Man be proven the Son of God as well as Son of man, seeing that the holiness of His spirit does not appeal to men? "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It is that declaration of the text which we are now to consider. In order to do so, confining ourselves entirely to this half of the great statement concerning the Person, we must carefully understand what this thing is that the apostle wrote. May I change the phrasing, not that I can improve upon it, but that sometimes by a change of words we are introduced to the meaning which we miss by very familiarity with the older formula. So I read the text thus, "Who was distinguished," and that word must not be taken in the general sense in which we speak of a man as being distinguished.

"Who was marked out as the Son of God with power through the means of the resurrection of dead ones?"

May I further change the text, this time not by translation in other words, but by paraphrase.

"The resurrection of dead ones set Him with powerful effect upon the horizon as the Son of God."

I do not suggest that that is translation, so those of you who are reading from the Greek New Testament need not be anxious. I do not intend it as interpretation. Those of you who are familiar with the passage in the Greek will discover that I have dared to take a Greek word and Anglicize it. What is this word "declared," "distinguished," "marked out?" It is the word from which we have derived our word horizon. What is the horizon? The boundary. What is a boundary? The end? By no means. It is the beginning. If only I could transport you to the sea, you would understand my text. Standing on the land's last limit there stretches the sea with its movement and its rhythm, its

music and its laughter. What beyond? The horizon, the boundary. Is that the end? That is the beginning. Everything between me and the horizon I can comprehend. The mystery begins where the horizon bounds my vision. It is limitation. The limitation is only the limitation of my vision, not of the essential fact. According to flesh, everyone can read the story, "born of the seed of David." According to the spirit, "horizoned as the Son of God by the resurrection of dead ones." Resurrection demonstrated the essential truth concerning Him. Apart from the resurrection, He is "born of the seed of David"; a great and gracious fact, and no one imagines I am undervaluing it. My heart exults with the Apostle John who handled Him. I am glad that men of my kith and kin nineteen hundred years ago did actually lay hands upon the warm flesh of the Man of Nazareth. That, however, is not all. That is not the final fact. If you make that the final fact, your Christianity will be a diminishing quantity, losing all its essential virtue and all its power of victory; until presently you will put Him by the side of Confucius, Buddha, and the rest; a sorry spectacle over which angels might weep. There is something else. He is the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness; and He is demonstrated as such, horizoned as such, flaming out as the sun upon the horizon, and rising to meridian glory, by way of the resurrection. That is the supreme value of the resurrection. The resurrection is the unanswerable demonstration of the profoundest fact concerning the Christ, that, namely, of His Divine Sonship.

In order to gain appreciation of this, let me take you very quickly along three lines of consideration. First, the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, as apprehended before the resurrection. Second, the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, as apprehended after the resurrection. Third, the resurrection as the means of demonstration.

First, the truth as apprehended before the resurrection. That is to say, I suggest that we shall, for a few minutes only, put ourselves back among the disciples before that event happened which we celebrate today.

I take up my New Testament and go through the gospel stories and find three titles of Jesus constantly recurring, "Son of Man"; "Son of God"; and "The Son," without qualification. I have nothing to do with the title "Son of Man." That put Him into immediate relationship with humanity. I take the title "Son of God." Please forgive the statistical way of stating this, I only desire to leave an impression upon your mind. It occurs in Matthew nine times, in Mark four times, in Luke six times, in John eleven times. Of course some of those occasions overlap, it does not at all matter for my present purpose. I find in Matthew that He is called the Son of God six times by men, three times by devils. Mark records two occasions when men so designated Him, and two occasions when devils called Him "the Son of God." Luke gives one occasion when a man called Him that, and four when devils so named Him, and one when an angel declared Him to be the Son of God. I come to John and I find six occasions when man referred to Him as the Son of God, and five when He so named Himself.

Take the other title "The Son," more splendid perhaps than the other because of its independence of qualification. Adjectives are often the means of weakening the glory of substantives. The proportion in which we can use substantives alone, apart from adjectives, is the proportion of dignity of statement and suggestion. Matthew has the description "The Son" four times, Mark once, Luke three times, John fifteen times. That phrase, according to the records, never fell from the lips of devil, or man, or angel. It is the peculiar phrase of Jesus.

With these figures in your mind, let me take another survey of these gospels. Christ did claim for Himself, by direct use of the title and by constant assumptions of commonplace speech, that He was the veritable Son of God. That fact was attested in a supernatural way on two occasions, when heaven's silence was broken and the Divine voice was heard. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" so at baptism; "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him"; so on the holy mount. The fact was witnessed by devils, as when one said to Him, "I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God," and another "Thou art the Son of God," and yet another "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not." That fact was once confessed by a man amid the rocky fastnesses of Caesarea Philippi, when answering the challenge of Christ Himself he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

If you will go over these occasions, I can but suggest the line, you will find that every confession of Sonship was closely associated with the thought of holiness. "My Son, in Whom I am well pleased," that is the declaration of His holiness. "I and the Father are one." "I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things.... I do always the things that are pleasing to Him," all that is the claim of holiness. "Thou art the Holy One of God," "Thou art the Son of God"; so evil recognized His holiness. And surely you will agree that Peter meant that when He said "Thou art," not the prophet foretelling, but the Messiah fulfilling.

That is a rapid survey of those days prior to the resurrection. What shall we say of it? The fact of His Divine Sonship was breaking on the consciousness of men. It was only the flush of dawn upon the dark sky. Men did not know Him as the Son of God. Peter confessed Him as the Son of God, but immediately afterwards rebuked Him, and by his rebuke demonstrated the fact that he had no full conception of the thing he had said. There He lived amongst men, holy, undefiled, spotless, pure, the Son of God; and they were puzzled, they wondered, but they did not fully comprehend.

Turn over the New Testament to the remaining part of it. How far was the truth of the Divine Sonship apprehended after the resurrection? To an audience such as I am addressing this morning, the inquiry carries its own answer. We know full well that all the thought of the other writings of the New Testament are saturated with the conception of the Divine Sonship of Jesus. It was the central conviction concerning Him. It was the constant reason of loyalty to Him. It was the persistent burden of testimony concerning Him. I will not weary you with saying things about that conviction. Let me rather end this section of our study with two quotations:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

That is the vision of Jesus Christ which flamed upon the consciousness of believing men after the resurrection.

Or, take another quotation which you may consider anonymous or which you may attribute to the same pen, I care not:

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all

things, through Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

I go back to these men before the resurrection and see that gleams were upon the sky. To repeat my own figure of speech, the flush of the dawn was upon the sky, but it was twilight. They were not sure.

On the other side of the resurrection, the sun is in the heavens shining in full glory. Christ is horizoned as the Son of God with power by the resurrection of dead ones, not by His own resurrection only, but by the resurrection of dead ones.

Let us go back again to the period before His cross. I have three stories of His raising the dead. First, the widow's son. What effect did that miracle produce? The people glorified God; they said, God has visited His people. They had not come to final doctrinal understanding of the Person of the Man Who had wrought the work, but when He raised the dead they said, God has visited us.

The resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain was evidence to them of the Divine presence, the Divine visitation, and therefore of holiness. When He raised the widow's son, a great man was in prison; "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." He had changed all the inspiration of a great public ministry which made kings tremble—for Herod heard him gladly at one time—for the dungeon and loneliness and questioning. I cannot help feeling that he had come to wonder whether, after all that, Jesus of Nazareth Whom he had named, was the actual One; but when he heard this, that one was raised from the dead, he sent his disciples to ask, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" It was this supreme miracle of resurrection which renewed questioning, wonder, hope, in his mind. Then presently He raised the daughter of Jairus in that inimitable word spoken, thrilling with the power of Deity: "Little darling, arise." The parents were amazed. That is all, but that is much. Amazed, they had touched the consciousness of power beyond the reach of humanity. Once again, Lazarus is dead, and they bring Him the news. What is His own account of the fact that He did not hurry, that He permitted Lazarus to die? This is it. "That the Son of God might be glorified thereby." "Declared to be the Son of God, with power... by the resurrection of dead ones." That is the supreme revelation. That is the supreme miracle.

But what next? The cross. What did that mean? All the fitful gleams of light which had been shining through Judaea, Peraea and Galilee, all the flush of dawning upon the eastern sky which the eager watchers had seen, went out, and never a ray of light remained. The sun was eclipsed in blood. According to the flesh, oh yes, we knew Him well, "Born of the seed of David," the genealogy is complete. We hoped, when He raised the daughter of Jairus, and the widow's son, and Lazarus, that He was more, but He is dead. You know the rest. We celebrate it this morning. He arose from among the dead. Many infallible proofs for forty days. He is horizoned. Horizoned as the Son of God.

Lo, our sun's eclipse is o'er.

Hallelujah!

Lo, He sets in blood no more!

Hallelujah!

The resurrection was the vindication of every claim He made; the demonstration of His Sonship; the revelation of His holiness.

According to flesh, "born of the seed of David." We can be accurate. According to the spirit of holiness, Who is He? There is only one way in which it can be proven, and that is by the resurrection of the dead ones. The son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus. Yes, but He died. But He is alive forevermore. Take that away from me, my masters, and I renounce your bastard Christianity.

I have no hope if that be not so. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain... ye are yet in your sins." Blessed be God, why such supposition? He arose, and is alive!

The final demonstration is not yet. I am not coming to the supreme value of the plural in my text. "Horizoned as the Son of God, marked out as the Son of God, with power... by the resurrection of dead ones." The final demonstration will never be until the Advent, when not only the first fruits, but all the company are with Him, "The resurrection of dead ones."

Ten thousand times ten thousand,

In sparkling raiment bright,

The armies of the ransomed saints

Throng up the steeps of light;

'Tis finished—all is finished

Their fight with death and sin!

Fling open wide the golden gates,

And let the victors in.

What rush of Hallelujahs

Fills all the earth and sky!

What ringing of a thousand harps

Bespeaks the triumphs nigh!

Oh, day, for which creation

And all its tribes were made!

Oh, joy, for all its former woes

A thousandfold repaid!

The final demonstration will be in the resurrection of the saints. So that the resurrection of the saints is not the last thing, it is the beginning. Do not limit God and humanity by the end of this age,

or by the millennium. Everything so far has been preparatory. Stretching away beyond me, I dream dreams of unborn ages and new creations, and marvellous processions out of the being of God, but through them all, the risen Christ and the risen saints will be the central revelations of holiness and of life.

That is the glory of the final resurrection. As so often, we leave the subject, not that it is exhausted. Suffer me this final word. The fact of His Divine Sonship demonstrated by the resurrection is the rock of our assurance. Said a man imperfectly knowing what he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Answered Christ, "Upon this rock I will build My Church." The rock foundation of the Christian Church is this fact of His Divine Sonship, and so essential Deity lies beneath the Church, an impregnable rock. Thank God if we are built thereupon by sharing the very nature of this risen One.

Let us go away this morning rejoicing in the resurrection because it is the message of a great confidence. He is King, Priest, Warrior, and Builder, and all the great relationships are linked to His resurrection because He is demonstrated thereby as the Son of God.

His Kingship is an absolute monarchy. I have no anxiety about His reign. I believe in an absolute monarchy when we can find the right King. We have found Him.

As to His Prophetic mission, it is one of absolute authority. What He said is true. It cannot be gainsaid. All the words gathered from His tender lips, and printed here and preserved for us, are words which abide. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." I have no intellectual quarrel with anything He says.

As to His Priesthood, the resurrection demonstrates its absolute sufficiency. Do you really believe that? Then why do you grieve God by this perpetual grieving over sin, and the declaration that you cannot believe He can forgive you?

Grace there is my every debt to pay,

Blood to wash my every sin away.

I know it because the Priest rose and entered in.

As to His triumph, He hath broken in pieces the gates of brass. He hath cut the bars of iron asunder. He hath triumphed gloriously, and He will win His battle and build His city. Then so help me God, as He will permit me, I fain would share the travail that makes His Kingdom come, entering the fellowship of His sufferings, for all the while the light of His resurrection is upon the pathway, and I know that at the last the things which He has made me suffer will be the things of the unending triumph.

I greet you this morning in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Seek not the living among the dead. He is risen, and because He is risen, we shall rise, and His victory and ours will be won.

Romans 1:14. The Church's Debt To The World.

Romans 1:14.

The Church's Debt To The World.

I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

Romans 1:14

It is almost certain that Paul had never been to Rome when he wrote these words. A question naturally arises therefore as to the reason why he wrote this letter and sent it to the Christians there. Other of his epistles were directed to churches that he had visited, some of which he had founded, to all of which he had ministered. But he had neither founded nor visited the Church in Rome when this epistle was written and sent.

Nevertheless, Paul was a Roman citizen. A Jew he certainly was—by birth; as he said of himself, he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," that is, a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents; he belonged to the economy of Hebraism to the last and minutest detail—but he was a Roman, not by accident, or even by personal choice, but by actual birth. When an officer of that nation said to him: "With a great sum obtained I this citizenship," Paul answered, "But I am a Roman born."

He was a Roman, having all the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. It is perfectly evident in the study of his life and writings that this fact affected his thinking and teaching. While he was a Hebrew pre-eminently, and while he was not unconscious of the Greek thought and culture of his age, in some ways Rome seems to have affected him more than all. He was a Roman of imperial mold, a statesman with a keen sense of the value of strategic positions, and able to carry on great enterprises. In a recognition of this fact we begin to understand the reason for his writing this letter. When to this we add the supreme matter that Paul was a commissioned apostle of Jesus Christ we have the full and sufficient explanation. His supreme consciousness, that is, the consciousness that most, constantly and consistently influenced him, was of his calling and commission by Jesus Christ. This did not make him unmindful of the other forces at work in his life. It rather sanctified them, and pressed them into the high and sacred service. There was no side of the apostle's life of which this inner fact did not take hold and make use. Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ knew that Rome was the strategic center of the world. He was perfectly familiar with the fact that the world was borrowing Rome's language for commerce and learning, and culture from Greece. He was perfectly aware of the fact that the Hebrew system was the purest system of religion known to the world. But he also knew that from Rome the highways stretched out over the whole known world. Rome had flung out those long-reaching arms over all the lands in order that her cohorts and legions might ride along them. I think, then, that I can see Paul, the man of contemptible bodily appearance, who yet became so transfigured by his message that kings trembled as he preached—I see him looking at Rome, and saying: Oh, if I could but start the new enterprises of the Cross from Rome as a center. How that vast government, stretching out its scepter and taking hold of all things, would help me in prosecuting the great work of my life, to make the gospel

known to the whole world. How well these great roads would do for the journeys of the missionaries!

When he said, "I must see Rome," he was not impelled by the curiosity of the tourist. It was the passion of the missionary. It was the statesmanship of a man whose mind was imperial in its grasp, whose heart and will were dominated by the Christ and by His Cross. And so, when for a time he was prevented from going, he felt he must write his letter. He must at least see to it that the Christians in Rome had a clear statement of the great Gospel, and its message put in such form as to make it plain to their understanding. It is as though he had said: I will write the Gospel that Rome may have it; because if Rome has it, and it has Rome, the world must inevitably be reached by its messengers and its power. Of course, all this is simply the statement of the human side. Behind all this was the Spirit of God, leading and inspiring. In our text we have found the deep, underlying impulse of the letter. And what is it? "I am debtor." To change the form slightly, the Apostle declared: "I am in debt both to Greeks and Barbarians, to the wise and to the foolish."

This leads us to some further inquiries. What did he owe to the Greeks? Something of their ideals of culture? Very little, as his writings show, for, while it is certain that he was always under the influence of his early training in Tarsus, it is also notorious that Paul's classical quotations are very few, and perhaps, always incorrect. What did he owe to Barbarians? Nothing, surely, but their attempts to murder him. What did he owe to the wise? Certain it is that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but there is very little doubt that he had paid in kind for all that he gained from Gamaliel. What did he owe to the foolish? Surely this is a mistake. He could not be in debt to the foolish!

So far, we are quite consciously missing the whole heart of his meaning. Let us attempt to express that meaning in other language. He meant: The Gospel has been committed to me for men; and so long as there is a Greek or a Barbarian, a wise man or a fool, who has not heard it, I am in debt. The Gospel has been committed to me not merely in order that I may hear its message, and obey it, and become a saved man. All that is true, but it is only preliminary, initial. The Gospel has been given to me for others.

Now we begin to reach the underlying impulse of Paul's life. We begin to understand its passion, its movement, its enthusiasm, its terrific drive. We sometimes talk about the terrific strain made on ministers in this age. The fact of the matter is that we hardly begin to understand strenuous service as compared with Paul's. Sometimes we are taken severely to task by well-meaning friends if we travel easily by train and preach twice during the week. There were no trains for Paul; there were no resting places for Paul. He crossed tempest-tossed seas and mountain ranges, and knew real perils on land and sea. What, then, was the driving force? Why hurry, Paul, why hurry? And he would have replied: I am in debt, and I must pay. I have a Gospel, an evangel, a message. Let me go and tell the men for whom it is intended. "I am debtor." There is the ring of tremendous responsibility in this. "I must see Rome." I am in debt to Rome. I have a Gospel for Rome. I am ready to preach it in Rome.

This is the language of the true Christian man in every successive age of the Church, and therefore it is the true language of the whole Christian Church. In broad principles, that word of Paul declares the attitude and responsibility of the Church to the whole world of men, irrespective of differences of birth or of attainment. The Church of God is in debt—in debt to the world. Not that the world has given the Church something for which she has to pay, but that God has given the

Church something for the world.

But, you say, the world hates God. That is partly true; but it is yet more true that God loves the world. But, you say, the world will not have God. That is also partly true; but it is wholly true that God wants the world. And it is for that reason that He has given the Church something, not for her self, but for the world. If the Church appropriates this great evangel, and sings her songs about it, thanks God in her worship for what He has done for her, and stops there, she is playing the harlot, she is prostituting her very nature to base uses. I make no apology for these blunt and brutal figures of speech. They are the figures of the Old Testament prophet and of the New Testament apostles, and there is nothing I feel we need to have borne in on our hearts more than this, that until we take this Gospel and give it to the world we are dishonest—we are in debt.

Let us now take time to consider the nature of this deposit, which the Church has received for the world, in order that we may the better apprehend the character of our responsibility. Let me at once say that I am not using the word "deposit" at this point carelessly. In writing to Timothy, Paul said, "I know Him Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The words, "that which I have committed unto Him," are exposition rather than translation. To translate more literally what the apostle wrote we may render the statement thus: "I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit against that day." Now, it will be seen at once that this may mean that He is able to guard that which I have deposited with Him, or it may mean that He is able to guard that which He has deposited with me. Both in the Authorized and Revised Versions the idea of the translators was that the apostle meant that Jesus was able to guard what the apostle had deposited with Him. I do not so understand the statement. It is out of harmony with the whole reason and purpose of the letter. I have no doubt that he intended to declare, "He is able to guard the thing He has committed to me." The idea was that the Lord had deposited something with the apostle, and that the apostle held the deposit in trust for others. Referring to this deposit, Paul said, I have had to suffer for it. I am not ashamed of it. My joy, my comfort is that if God has given me this sacred deposit He is able to guard it. There is no need for me to be anxious to guard the deposit of truth. God can do that.

This, then, is the sense in which I have used the word deposit, the sense in which the apostle uses it in this case, as of something deposited with him.

What, then, we may now inquire, is the deposit? In order to find the answer, I look at the text in the light of the context. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it"—and there follows the description of the deposit of the great Gospel committed to him and the Church. First, there is a description in general terms—"It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." That is the heart and center of the whole matter. Power unto Salvation! That is what our Gospel is. Not education, not entertainment, not social organization, save as it is true that all these grow from this root. Salvation in the New Testament almost invariably means rescue rather than amelioration. Rescue and all that naturally grows out of rescue. It is salvation from evil, both moral and natural. Salvation from the penalty of evil, salvation from the power of evil, salvation from the presence of evil.

These are the tenses of salvation. A man is saved from the penalty of evil in the moment in which he believes; he is saved from the power of evil by all the processes of sanctification; he will be saved from the presence of evil, finally, at the coming of the Lord Jesus. This, then, is our Gospel; it is a Gospel of salvation as justification, as sanctification, as glorification. It is the salvation of the

spirit of a man, which is justification. It is the salvation of the mind of a man, which is sanctification. It is the salvation of the body of a man, which is glorification. It is a salvation which deals with the whole man: spirit, mind, and body. Thus the Gospel is essentially a message for such as are in need. It is the message of Christ, Who distinctly affirmed, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If for the sake of argument it be granted that there may be human beings who have no need of moral cleansing and spiritual renewal—we by no means say that this is so, but suppose that it were so—then they have no need of a Gospel, and our Gospel has nothing to say to them. On the other hand, those who know themselves spoiled, mastered, depraved by evil, are in need of a Gospel, and it is for such that the Church holds the Gospel as a deposit.

It is, moreover, the Gospel of salvation through the power of God and not through the power of man. There is a kind of evangelism much in vogue in certain quarters at the present hour which speaks of the conflict in every man between angel and beast, and which declares that man's hope lies in his power to destroy the beast and cultivate the angel. Well, all I can say is that I know all about the beast in my own life, but not so much about the angel. But: if this evangel says to me, All you have to do to be saved is to make the angel master the beast, then I declare it is no evangel, for I cannot do it. But if the evangel tells me that there is a power of God that destroys the beast by giving me a new life, which is the Christ life, then have I hope. The Gospel declares the possibility of salvation by the power of God. That is the deposit which creates our debt to the world.

Our context takes us a step further in the revelation of the nature of our deposit as it says: "For therein," that is, in this Gospel, "is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith, as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

The Gospel, then, is, first, the announcement that righteousness has been revealed. That is the fundamental and inclusive theme of the Roman epistle. The righteousness of God has been revealed in a person. We often speak of the righteousness of Christ. That is not incorrect in some senses, but it is at least a suggestive fact that the Bible never speaks of the righteousness of Christ. It speaks of the righteousness of God, and Christ is that righteousness. If men want to know what righteousness is they must know Christ. They cannot have a true idea of righteousness until they know Him. Every other conception of righteousness is faulty and false. In Him alone the righteousness of God is revealed.

But, further, the righteousness of God is revealed in Christ not as pattern only, but also as power. The Gospel declares that the righteousness of God revealed in Christ is at the disposal of the man who needs salvation. Such a man may be saved on his side by the activity of faith, and on God's side by the bestowal of righteousness, a righteousness which gives him the pattern of his life, a righteousness which, through the mystery of Christ's dying, being communicated to the man, becomes the dynamic of his new life.

That is the Gospel which the Church holds as a deposit for the world. Oh, the music there is in it for my heart! I cannot read this great doctrinal treatise, argumentative and logical as it is, without the song born of the experience begotten of its teaching finding expression. I was lost, but there came to me the Gospel of salvation, and that Gospel of God's salvation was, first, the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ. That was a revelation of surpassing beauty, yet the unveiling filled my heart with fear and a new sense of my own failure and unworthiness. Then, while I looked and

was afraid, behold, I saw that the hands were wounded, and the side; and I discovered that the infinite mystery of death admitted me into the infinite dynamic of life.

But it may be well that we inquire again, Why is such a Gospel necessary? And again the context gives us a complete answer in the words: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." A revelation of righteousness was made necessary by the revelation of wrath. The revelation of righteousness by the law was in itself a revelation of wrath to the Jew, because the Jew had not obeyed the Law. The revelation of righteousness through conscience in the Gentile was a revelation of wrath to him, because he had not walked in the light of conscience. This Gentile application is most pertinent to ourselves. Let us consider it. Concerning the Gentiles the apostle declared—quoting the Authorized Version—that they were "men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The Greek word means, to hold down, to imprison, to prevent its working. That was the reason of wrath. When is God angry with a man? When that man holds down the truth in unrighteousness. Let me attempt to express that in another way. God is angry with a man when he does not follow the dictates of his instructed conscience. In the case of the Jew the same principle obtained, but with another application. He was guilty of holding down, that is, of preventing the operation of the written law in his life. That to him was unrighteousness. The Gentile was held responsible for the measure of light which he had but did not follow. That was his unrighteousness. The Jew has sinned against law. The Gentile has imprisoned the truth in ungodliness and unrighteousness. Therefore the wrath of God is over both. Both Jew and Gentile need salvation in the sense of rescue.

The age has not changed—at least, if the age has, human nature has not. I have no care to argue with men whether they are sinners through Adam's fall. I hold that they are, but one note of the Gospel is that such race failure and pollution is accounted for, and atoned for, in the Cross. The point of human responsibility is that men have deliberately chosen darkness, even though the light, whether of law or of conscience, has been shining on them, because of which God's wrath is on them. Because of that they need salvation, and our Gospel deposit is the proclamation of the possibility of saving such. If wrath is revealed because of man's unrighteousness, righteousness is revealed as available for man by way of the infinite and superabounding grace of God. That is our deposit. It is committed to us. We are, therefore, committed to the work of proclaiming it to the world.

And now, finally, it must be remembered that this Gospel is for all men. In spite of all arguments to the contrary, that is the plain teaching of the New Testament. If I did not believe that I could never preach again. But there is no room for doubt or question. This Gospel is for all men, and for all men it is committed to us. This was made perfectly clear in the last command of Jesus to His first disciples. To them He said: "It is not for you to know time or seasons,... but ye shall be My witnesses." He then described the circles which bound the sphere of responsibility. Let us note them. "In Jerusalem"—that is the first circle, the city in which we dwell. "And in all Judea and Samaria"—this circle is wider, embracing our native land, and the country adjoining. The last circle is described in the words: "And unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Jesus Christ, the Head of this church, is Head of the holy catholic Church. He stands in our midst, and He says to us: You are in debt to Westminster, to London, to England, to the uttermost part of the earth. So long as anywhere there is a man who has not heard that Gospel, we are in debt. So

long as anywhere there is a soul underneath wrath for disobeying light, and we have joy and a glorious Gospel, we are in debt. For dealing with evil and all its issues this Gospel is sufficient. Every manifestation of evil is, therefore, a call to us. Personal evil, social evil, national evil, racial evil, are saying to us, Bring us your Gospel.

Oh, heart of mine, listen! Listen to the cry of the war. Listen to the cry of the woman on the streets. Listen to the cry of evil everywhere. What are these voices saying? You are in debt to us. You are in debt, for you have the Gospel. Bring it to us. The man of Macedonia is crying to us as clearly as he called to the apostle!

It is a great privilege to have such a deposit; but, oh it is a great responsibility! Debt is always dishonorable. A man is pitied when he is bankrupt; but if he has the money to pay, and he does not, then is he a rogue, and must be punished. We are not bankrupt. We have the Gospel that will meet the need of the age. If we hide it and keep it from this city, this land, this world, we are dishonorably in debt.

Suppose the Church fails to discharge this debt. Nay, let us close on a more personal note. Suppose I fail to discharge this debt. What then? Ah! what then? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Can any sin be greater than that of withholding a supreme remedy from supreme need? Have we ever asked ourselves which judgment is likely to be greater—judgment of the disobedient Church or judgment of the men who needed the Gospel and never had it because of her disobedience? If "holding down the truth in unrighteousness" brings the wrath of God, surely there is no sin so great as that of having this Gospel and not passing it on, telling it out. The Church's responsibility to the world is marked in these words. She is in debt to man because all her glorious evangel is hers for them. May God lay on us the burden of this duty, and send us out to discharge it. As the Church discharges this debt, she fulfils her mission in the world.

Romans 1:16, 17. The Power Of The Gospel.

Romans 1:16, 17.

The Power Of The Gospel.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.

Romans 1:16-17

When Paul wrote this letter he had never visited Rome. He earnestly desired to do so, and expected that his desire would be fulfilled. That desire was created by the fact of his Roman citizenship, and by his interest in the Christian Church in Rome; and that more especially because he desired that the Church in that city should be an instrument for the evangelization of the Western world. Writing thus to the saints in the Imperial City, he declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel, and he gave his reasons.

The statement that he was not ashamed is in itself interesting. It is the only occasion on which we find Paul even suggesting the possibility of being ashamed of the gospel. I am perfectly well aware that this is a declaration that he was not ashamed, but why make the declaration? I think there can be but one answer, and it is suggested by the words immediately preceding the text: "So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." The declaration that he was not ashamed of the gospel, with its implication of the possibility of being ashamed, was the result of his consciousness of Rome, of its imperial dignity, of its material magnificence, of its proud contempt for all aliens, of the vastness of its multitudes, of the profundity of its corruption. There was no question in his mind as to the power of his gospel, and yet we detect the undertone of inquiry as he wrote: "I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel."

It is always easier to preach in a village than in a city, to the sweet, simple people of the countryside than to the satisfied metropolitans. Really it is not so, but the feeling that it is so invariably assails the soul of the prophet of God. In answer to that consciousness of his soul, or perhaps in answer to his feeling that such a consciousness might exist in the minds of the Roman Christians, Paul affirmed his readiness to preach the gospel in Rome also, declaring that he was not ashamed of it, and giving as his reason that this gospel was "the power of God unto salvation." The only justification of a gospel is that it is powerful. A message that proclaims the need for, and the possibility of, spiritual and moral renewal must be tested by the results it produces. A word devoid of power is no word of the Lord. A gospel that fails to produce the results it announces as necessary and as possible is no gospel. Is our gospel the power of God?

Let me say at once that the particular burden of my message this evening has come to me as the result of a long letter which I now hold in my hand, four closely written pages which I am not going

to read to you in full, but which I have read again and again for my own soul's profit and examination as a preacher of the gospel, and from which I propose to read a few sentences. The letter refers to meetings which have been held in preparation for the winter's work:

You were saying on Tuesday evening that men were everywhere inquiring after reality, and I quite agree. We often hear about the dynamic of Christianity. There are youths and young men—I speak only of those about whose temptations I know something—who have to face temptations, and even this week have cried to the Lord Jesus for help and have tried the best they knew how to overcome, yet have failed. When a young man comes to me and asks where he can get the power to overcome, what am I to say? One did remark to me, "It is not a lack in our religion that it supplies no real power to overcome such-and-such temptations, temptations that cannot be avoided, and that have to be faced?" Men don't want a merely theoretic idea or ideas about the dynamic of Christianity. They want to realize how they can practically appropriate that dynamic. Careful Christian workers want to know how far, and in what way, they may safely encourage those spiritually sick and blind to hope for spiritual help after they have believed for the forgiveness of their sins; and experience shows it must not be a matter of mere inference, for inference would be likely to promise more than what seems to be genuinely realized. To hold out hopes that experience must disappoint is disastrous. Yes, it is reality men are longing for.

I believe that letter expresses the inquiry and the feeling of many souls. I think that my friend has fastened on a word that he knows I am peculiarly fond of, the word dynamic. I plead guilty; I love the word, and I use it a great deal, and I do so because it is a New Testament word. It is the very word of my text, The gospel is the power, *δυναμις*?, of God unto salvation. The letter of my friend is practically a challenge of the declaration of my text. The text says, "The gospel is the power of God into salvation." My friend suggests that there are men who have heard the call of Jesus, who have been obedient to it, and yet have not experienced that power. I am not going to argue the points of the letter, but rather to consider the statement of Paul, hoping and believing that in that consideration and in an attempt to understand the meaning of the great Apostle at this point there may be help for honest souls whose difficulty is voiced by the writer of the letter.

However, let me say to the writer of the letter, and to all such, that I agree that there is nothing more important today than that the Christian preacher and teacher should be real in the use of terms. But all who are making that demand must recognize the extreme difficulty of reality in terminology when dealing with spiritual forces that can never be perfectly apprehended. Whenever we have to deal with great forces we find ourselves in a similar difficulty. I am not an electrician, but I suggest a question whether the phrase, "to develop electricity," is an accurate phrase. I do not say that it is not, but I ask, Can you develop electricity? Is it not, after all, a word that we hazard until we come to fuller knowledge? Is there any man in this house, or in London, or in the world, who is prepared to tell us the last thing about electricity, not only what can be done by it, but also what it is? The moment we get into the realm of great forces which are intangible, imponderable, demonstrated by what they do, we are at least in danger of seeming to be unreal in our terms. We are dealing now with the most wonderful of all forces. At the close of our meditation undoubtedly there will be a sense in which some of the terms used will seem to lack reality. It is not that the force dealt with is unreal, but that it is so far beyond our final explanation that terms cannot be discovered which cover the facts of the case while excluding everything that should be excluded.

Confining ourselves now to the words selected, let us consider, first, the affirmation, "The gospel... is the power of God unto salvation"; second, the condition on which the power is appropriated, "to every one that believeth"; and, finally, the exposition of the operation which the Apostle added, "for therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith."

First, then, as to the affirmation. Here many sentences are not necessary. The Apostle declares that "the gospel... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The power: that is something which produces results, something which is more than a theory, something which is mightier than a law, an actual, spiritual force, producing spiritual results, an actual power accomplishing things. What it is in itself may be a mystery; how it does its work may not be known; but the Apostle declares that it accomplishes certain things, and that we may know by the results it produces that the gospel is more than a theory, more than a law, that it is, in fact, a power. Moreover, he makes the superlative declaration that it is "the power of God." This is the superlative way of declaring its sufficiency for doing certain things. In quality it is irresistible, in quantity it is inexhaustible. Yet he declares further that it is "the power of God unto salvation." This at once defines and limits the power of the gospel. The gospel is the power that operates to this end alone. The gospel is the power which operates to this end perfectly.

The word "salvation" immediately suggests inquiring what the danger is that is referred to, for to know the danger is to know the scope of the salvation. Here, to summarize briefly, the danger is twofold: pollution of the nature, and paralysis of the will. In the presence of temptation men find that their nature is so weakened that they yield, and their will is so paralyzed that even when they have willed not to yield, still they do yield. That is the whole story of the danger. The Apostle declares that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," that is, for cleansing the nature from its pollution, and for enabling the will, so that henceforth a man shall not only will to do right, but shall do it.

It is perfectly clear, however, that the gospel operates in human lives only on the fulfilment of conditions. The gospel is not the power of God to every man. "The gospel... is the power of God to every one that believeth." The Apostle here recognized the human possibility, that is, a possibility common to all human nature, irrespective of race or privilege. "To the Jew first; and also to the Greek"; and to the Greek none the less and none the later. The conditions can be fulfilled by men as men, apart from the question of race or privilege or temperament. The gospel can be believed by the metropolitan or the provincial, by the dweller in Rome as surely as by the dwellers in the hamlets through which he had passed, by the learned and by the illiterate. Belief is the capacity and possibility of human life everywhere.

What, then, is this capacity? We must interpret the use of the word believe here by its constant use in the revelation of the New Testament. There must be conviction before there can be belief. Belief is always founded on reason. How can they believe who have not heard? The conviction is not necessarily that of the truth of the claim; it is not necessarily conviction that the gospel will work. There can be faith before I am sure that this gospel is going to work. Indeed, thousands of people have a profound conviction that the gospel will work who yet have never believed. The conviction necessary is that in view of the need experienced, and of the claim which the gospel makes, it ought to be put to the test. Jesus said to His critics on one occasion: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." Surely that was a perfectly fair

test. He who puts the gospel to the test of obeying it will find out whether its claim of power be accurate. When a man is convinced that in the presence of his need and of the claim which the gospel makes he ought to put it to the test, he has come to the true attitude of mind in which it is possible for him to exercise faith. Faith, then, is volitional. That is the central responsibility of the soul. Faith is not a feeling that comes stealing across the soul. Faith is not an inclination toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is that volitional act which decides in the presence of the great need, and in the presence of the great claim, to put that claim to the test by obedience thereto. Conduct is the resulting expression, which is conformity to the claims made by the gospel, immediate and progressive. Whatever the proclamation of the gospel says to the soul, the soul is to put the gospel to the test by obeying. Invariably in the actual coming of a soul to Christ under conviction of sin everything is focused at some one point; and when that is obeyed other calls will be made on the soul by this gospel, which is one of purity and righteousness, as well as of mercy and of love. Faith is that volitional act which puts the gospel to the test by obedience to its claims. That is the condition of appropriation.

The whole situation is illuminated for the inquiring soul by the explanatory word: "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith." That is the exposition of what the Apostle has already written concerning the gospel, both as to the nature of the power that is resident in it and as to the law by which that power is appropriated in individual lives. The declaration that there is a revelation in the gospel of the righteousness of God does not mean that the gospel has revealed the fact that God is righteous. That revelation antedated the gospel; it was found in the law, it was found in human history, it was found everywhere in the human heart. Out of that knowledge comes the agony of soul that seeks after a gospel. The declaration clearly means that the gospel reveals the fact that God places righteousness at the disposal of men who in themselves are unrighteous, that He makes it possible for the unrighteous man to become a righteous man. That is the exposition of salvation. Salvation is righteousness made possible. If you tell me that salvation is deliverance from hell, I tell you that you have an utterly inadequate understanding of what salvation is. If you tell me that salvation is forgiveness of sins, I shall affirm that you have a very partial understanding of what salvation is. Unless there be more in salvation than deliverance from penalty and forgiveness of transgressions, then I solemnly say that salvation cannot satisfy my own heart and conscience. That is the meaning of the letter I received: mere forgiveness of sins and deliverance from some penalty cannot satisfy the profoundest in human consciousness. Deep down in the common human consciousness there is a wonderful response to that which is of God. Man may not obey it, but in the depths of human consciousness there is a response to righteousness, an admission of its call, its beauty, its necessity. Salvation, then, is making possible that righteousness. Salvation is the power to do right. However enfeebled the will may be, however polluted the nature, the gospel comes bringing to men the message of power enabling them to do right. In the gospel is revealed a righteousness of God, which, as the Apostle argues and makes quite plain as he goes on with his great letter, is a righteousness which is placed at the disposal of the unrighteous man so that the unrighteous man may become righteous in heart and thought and will and deed. Unless that be the gospel, there is no gospel. Paul affirms that was the gospel which he was going to Rome to preach.

Then we come to a phrase which is full of light. He tells us that this righteousness therein revealed, revealed in the gospel, is "by faith unto faith," in which phrase he tells us exactly how

men receive this power. He has already told us that it is to everyone that believeth, then he gives us an exposition of that phrase. As he has given us an exposition of "salvation" as the revelation of righteousness of God at the disposal of men, so now he gives us an exposition of the phrase "every one that believeth" in the phrase "by faith unto faith."

The phrase is at once simple and difficult. There can be no question as to its structure. Taking the phrase as it stands, and looking at it grammatically apart from its context, it is evident that the second "faith" is resultant faith. The faith finally referred to grows out of the faith first referred to. "By faith unto faith." It is an almost surprising thing how successfully almost all expositors have hurriedly passed over this phrase. What did the Apostle mean? Did he mean that is an initial faith on the part of man which results in a yet firmer faith? That is possible, but there is another explanation. I believe the Apostle meant that the gospel reveals a righteousness which is at the disposal of sinning men by the faith of God unto the faith of man. The faith of God produces faith in man. The faith of God. Ought such a phrase be used of Him? Verily, if faith be certainty, confidence, and activity based on confidence. The faith of God is faith in Himself, in His Son, and in man. On the basis of God's faith in Himself, and on the basis of His faith in His Son, and on the basis of His faith in man, He places through His Son a righteousness at the disposal of man in spite of his sin. That faith of God becomes, when once it is apprehended, the inspiration of an answering faith in man. Inspired by God's faith I trust Him. I act in consonance with the faith that He has demonstrated in human history by sending His Son, and by all the provision of infinite grace.

I take my way back from this epistle and observe once more the Lord Jesus as He revealed God to me, and that is what He always did in dealing with sinning souls. He always reposed confidence in them in order to inspire their confidence in Himself. If Thou canst do anything, said one man to Him; If thou canst...! All things are possible to him that believeth, was His answer. That was the Lord's declaration of His confidence in the possibility of the man who was face to face with the sense of his own appalling weakness. There are many yet more remarkable and outstanding illustrations in the New Testament. The Lord ever dealt with men on the basis of His confidence in them, in their possibility in spite of failure, always on condition that they would repose an answering confidence in Himself. A supreme illustration of this was afforded in the upper room on that last night when He was dealing with the disciples in the sight of His approaching departure. Mark most carefully His conversation with Peter. Peter, demanding to understand Him, in agony in the presence of the gathering clouds, said: Where art Thou going? Jesus replied: Whither I go ye cannot come now, but ye shall come hereafter. Again Peter asked: Why cannot I come now? I will follow Thee anywhere. I will die for Thee! Jesus replied: Wilt Thou die for me, Peter? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. If I go away, I come again to receive you to Myself. I go to prepare a place for you.

Take out of that conversation its central value. It is Christ's confidence. He said to Peter, in effect: I know the worst that is in you, the forces that you have not yet discovered that within four-and-twenty hours will make you a denier, cursing and swearing. I know the worst, but if you will trust Me I will realize the best in you. I know the best in you. I shall have perfect confidence in you, provided you will have confidence in Me.

Let me take a superlative declaration. Whatever we think about humanity, Christ thought it worth dying for! He believed in it, in spite of its sin, in spite of its unutterable failure. When He confronted sinning souls He believed in them. He knew their incapacity. He knew that of themselves they could do nothing; but He knew also that in them was the very stuff out of which He could make saints who would flash and shine in light forever. In spite of the spoiling of sin, there was that in them with which He could deal. If I may borrow an awkward word from the old theologians, God believes in the salvability of all men. God puts righteousness at the disposal of man by faith in Himself, in His Son, and in the man at whose disposal He places it. If that once be seen, men respond to that faith of God by faith in Him.

Let us come away from the realm of argument into the realm of experience. All true Christian workers, men and women who know what it is really to get into close touch with sinning souls, and into grip with the spiritual life of men, have learned that the way to lift men back out of the slough of despond is to let them see that Christian workers believe in them. The way to lift any woman back again out of the degradation into which she has come is to show her you know she is capable of the higher and the nobler in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "By faith unto faith." By faith a righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. By the confidence which God reposes in Himself, and by the confidence He has in the possibility of every human life, He has placed righteousness at man's disposal through Christ. No man will ever avail himself of that except by faith. No man can appropriate the great provision save as he responds in faith to faith. As this faith of God in man is answered by the faith of man in God, then contact is made between the dynamic that is resident within Himself, and placed at the disposal of men by the mystery of His passion, and the weakness and incapacity of the human soul.

Such was the gospel of which Paul was not ashamed. Such is the gospel. The accuracy of the theory can be demonstrated only by results. That is the whole theme. I am here this evening to affirm once more—and I do it no longer as theory, I do it as an experience; I speak from this moment not merely as advocate, but as witness—that "the gospel... is the power of God unto salvation." However hard and severe the affirmation may seem at the moment, I am nevertheless constrained and compelled to affirm that if the gospel does not work, the failure is in the man, not in the gospel. If that be not true the whole Christian history is a lie. If that be true, then all the thousands and tens of thousands of human beings who for two millenniums have declared what the gospel has wrought in them have been woefully deceived, or have been most mysteriously perpetrating fraud throughout the centuries and millenniums. If it does not work, then that man who says that he has been delivered from besetting sin is a liar, and he is sinning in secret. Either this declaration is true, or the gospel is an awful deception, enabling men to hide secret sin. I pray you think again. If you have imagined that there is no dynamic in the gospel, think again, and examine your own life again, and find out whether or not you have fallen into line with the claims of the gospel and fulfilled its conditions. I assert that it is not enough that man shall hate his sin and cry out for help; he must put himself in line with the power that operates, he must fulfil the conditions laid down. It is not enough to submit to the Lord; a man must also resist the devil. It is not enough to resist the devil; a man must also submit to the Lord. There are men who submit and cry for help, but they put up no fight against temptations. They will never appropriate the power. There are men who put up a strenuous fight against temptations, but they never submit, never pray, never seek help. They will never find deliverance. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one

that believeth." The gospel is that wherein the fact is revealed that righteousness as a power is at the disposal of a sinning man by God's faith in that man, inspiring man's faith in God. If men would discover the power of this gospel they will do so as they submit to its claim immediately and thoroughly.

If this were the time and place, as it is not, I could call witnesses. They are in this house: men who have known the very temptations delicately referred to in this letter, subtle, insidious temptations; but who also know that the gospel has meant to them power enabling them to do the things they fain would have done, but could not until they believed in this gospel.

I would like my last note in this address to be an appeal to any man who is face to face with this problem. My brother, God believes in you, and that in spite of all the worst there is in you. God knows the worst in you better than you know it yourself, yet He believes in you; and because He believes in your possibility He has provided righteousness in and through the Son of His love and by the mystery of His passion. I want you to respond to God's faith in you by putting your faith in Him, and demonstrating your faith by beginning with the next thing in obedience. You also will find that the gospel is the power of God, not theory, not inference, but a power that, coming into the life, realizes within the life and experience all the things of holiness and of righteousness and of high and eternal beauty.

Romans 3:26. The Justification Of The Sinner.

Romans 3:26.

The Justification Of The Sinner.

God's Difficulty—God's Solution

... that He might Himself be just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:26

The measure in which we apprehend the meaning of the words of the text is the measure in which they challenge our belief. In the earlier part of the letter we find the teaching of the writer as to the attitude of God towards human sin. I content myself with one quotation; "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness." The terrible conclusion of the writer as to the condition of the human race, a conclusion which he declared by quotation from one of the ancient psalms, is found in such words as these:

There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none that understandeth,

There is none that seeketh after God;

They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable;

There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one:

Their throat is an open sepulchre;

With their tongue they have used deceit:

The poison of asps is under their lips:

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

And the way of peace have they not known:

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

By this writer, who first makes clear the attitude of God towards sin and then concludes the whole race as under sin, we are told that this God can be true to Himself in character and yet clear the members of this race from the guilt and penalty of sin.

If we take the declaration without due consideration of the conditions, we shall deny its accuracy. We shall declare that it is impossible for God to be just, that is, true to Himself in nature and character, and justify the ungodly, that is, liberate them from the responsibility or penalty and guilt of sin and treat them as just men. In our courts of law, justice and mercy can never act together. I am not arguing that there never should be clemency in the courts of law. I am not arguing that it may not be well in certain circumstances to extend mercy toward guilty people. I do declare, however, that in the exercise of mercy, there is the violation of justice. It may be that some man arraigned in an earthly court committed an act of wrong under extenuating circumstances that call for clemency and the court so acts towards him. That is not a violation of justice, for it is just that he should be pardoned, as when some man steals a loaf of bread for starving wife and children.

In the Hebrew economy, in the instructions to judges, this matter was most carefully stated, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, and the judges judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." How then can God justify the wicked? How can God be just to Himself, and the Justifier of sinning men? The wonder is great, but the fact is gracious.

Let us consider this matter not theoretically merely, but in order to apply the truth to our own souls' need. Let us try to understand God's difficulty, and then let us consider so far as we may, knowing ere we begin that the light may be too bright for the feebleness of a sinner's sight, and that such a profound matter can be perfectly apprehended—God's solution of His own difficulty.

God's difficulty; to be Just and the Justifier of the sinner. God's solution of his own difficulty; God may "... be just and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

We commence by reminding ourselves of the separation between man and God. We recognize at once the intimate relationship between man and God; that all men are offspring of God; that the deepest thing in human nature is not the flesh-life of which we have had our fathers after the flesh, but the spirit-life in which every man is offspring of Deity. In this recognition we are coming face to face with the nature of the separation of which we are to speak.

Passing quickly over the solemn ground, we remind ourselves of two things; the holiness of God and the depravity of man. The holiness of God is the supreme revelation of the biblical writings. It is, moreover, to all those who have eyes to see intelligently, the supreme revelation of creation. This is the apostolic argument in the earlier part of the letter. Paul declared that the Gentiles, the men without the particular revelation which had been granted to the Hebrew people, were nevertheless not without revelation for in nature the wisdom and power of God are clearly revealed. In those things also, we have a revelation of the holiness of God. Let us disabuse our minds of any preconceived notion of what holiness may be: not that our interpretations have been at fault, but that sometimes they have been altogether too partial. The holiness of God is demonstrated by all His works. In the Book of Psalms it will be found that those singers of the ancient times—wonderful singers expressing all the emotions of the human soul in the presence of God—constantly celebrated "... the wondrous works of God." The phrase runs through the psalter. The perfection of God is manifested in creation, is seen in form and color, is heard in sound, is detected by all the senses of men. The perfection of God is revealed in all the processes of creation: in those crises and upheavals which fill the soul of man again and again with fear and dread but which in the last result are ever seen to move on toward something yet grander and

more beautiful. No man has thought carefully in the presence of the wonderful evolutionary method of God in the created order—which, by the way, is only one method and does not account for everything—without having been impressed by the wonder of it all; the slow-moving processes ever onward and ever perfect in themselves and yet ever growing into more wondrous perfection, and then the clash, the upheaval and the new glory. God's creation uttereth forth His praise. "The whole earth is filled with the glory of God"; and perfection is holiness demonstrated through creation.

The holiness of God is demonstrated also in the perfection of His government; His government of the world in wisdom, in truth, in justice, and in power. These things are not always seen at near range. In many an hour of darkness and conflict we tremble and are afraid. Therein we foolishly judge Him by the limitation of our vision. If we wait but for a generation, and then look back to things that puzzled us, we always see that God has been over-ruling, out of all the chaos creating cosmos, out of disorder establishing order, in the graphic language of the ancient psalm, making "... the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder girding upon His thigh as a sword"—thus holding it in reserve. All this is but demonstration of the holiness of God.

To state the whole fact, again quoting from the ancient psalms, "As for God, His way is perfect...." Nothing imperfect is tolerated by Him. The autumnal fires destroy the effete beneficently to make way for new life and new beauty. These autumnal fires in nature are but the sacramental symbol of the fact of the Divine presence in which the whole creation ever exists. Scientists have described these fires by the technical term "eremacausis," which means quietly burning. These slowly-burning fires are ever purging nature's floor, and they constitute a fitting symbol of that presence of God everywhere that became clear to the vision of the ancient prophet when he said, "... who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" All those who have looked upon human life clearly, carefully, and intelligently, and with spiritual perception, have seen that all our cities, all our nations, all our empires, are within His fire, which surely, ultimately destroys the effete, purifies the strong, and leads forward toward the ultimate consummation of absolute perfection. God's holiness is attested everywhere.

It is supremely declared in the biblical revelation. In the divers portions of the past, the supreme message is that of the holiness of God. In all the songs Divinely inspired, in all the prophecies Divinely taught, in the whole system of the law, the one monotonous message is this, "I, the Lord Thy God, am holy." All these divers portions of the past, however, are as nothing when put into comparison with the simple and yet sublimely complete message that He gave to men in the Person of His Son.

If there be one truth supremely manifest in nature, supremely declared in revelation, it is that of the holiness of God; that holiness that has no place for ultimate imperfection, that holiness that can only be satisfied with perfection in any and every realm, material, mental and moral. The unveiling of God in the Word, in all nature, and in all history, is the revelation of supreme holiness.

We turn from that thought, and we think of man. I will not again read the indictment of the apostle in this context. I only ask you to have it in mind. If inclined to challenge it at any point, I pray you before you pass your verdict, consider it with great care. Having myself done so, I declare that I am convinced that the picture is a true one.

Think of the depravity of human nature as it is revealed in unexpected ways. Man's depravity as revealed in the imperfection of his works even at their highest and their best. There is no true artist but will tell you that the finest creation of his mind and genius is failure. In the realm of art, we are in the realm of creation more peculiarly than in any other realm; yet art has always failed, and in its passionate desire for perfection it sometimes becomes grotesque and foolish. We smile today at some of the manifestations, but they are tragic manifestations of human failure. Futurism is a very modern revelation of man's failure, as well as of man's inherent capacity for creation and passionate desire for expression.

Man's failure is revealed also in his government. That I am not proposing to argue at any length. I take the widest outlook, I survey the centuries and declare that man has never yet governed perfectly. We have made our boast in our ability to govern, and at this moment are faced with a tragic situation in which the supreme, appalling revelation is incapacity for government so that lawlessness is permitted unchecked.

Humanity's failure is revealed as surely in the imperfection of its words and these again at the highest and best. Humanity's attempts at interpretation of the poets and the philosophers all fail, so that each succeeding generation comes up with a sigh and finds disappointment in the things that have been said and attempts interpretation once more and again fails.

Take the narrower outlook. Humanity spoils everything it touches of its own life. Business at this hour is full of things of defilement. I am not saying that no man in business is upright. I am not foolish enough to say such a thing; but I am saying that he finds it extremely difficult to be prosperous and upright at the same time. Commercial life is permeated with things of iniquity and evil.

Man spoils his own pleasures with evil. Things perfectly innocent and proper are defiled as man touches them. Tell me what there can be of evil in the racing of two horses mounted by men who almost seem part of them so perfect is their understanding of them? Yet, no reputable man cares to have his name associated with the turf! What can there be inherently evil in cards with pictures of kings and queens and knaves on them? They were invented to amuse a mad king! Yet they have been polluted and fair lives are being damned and ruined by gambling with them. These are rough and ready illustrations, but they are illustrations. Man touches religion itself, and it is degraded and so spoiled and made the means for the manifestation of an evil spirit in protested defense of itself. There is nothing more terrible than that in the whole history of religion that men defend the truth of God in a temper that is born in the pit.

If these are the general facts of the separation between God and man, think within a narrower circle of man's fear of God, man's dread of God, and man's dislike of God. Has man a dread, a fear, a dislike of God? There are thousands of homes characterized by all that is refined in the more modern sense of the word where the very name of God and religion are taboo. Men do not want to talk about God. I protest that it ought to be the most joyous thing in all the world to talk about God, that men should find their chief delight in talking together about Him. Those who really know our God delight to speak of Him, and there is nothing narrow in the speech and nothing mean in the conversation. It is broad with the breadth of His own beneficence and beauty and glory and glad with the happiness of the happy God. Yet men are afraid and will not talk of God but turn their back upon God because of an underlying consciousness of wrong and distance from

Him. The reason of man's fear of God is not in God, it is in man. The men who have known God best have had the least slavish fear of Him and have exulted in their conversation concerning Him and their relation to Him. In the light of the Divine requirements as they have been revealed in the Scriptures of Truth—"And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"—what is there that makes men anxious not to have dealings with Him? Nothing other than that they have not done justly, have not loved mercy, and have not walked humbly with Him.

That God can justify sinning men and still be just Himself seems to us impossible. Let us remember that on the Divine side the difficulty is created by the desire of God. If God were other than He is, were God other than Love, His passion for perfection might be vindicated by my destruction. He might blot out the evil thing, sweep away the failing race. But listen to one or two very old and very familiar words, perhaps with a slightly altered emphasis; "... Adam,... Where are thou? Do you read that as though God were occupied in the work of a policeman? Then you blaspheme. That is not the cry of a policeman; it is the wail of a father. He did not want information as to the geographical location of a man who was hiding; that idea is absurd! The cry was the revelation of the spiritual agony of God in the presence of human sin. Listen to another of these words. It is the language of the broken-hearted prophet Hosea who learned God's pain by the tragedy in his own home, and it expresses that pain of God in presence of Israel's sin; "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" In the New Testament the whole truth is declared; "God so loved the world..."! That is the supreme fact; love craving for fellowship; God desiring the fellowship of His children; God wounded in His own heart, in His own being, and suffering in the presence of human sin.

Out of that love arises the difficulty of God. His desire is to justify the sinner, to make a way for His banished ones to return, to find a way back for Adam, to restore Ephraim to His original intention, to bring the world to Himself in spite of sin and wandering. That is the Divine desire, the Divine passion. How can He do it? God cannot exercise one attribute at the expense of another. He cannot deny justice when He acts in mercy. He cannot forget the requirements of law when love would operate.

Yet the difficulty is not merely in that God must vindicate law. The difficulty is deeper. He must vindicate law because of the nature of the law that He must vindicate. His law for man was love-inspired and so absolutely perfect that, being broken, results follow which are destructive of such as break it. Punishment is not additional to sin, it is inherent in sin. What a man soweth that he reaps. The harvest of broken law is not the harvest of anger, it is a harvest that grows out of man's own sinning.

Speaking within the limitation of the human outlook, therein is the supreme difficulty. The principle of law can be vindicated by the annihilation of the sinning man; but because law is inspired by love, and love is set upon the perfection of that man, and because the thing the man has done has within itself the elements of man's destruction, the love that inspires law must insist upon the law, while yet it feels out after the man. How can that law be met which has sprung from love, and how can that man be restored? How can this God of perfection be true to Himself and take sinning men back to Himself on the level of the righteous?

There is only one way. He must make them righteous. He must put righteousness at their disposal by some process so that it really becomes theirs, mastering them and dealing with all that which has resulted from their sin, restoring them to His holiness, upon the basis of some power that overcomes sin. Nothing short of that can satisfy the requirement of this God Whose desire is that of the restoration of man.

Again I ask, "How can this be done?" Nicodemus was not so great a fool as some people seem to think. I am weary of hearing men talk about him as though he were a flippant fool, an intellectual idiot! Nicodemus was a tremendous man, and our Lord dealt with him so. When he said, "... How can a man be born when he is old?" he was not trifling, but asking the most agonizing question a human soul can ever ask. When I have arrived at manhood, how am I to undo the past years and their influences. I am molded, fashioned; how am I to escape from myself? How can I begin again. It is one of the most terrific questions that was ever addressed to God in Christ. "... How can a man be born when he is old?" How can he have that justification that takes hold of the inner fact of his failing manhood and deals with it? That is the question.

The gospel we preach is not simple; it is profound. We do not ask you to receive the pity of God as though He would excuse you and admit you presently to heaven in spite of what you are. God cannot deal with men like that; has not done so and will not do so! He must justify and still be just! He cannot justify, unless He remains just. There is the problem and the difficulty.

Hear then God's solution of the problem; "... He might be just and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." At this point I call a halt of most serious importance and significance apart from which we shall be all astray within five minutes. We must first note Who this Jesus is, to Whom reference is made. Because I am dealing with Paul's teaching and argument, I go back to Paul's definition. His letter opens with it. He was filled with the consciousness of this supreme fact of the Person Who in Himself is of the very essence of the gospel.

"Paul, a bond servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which He promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is necessary that we go back to that passage to know Who this Person is. There is a racial aspect of humanity from which no individual escapes. This Person, born into this flesh, Who identified Himself with the race, was in essential spirit the Son of God. He came to dwell in flesh that had been the very instrument of sin. The Person toward Whom our faith is directed is not mere man of our humanity. He is Man of our humanity, but He is also One Whom we cannot dismiss by calling Him Jesus of Nazareth; we must also name Him Son of the Highest. We cannot account for Him wholly within the terms of our humanity; we must include within our thinking His relationship to Deity. That relationship is essential so that when we look at the Son we see, to borrow a phrase from another of the letters of the New Testament, "... God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself...." Therefore, upon all He said I must place the measurement of the Divine wisdom; upon all He did I must place the measurement of the Divine power. From the narrowed focus of His human life, I must look out into all the immensity of the Divine. When I see Him at work and listen to His speech, I know I am observing God and listening to God. His tears are the tears of God. His sighs are the sighs of God. His pain is the pain of God. This One Who

was contracted to a span for human observation, brought down into human limitation for human outlook, is One in Whom all the fulness of the godhead dwelleth bodily. We shall never understand our redemption until we get this outlook upon the Redeemer. If you tell me Jesus was a Man Who persuaded God to love me, you are uttering that which is almost blasphemy. Jesus is God persuading me back to the love of God and enabling me to answer the persuading. Jesus is the name employed in the text; the sweetest, simplest, human name; employed in order that my frail finite mind may fasten and fix itself upon Someone Whom in measure I can understand, and having done so may find that I have been admitted into the spaciousness of all the eternal Deity. Paul says that in Him "... a righteousness of God hath been manifested,..." which means infinitely more than that God's righteousness is revealed in Him. The manifestation of righteousness in Jesus is the putting of righteousness at my disposal, not clothing me in it, but communicating it to me so that it becomes the inspiration of my life. This is done "... through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." The exposition of that term "redemption" is found in the words "a propitiation... by His blood." The word "propitiation" suggests something that covers the guilty person so that the results of sin do not fall upon the guilty head. "By His blood" brings us back to the tragic, awful symbol of the very pain and passion of God. Here is the Cross. Therein I learn what I cannot explain, that He bare my sins in His own body on the tree. How, I cannot tell! I could have explained it had it been the activity of man for I also am a man. When I discover that behind the revelation of the Man there is the activity of the God who out of love enunciated law and now out of love doth suffer the consequent penalty of broken law, then I feel that the Rock to which I come will hide me, for God will not violate His own holiness, and even though I cannot explain the method by which He justifies me, I know that seeing He has taken my burden, I may take from Him with humility the gift of pardon which His grace extends.

The way of appropriation is that of faith. The only unpardonable sin is to reject the offer of His grace. The only sin that hath no forgiveness is the rejection of the operation of the Spirit Whose office it is to reveal the things of Christ and place at our disposal all the grace He came to bring me. That unpardonable sin cannot be committed in an hour or a moment. It is not one act. It is persistent, definite, final refusal of Christ. There is no other sin that hath no forgiveness.

The Sabbath day is nearly done. We have been trying to face supreme things. The supreme things of life are those of relation to God. Does that need any arguing? I think not. In view of His holiness then let us ask, "Where do we stand?" To those who are conscious of wrong, of sin, of failure, and consequent lack of fellowship with Him, we bring now the message of the gospel. It is that God places at our disposal righteousness through Christ His own Son, places at our disposal righteousness which is the outcome of the redemption provided through propitiation. He has taken our place as to all the result of our sin and gives us His place as the result of that very suffering.

What shall we do? Shall we not trust Him? Shall we now come to Him saying:

Nothing in our hands we bring,

Simply to thy cross we cling.

In such trust we shall have that justification which He bestows while still just to Himself, and enter into the eternal peace.

Romans 5:8. Amazing Love!

Romans 5:8.

Amazing Love!

But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

During the past week I received one letter which especially arrested my attention. It was unsigned, and I want to read it to you. It is very brief, very pointed, and seems to me to breathe the spirit of restless and disappointed rebellion. The writer says:

The writer begs leave to call to the Rev. Campbell Morgan's remembrance a statement he made last Sunday evening, viz., "My Friend has proved His love to me so as to bring conviction to my heart." Then why does He not convince every person of His love? Why is He not just to all?"

The text I have read tonight is my answer to that question, and I was very careful last Sunday night to state that fact. In speaking of my Friend I said two things concerning His love. First, He has declared His love to my surprise, and then I made use of these actual words:

He has demonstrated His love so as to bring conviction to my heart. Whether I have responded or not is not the question for the moment. I simply state the fact. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Thus it will be seen that when I said that my Friend had brought conviction of His love to my heart I made the statement upon the basis of the text which I take tonight. I do not think the thinking of that letter is lonely, even though the writing of it is singular. I can well imagine that many people would go away last Sunday evening saying in their hearts practically the same things. "The Preacher declared that God had demonstrated His love to the conviction of his heart; but He has not done so in my experience, and if not, why not?" To that attitude of mind I want to say that the proof given to me of the love of God has been given to all. I did not mean to say that in some flaming vision of the night or apocalypse of the day God had done for me what He had not done for others. I suppose there are people even in this age who do see visions. I have never seen them. I suppose there are even today those who seem to hear, and perhaps do hear, voices which others do not hear. I am not one of such, and I should be very sorry for any man or woman to imagine that I intended to say that I had been privileged by God in any way that they had not. My Friend's proof of His love is given not to me alone, but to all men. No proof in mystic words spoken in loneliness to my own heart and no proof by some sudden and exceptional vision of glory could begin to be so conclusive to my reason as the great proof which belongs to all quite as much as it belongs to me. I venture to say—I know I speak within the realm of the finite, and limited and human, and yet I say it of profoundest conviction—God Himself could not have thought of any other way to prove His love so conclusive as the way He has taken. Will you let me, in all love and

tenderness, and yet with great earnestness, say to you, my friend who wrote to me, and to all such, that if God's love has not carried conviction to your heart, I think it is because you have not taken time to consider that great proof? You have heard of it, you have sung of it. You could recite the proof texts, my text and the text in John, and many other such. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." That is the proof. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is the proof. I have no other. Hear me, that is not idly spoken. I have no other. I do not find the proof of God's personal love to me in nature. There are proofs in nature when once I have found His heart of grace. Then every flower seems to me to sing of His love, and all the rhythmic order of the universe becomes one great anthem of His tenderness. I never heard the song of the flowers or the anthem of the universe until this proof had brought me low and convinced me of His love. I have no proof but this, and yet I say to you again, speaking experimentally, my Friend has proved His love to the satisfaction of my heart in such full and perfect measure that I have no alternative, so help me God, other than that of yielding myself to Him, spirit, soul, and body, lover to lover in an embrace that makes us one forever.

I cannot help thinking, if you will let me repeat it, that if this proof has not carried conviction, it is because you have not taken time to think of it and consider it. You may believe it theoretically. You may never have quarreled with the simple statement, with the perpetual, almost monotonous, message of the evangel; but have you ever considered the proof of God's love? To ask such a question as this, and to make such a suggestion as this, is, of course, at least to carry to your minds the thought that I am going to try to lead you in the way of consideration. So I am, and yet I feel I never had a harder task or a more impossible. What can be said when the Scripture has spoken? There is nothing to be added to the text. There is great danger of detracting from its infinite music by any attempt to analyze it and break it up. Oh that we may hear it sung into our deepest heart tonight by that infinite spirit of music, the Spirit of God. "God commendeth"—recommendeth, demonstrates, proves—"His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I cannot add to that. There is nothing more to be said. It is the speech of infinite and eternal love. When I read it I am inclined to bow my head and say, "The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." Yet I must deliver my message, tremblingly and falteringly, and honestly wishing I need not say any more.

Notice first the persons involved in the declaration—God and the sinner. The spaciousness of the text is its difficulty. The infinite distances appall us when we begin to attempt to traverse them. We sometimes speak as though the supreme thought of distance were expressed in the words, "at the poles asunder." The poles asunder! That is but a handbreadth, but a span! God and the sinner. That is the supreme distance.

Notice, in the next place, the fact declared. Four words declare it. Four words that any little child who has been to school for one year could spell out—four words in our language all so tiny that a child can lisp them. Yet heaven is richer for their utterance, and all the thunder of the music of the seraphim is as nothing to that contained in them. All the mystery of human pain through piled up centuries is only palest gray by the side of the deep, dense darkness of this announcement, "Christ died for us." Finally, notice the truth declared in the text: "God commendeth His own love toward us." I cannot, I do not, believe that if you will quietly try this evening to traverse that threefold line of consideration you can write to me again and say, "God has not demonstrated His love to me."

Notice first the persons involved. How shall I speak reverently and yet with boldness of God? It seems to me that the great Apostle of love, John, the mystic, the seer, the man of vision, has given us in the briefest sentences the sublimest truths concerning God. I am not going to attempt to deal with these sentences, and yet I want to quote them. John tells us the story of the essence of deity in this brief word, "God is love." That is the subject in question tonight. John tells us the nature of God as well as His essence in words equally short and simple, "God is life." And once again John tells us the character of God in another sentence as simple, "God is light." How dare I drape such declarations with the verbiage of explanation? It seems to me as though the Spirit through the chosen apostle of love took up the simplest words of human speech and lifted them above all rhetoric and eloquence and explanation and exposition, and focused in them all the light and splendor and glory concerning God which it is possible for man to stand in the presence of and live. God is life, essential life, and in the word is included all the facts of power which we try to express in other ways: all the facts of wisdom which so often appall us when we have tracked its footsteps through immensity, and that overwhelming fact of His sovereignty which we are so slow to learn and acknowledge. God is life. Not that He has it, or has been it, or even lives it, but He is life. This I am not considering now, for it does not seem to me that we shall catch the marvel of my text if we simply consider the fact of the life of God as it is manifest in all power and wisdom and supremacy. To be told that a Being of infinite power loves is not astonishing, even though His love be set upon a finite thing. To be told that a Being of infinite intelligence loves does not appall me, even though His love be set upon some foolish creature of His own hand. To be told that a sovereign, supreme Being loves is not amazing, even though His love be set upon those who are subject to His throne. Therefore I pass from the sentence that speaks of the essence, "God is love," and the sentence that speaks of the nature, "God is life," to the final sentence which speaks of character, "God is light." The moment I have uttered it or read it, the moment the thought it suggests passes before me, I begin to be astonished at the declaration that He loves me.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." How shall I speak of that light and what it really means? It is best of all to catch the words of Holy Scripture and let them suggest, at least to my heart, something of the infinite and awful purity of God. He is holy and righteous. He is true and faithful. Holy—right in character. Righteous—right in conduct. True—the essential fact concerning Himself. Faithful—His loyalty, in all His dealings with created things to the uttermost bound of His universe, to that essential fact of truth in His own being. The God of the universe, infinite in power, infinite in wisdom, is, above all else, infinite in holiness. If the statement of the truth does not appall us it is because our sensibility to holiness is blunted by our own sin. If these words can easily pass our lips and we never tremble, the lack of trembling is evidence of paralysis in all the higher sensibilities of the spiritual nature. If only we knew what holiness meant, if we could understand what righteousness essentially means, if only we understood the real meaning of "truth in the inward parts," of faithfulness in the least detail of the activity of power, we should be appalled by the thought of the essential holiness of God. God, infinite in holiness. Let the broken and incomplete sentence suffice.

Then I pass to the end of my text and find this word "sinners." What are sinners? Those who in character are the exact opposite of God, though they are kin to Him by nature. Here is the marvel. By nature man is kin of God. Do not be afraid of the great word which the Apostle quoted on Mars Hill. By first creation man is "offspring of God," kin to God, related to God. As in His nature there is

essential power, in my life there is power. As in His nature there is wisdom, in my life there are knowledge and wisdom. As in His nature there are supremacy and government, so in every human being there is the capacity for government, for man is the crown of creation, the king of the cosmos, made for co-operation with God in government and dominion over all the far-reaching life that stretches—a lost territory—beneath his feet.

Such is man in his nature. But what of his character? Though he is kin to God in nature, all his character is unlike God. Unholy instead of holy. Unrighteous instead of righteous. Untrue instead of true. Unfaithful instead of faithful. Contrary to God in choices and conduct. I am not going to discuss the theory of the "how," I am simply stating the fact of human life. Even though in these days some of us may be inclined to quarrel with the phraseology of sacred Scripture and the terminology of the older school of theology, the fact remains, men "go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

There is no man here who will test his past character and conduct—I will not say by the white light of God's existence, but by his own ideal of truth and uprightness and purity—and dare stand erect and say, "I have never sinned." There is no man in this house who dare say that, whatever his religion, or lack of religion. Men everywhere are ready to admit the fact of sin. We have been told quite recently that in these days men do not want to hear about sin, that men are putting sin out of their vocabulary as a word, and are attempting to put it out of their thinking as a fact; but they cannot put it out of your experience. Drop it out of your vocabulary if you will be so foolish. Cease taking account of it in your arrangements if you will be so mad. It will be the madness of the ostrich that hides its head in the sand of the desert and dreams it is unseen because it cannot see.

Now mark what this means as to contrast. By the highest standards of human experience the sinner ought to be objectionable and loathsome to God. Purity—and we are down on the low level of human thinking—does and ought to hate impurity. The man of high ideals must hold in supreme contempt the man of base and ignoble ideals. To me it is first of all inconceivable that infinite purity can care for me because I am impure. Apart from the cross of Christ you will never persuade me that God loves me. I am not blaming God for not loving me. I would not suggest that He ought to love me. I would not lend my lips to the blasphemy of saying that He ought to love me because He made me. He made me kin to Himself with environment in His own being and the inheritance of His own might, stronger than any other environment and inheritance I have entered into. Still, I am impure. I have been selfish, and sinful, and am undone in the fiber of my moral being, and it is inconceivable to me that the pure can love the impure. I cannot, save as His love enters into my life and enables me. The measure of my purity—it is faint, God knows—but the measure of it is the measure in which impurity is hateful. Here are the supreme mystery and the supreme miracle, not only of the evangel as it is declared, but of the experience of all such as share its mystery and become themselves like God in that they, too, love those who are unlike Him and unlike themselves. Mark the persons involved: God, infinite in holiness and purity and uprightness, and sinners such as are kin to Him in nature and utterly unlike Him and opposed to Him in character.

Now come to the fact declared in this text, the central fact of all your Bible. The fact, the first dreams of which you find in Eden, and the last glory of which flames in the Apocalypse. "Christ died for us." "Christ died." How am I going to speak of that? Do not be angry when I say that some of you are almost weary of hearing this. You are almost inclined to say, "Is this all? We know all

this." We do not begin to know it. There is nothing else to say when this is said. Therefore, God help us to be careful how we say it, and how we hear it. The matter of first importance is that we are very careful what we mean when we say "Christ." It is of equal importance that we are very careful what we mean when we say, "died." If I take this simplest phrase in holy Scripture "Christ died," and utter the word "Christ," I think simply of a peasant of Galilee, and when I utter the word "died" I think of such a death as I have seen when my own loved ones passed, but I have not heard the music, have not seen the wonder, have not begun to understand how God commends His love.

With great solemnity, and speaking under deep conviction, I warn you never to forget that when you speak of Jesus you also speak of God. God was in Christ, not as He is in me even by His grace, but in that fuller and infinite sense which the Apostle expresses in the grandeur of that word in the Colossian Epistle. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell corporeally." Oh, I cannot understand it. No philosophy man ever invented can contain it. If you rob the word "Christ" of that significance your Gospel will fall to pieces. Remember that this is God in Christ. The Man of Nazareth, very man, perfect man, man as I am man, was God's revelation to me of Himself. The Son of God was incarnate in the Man of Nazareth, and the Son of God is today still related to that selfsame Man of Nazareth in the place where men gather in the home of God; but you have something larger here than the mere Man of Nazareth, you have Christ, and the name is the mystic symbol of Godhead bent in humility to redemption's work. Christ, the Son of God Who is of the essence of God, Who was with God in the measureless deeps and infinitudes of bygone eternity, Who was God, and Who, in a mystery profounder than the mystery of the rolling ages, became flesh and dwelt amongst men. "Christ"—do not put any small human measurement upon this word, or you will rob the evangel of its music. You may well sit down and tell me that God has not proved His love to you if you think little of Christ. It is little thinking of Christ that has degraded our conception of the meaning of His death. "Christ died," and if you stand in front of the Roman gibbet and watch the ebbing of the life of the man until presently you say, "He is dead," and if you imagine that is all that is meant, your eyes are very blind. You have seen very little. He Himself said that the physical is not death. He did not ever speak of such as death, but always as falling asleep. In His thinking and teaching, and in the Apostolic thinking and teaching which immediately succeeded it, death was something profounder than physical dissolution. What is death? Death is that in which a man may be, while yet alive, in the physical realm. A man can be dead in trespasses and sins. Death is that condition in which a woman may be while in the height of the London season. "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." Death is not dissolution of the body. It is severance of the spirit from God, the sense of homelessness, the sense of friendlessness, the one all-inclusive agony of loss, of lack and failure. Christ—and do not forget the meaning of the word—died. Listen, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The sense of homelessness, loss, the infinite agony of loneliness. But you say to me, "You told us a moment ago that this was God." Yes, I repeat it. Then you say, "What can He mean when He says, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'" How can God say that to God?" Here are the mystery and the marvel of the unveiling of infinite love as you will find it nowhere else. I pray you do not imagine that this Person on the Cross is other than God. After hearing that human speech in which the Infinite and Eternal sobs itself out in the little language of a fallen race, what do I find? I find that God has lost Himself to find man. I find that God has gathered into His own consciousness the whole unutterable issue of sin. Christ died. He did not

cease to be. God in Christ, Who had blessed men with a touch, and had wooed men with winsomeness, now dies as He finds the place of loneliness, of homelessness, of infinite lack. Yea, verily the old prophetic word is fulfilled there in the sight of heaven and earth and hell in the experience of God, "The pains of hell gat hold on me." "Christ died." And yet you say that God has not proved His love to you.

Now mark the infinite reaches of this Gospel—God and the sinner. We see the infinite gulf, and we state, according to the very highest and best conception we have of things, that God ought to count the sinner loathsome. What is the truth? When there was no eye to pity, His eye pitied. When there was no arm to save, His arm brought salvation. What is the truth? Hear it, man, woman, doubting of God's love. The God of infinite purity bent in the mystery of incarnation, and in the cross, to the condition of the impure. He gathered into His own experience and consciousness all the immeasurable and unutterable issues of sin. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Oh, for such love let rocks and hills their lasting silence break!"

"God commendeth His love." Can you explain to me in any other way than by the answer that love was the inspiration, the mystery of that descent and that great death? I say to you tonight that to me there is no other explanation of that death. "Scarcely for righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man someone would even dare to die." Such is the prologue of my text, and mark the emphasis, "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "His own love"—there is no other like it. Here is the quality found nowhere else—"His own love." You cannot commend anyone else's love in this way. I ask you again, Does that truth prove anything other than love? You tell me that that truth is proof of God's righteousness. I tell you, No. You tell me that truth is proof of God's wisdom. I say, No, not supremely. You tell me that truth is proof of God's power. Not finally. Yet God's righteousness is vindicated in it, wisdom is manifested, power is operative. You tell me that the Atonement was necessary because of righteousness. And I say, No, God's righteousness might have been vindicated by the annihilation of evil. All the infinite righteousness of God might have been perfectly satisfied if He had swept out the things that insulted His righteousness. But listen, "How can I let thee go?" That is the language, not of righteousness, but of love. "He commendeth His own love." The Apostle understood the deep truth. Though this is the great Apostle of righteousness he does not say, "He commendeth His righteousness," but "He commendeth His own love toward us." I stand in the presence of my text, and in the presence of that eternal wonder, and I say my Friend has demonstrated His love to the satisfaction of my heart, and I know now that He loves me.

Surprised? Oh, my God, how growingly surprised I am. Amazing love! Why did He love me? I really do not know; but He did, and He does. Why should He care for me? I have been so selfish, so impure in my thinking and desire. Why I cannot tell; but this I know, He loves me. You may persuade me on many things, and you may dissuade me from some convictions; but I challenge you to dissuade me here. My Friend loves me. I am in His heart as well as in His power. I am in His love as well as in His light. You ask me how I know it, and I take you, not to the infinite spaces where stars march in rhythmic order, not to the hedgerow where God smiles in flowers; but to the rough and brutal cross of Calvary, to the hour of the dying of the Christ. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." My brethren, such love

is royal, and royal love makes claims upon loyalty. What shall I do in answer to that love? We have often sung together:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small;

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Have we not sung that wrong in two ways? Have we not sung it first as though we would say, I cannot give Him so great a thing as the realm of nature, I can give only myself to Him? That is wrong. It is wrong in His thinking if it is not in yours. He counts you, bruised and broken, sinful, dying man, He counts you more than the whole realm of nature. When one day He held the infinite balances in His hand, He said, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" That is His estimate. God so loves you that He would not feel Himself enriched if he could save the whole realm of nature and lose you. How do I know that? Because He gave something infinitely more than the whole realm of nature, He gave Himself in His Son for you. If you want to know your value by the measurements of love, God measure you by Himself. When next you sing that verse, do not sing it as though you had nothing to give—if you have yourself to give. If you have yourself to give, give yourself. That is all He wants. Have we not sung that verse wrongly in the next place by singing, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all," without the answering abandonment? My brother, my sister, answer that love tonight, not only by singing of its demands, but by giving all you are to it. Give yourself, with all your wounds and bruises, with all your weakness and frailty. Answer that love, and that love will remake you until at last you shall be meet for the dwelling of the saints in light. May God in His infinite grace speak this word to us as no human voice can speak it.

Romans 6:23. The Wages Of Sin--The Gift Of God.

Romans 6:23.

The Wages Of Sin--The Gift Of God.

For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23

In the previous chapter we considered the tremendous declaration of Paul that where sin abounds, grace does more exceedingly abound. Continuing in this chapter, we lay emphasis upon the individual and particular responsibility of that truth and upon the responsibility which it involves. There can be no statement more clear in this regard than that of the text. In these words we have the revelation of the alternative which is offered to every soul who has heard the gospel of the grace which abounds more exceedingly than all the multiplying of sin. To many men, that alternative has never been presented. There are those who sit in darkness and under the shadow of death in lands to which the gospel has never come. They are not in view when we speak of the alternatives of this text. There are multitudes of people in London who are not in view, for we make a great mistake if we imagine that London is evangelized. There are people in the west and in the east who know nothing of the gospel. The alternative of the text is that which is offered to a soul who has heard the gospel, who knows its terms, who is familiar with its message. Such a soul will either yield to sin, serve it, and earn its wages; or it will yield to God, receive His gift, and live. No soul can escape from sin. Sin is inherited. One of the first emphases of the gospel is the emphasis it lays upon the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and where this Lordship is truly understood, it becomes the revelation of sin in the life of the soul. A man may stand, by reason of his early education and training, under Mount Sinai without trembling. No man can come consciously into the presence of Jesus Christ without finding his own guilt and his own unworthiness.

But if this soul who knows the gospel cannot escape from sin, it is equally true that it cannot escape from the gift which is placed at its disposal in the gospel. The gospel is the announcement of the fact that God has placed at the disposal of every soul the gift of eternal life. A man can ultimately escape from either sin or grace, but not from both. He can escape from sin by yielding to grace, or he can put himself outside the operation of grace by yielding to sin.

This presentation of an alternative is according to the perpetual method of God. In this text there are two statements: first, "... the wages of sin is death"; second, "... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." If I found these two statements entirely separated in my Bible, they would both remain true; but the fact that they are together is in itself more than a suggestion of the love of God. It is in harmony with His perpetual method. In nature every poison has its antidote. When we turn from nature to the literature of revelation, the whole message is concerned with the one poison and the one antidote. It is the literature which reveals the poison; it is the literature that declares the antidote. The Bible is not a Book that gives us any light upon the universe in detail. It tells us enough to compel us forevermore to set the universe to its uttermost bound in relation with

the God from Whom it proceeds. The Bible has to do with a world where sin is, and if we want to know what is the nature of the poison that blasts life, we must turn to this literature. Outside it, we shall find the fact of sin recognized and called by all kinds of high-sounding names, but here it is stripped to the nakedness of its actuality.

But grace is here also; the antidote is discovered from first to last. The Divine compassion is its supreme message; the Spirit of God brooding over the chaos; the wealth of the love of the Eternal, demanding: "... Adam,... where art thou?" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?..." God is the God Who makes a way by which His banished ones may return; He is the God Who so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.

In our consideration of this very old and familiar text, let us first observe the contrast in the alternatives; second, ponder the two courses described; and all that, in order that as God shall help us we may in this very hour face the crisis created.

First, then, as to the contrast. The very reading of the text suggests it, and a closer consideration of it shows how perfect it is. In the first part of the text we have three terms: wages, sin, death. In the second part we have three terms: a gift, God, eternal life. They stand over against each other in each case. Wages—a gift; Sin—God; death—eternal life.

What are wages? Wages are earnings. A man has a right to wages. Wages are the equivalent of work, or at least they ought to be. When a man takes his wages by common courtesy he will say, "Thank you." He really need not do so. He has nothing to thank any one for when he gets his wages. He has earned them. They are the answer in equity and justice to what he has already given in toil and in effort. Wages lie within the realm of law, or order, of accuracy, of justice.

What is a gift? The revisers have accurately translated the one Greek word by two words, for it is a word that emphasizes the freedom of the gift. What then is a free gift? Something that cannot be earned. That which no man can claim as his right. That which cannot be bought. A free gift must be received of grace, of favor, of love. A free gift is in the realm of grace.

Let us take the next stage of contrast: sin and God. In our text the term sin is in some senses qualified by the term wages. Its appeal is made personal and direct by that word. Sin is considered here as an individual act. It is the act of a free agent. It is not merely the missing of the mark; it is wilful missing of the mark. It is not merely failure; it is the choosing of failure. If wages be the payment for work, sin is the work that earns the payment. Here sin is considered as definite volitional choosing of the wrong with all which that involves of guilt and of paralysis.

Now what term is set over against sin? The term God. That is a very arresting fact. Even in the inspired writings in which the words were chosen under the direction of the Spirit of God we always find that when they are dealing with the things of God and Christ, language breaks down. Grace is bigger than literature; grace is mightier than language! In order to make this contrast complete, the lower level of perfect rhetoric and balance and proportion must be violated. It was easy to set the free gift over against the wages, but when we come to sin, the course of action demanding wages, what can be put over against it? No course of action is equal to dealing with sin. Then God is immediately placed in contrast with sin.

Another series of contrasts could be imagined. Let us consider them. It would be possible to say, and it would be a perfectly true thing to say: the wages of sin is death, but the wages of holiness is life. That is a perfectly balanced contrast in its entirety. But therein is no reference to a gift; the first set of terms do not constitute a contrast, but a similarity. The contrast in that statement is between sin and holiness and between death and life. That, however, is not the text. If we go back to primitive man in the garden, we may say that the alternative before him may thus have been stated: the wages of sin is death, but the wages of holiness is life. That is the alternative before a sinless being. It was so in the case of God's second Man, the last Adam, Jesus. In His case the wages of sin would have been death and the wages of holiness life. The text was not written for the sinless; it was written for sinning men. In their case we can understand the declaration, "... the wages of sin is death,..." But what alternative is offered to sinning men? The answer of grace is: "... the... gift of God is eternal life...." God puts Himself over against sin. In a man's new endeavor He does not say: the wages of sin is death, and the outcome of reformation shall be life. He does not say: the wages of sin is death, and the outcome of religious observance shall be life. These things are of no use. The man who is in the thought of God is a man who is incapable of reformation and whose religious observances would in themselves be sinful. Therefore, God put Himself over against sin. Sin—God. We are only looking at the terms, but mark the arresting grandeur of the contrast.

So we come to the last contrast in the text: death and eternal life. What is death? It is the end of sin, the righteous end. It is that which makes sin musical. It maintains the harmony of the universe. If in the universe of God, the breaking of a law could be permitted without check or hindrance, then all music would cease, the beauty missed, and the last victory never be won! Death is the necessary end of sin, the only answer to it, the only final harvest that men can reap who sow in sin. Death is that which every man chooses in the moment when he yields himself to sin. By that yielding, he chooses death, disintegration, corruption, ruin. To break law is to create anarchy; to create anarchy is to make hell necessary.

Over against death, our text places eternal life. Death is an end; life is a beginning. But life is more than a beginning; it is the energy for the development of that which is begun; it is the potentiality for the full realization of everything which is begun. The final contrast does not refer to the end only, but to the beginning also; not to the beginning only, but also to the end; not to the beginning and the end alone, but to the whole process of development.

Let us consider the two courses of life presented by this alternative. Here we must take them in the other order. First, we must consider the second part of the text:... the free gift of God is eternal life.... In our understanding of that, we shall find a new definition of sin which qualifies the first part of the text giving it a new meaning in view of God and His free gift. Sin, when the gospel is known no longer, consists of certain actions; it consists in the attitude of soul which results in these actions. No man who has heard this gospel will ever perish for the sins he has committed. If he perish, it will be because he has refused God's gift, the reception of which would have made him master over the sins that he has committed. Therefore, we must begin with the second part of our text.

Here, then, the first word to be considered is God. God is concerned of as One perfectly knowing the soul; as One Who is unutterably holy so that He cannot overlook sin or clear the guilty while

the guilt remains; as One Who is unchangeably loving so that His love alters not when it alteration finds.

This God offers a free gift to the sinning man. That is to say, He offers a gift of His own will, a gift which is the result of His own operation, of His own passion. Moreover, He offers this gift as a free gift without any condition as to character in the person who is to receive it, without any pledge on the part of that person as to the future. God bestows His gift freely upon all such as will receive it. God does not ask that men bring a certificate of character with them. Neither does He ask us to make a pledge and a promise that we will always be good. He asks no such pledge; He asks no such promise. That is the grace of God. I speak in soberness of truth and under emotion when I say I would to God I knew just how to say "grace" as it ought to be said! Out of the very grace of His heart which in operation has involved His own unutterable pain and sorrow, God offers a free gift, and He offers it to a man without any promise whatsoever as to that man's character and without any pledge as to the future.

What, then, is this gift? It is the gift of life, age-abiding life. Our word "eternal," great and wonderful as it is, connotes in our thinking one element only, the element of quantity. The Greek word so translated has in it more than the element of quantity, though that is included; it rather suggests a quality which ensures the quantity. Literally, it is age-abiding life. Our imagination is helped by the writings of our New Testament. We may climb the heights, and watch the ages as they come and go. Glancing back over the few brief ages of the history of this world—for how few and brief they are in comparison with all the ages—we see the age of fellowship with God, the age of conscience, the age of law, and the age of grace that has lasted now for nearly 2000 years. Looking on, we see the age of the reign of Jesus with His saints for a thousand years, and the more wonderful age beyond the millennium, the age of the Kingdom of the Son and the City of God. There the Bible ends its revelation because there is not room to tell all the story. Paul climbed to a great height one day, and he tried to say something and broke down in magnificent poetry in the attempt as he wrote of "The generation of the age of the ages." In the light of that suggestion we see them coming, age after age, out of the fathomless Being of God, profound in mystery, glorious in strength, new ages of which we can but dream in the highest moments of our spiritual illumination. Age-abiding life is life that includes them all, persists through all, harmonizes with all. That is the gift which God gives a man without asking him for a certificate of character or any pledge for tomorrow.

This gift is that of life won out of death, and therefore in its reception the soul is pardoned and cleansed. It is life in union with the risen Lord and ascended Lord, and therefore it is the life of power equal to all the demands that can be made upon it in this and every succeeding age. It is life in fellowship with God; ultimately, therefore, it must prove itself to be a life of complete realization; the perfection of the individual instrument in spirit, mind and body, and the accomplishment of the purposes of God, not merely in the instrument, but through the instrument.

This, then, is one course open to every man and woman who knows the gospel. It begins with God. The soul comes to Him, yields to Him, puts itself in relationship with Him, blunderingly, tremblingly, it may be; not necessarily understanding the doctrines of faith, for no man was ever saved by understanding the doctrines of the faith; not necessarily at the moment accepting all evangelical theology, for that is too vast for immediate understanding, but by yielding to God as He

has manifested Himself in Christ. There we begin. When we do so, we receive a free gift in which there are qualities of cleansing, of peace, and of pardon; and as we answer its call and its demands and its guidance through the running days and the multiplying years we are brought by it into the realization of the eternal purpose of God. That is one course open to every soul who knows the gospel.

What is the other? Here we begin at the point where the soul begins. The beginning is sin. Sin is rejection of the gift. I halt to remind you of the careful emphasis which I laid at the beginning on the fact that we are dealing only with those who know the gospel. To such, sin is rejection of God's gift. That is what our Lord meant when in His Paschal discourse He said to His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came He would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. Concerning conviction of sin, He said: "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." For the man who has heard the gospel, that is the whole heart of sin, it is the whole reach of it. Included in it are the desires that inspire the rejection. Why do men reject the Lord Christ? Because there are certain desires clamant in their lives which they wish to satisfy and which they know they could not if they yielded to Him. The things thus done in answer to desire are done at last under compulsion. Men cannot cease if they would. All this multiplying of sin grows out of the central sin of the rejection of Christ. Let us state this from the positive side. If this gospel means anything, it means that if a man will yield to God, there is power in the gift of life which He bestows sufficient to break the power of canceled sin. Consequently, sin is the rejection of the remedy.

Where this sin is committed wages follow as the necessary results of the things we decided to do; the harvest that must come from our own sowing; that which is righteously due to us by reason of our choice; that which must come to us as the result of the false effort we are putting into life.

The wages are described by the one word, death. The only wages that sin ever pays are the wages of death. They are paid immediately and continuously. Do not confuse, I pray you, appearances with facts. Someone may say, "Sin pays more than that. Sin pays some men wonderfully!" Sin does pay some men wonderfully to all appearances, but the gains of sin are the destruction of the sinner, always, and that not ultimately merely, but immediately.

The man who imagines that riches gained in the nefarious practice, the blighting traffic by which he is damning others that he himself may get rich, constitute the wages of sin, is blind. He himself is dying and never more so than when he is counting his gains and imagining that they are the wages of sin. The wages of sin is death spiritually; this first. Eyes that cannot see God, ears that cannot hear His voice, the heart that is insensate to His nearness, the life that is untouched by the movements of His grace; this is to be dead in trespasses and sins, and this eventually will mean death, bodily and mentally as well as spiritually; and at last it will mean eternal death, age-abiding separation from God, the second death. The second death is the ending of the possibility of dying, and that is the ultimate in sin.

So we come face to face with the crisis. These two ways of life are before every one of us now. God is close at hand; nearer is He than breathing, closer than hands or feet;

Circling us with hosts of fire.

Hell is nigh, but God is nigher.

Sin is also with us, it is close to us, but God is nearer than sin. Sin is here in the sanctuary. Satan cannot be excluded from the sanctuary. He yet has access to the heavenly places. There will come the day when he shall be cast out finally, but that day is not yet. Sin is here. Sin is bargaining with souls, and souls are bargaining with sin even now, wondering whether or not they shall yield to God or sin.

These are the only alternatives open to every human being who knows the gospel. There is no middle way. Moreover, there is no hindrance either way except the hindrance created by the opposite. I can choose sin if I will. Grace will appeal to me, woo me, warn me, but it will not compel me nor can it. I can sin if I will and take the wages if I will and die if I will. Grace is here. I can yield to grace if I will. Sin will lure me and seek to blind me and traduce the God Who is near, but sin can have no power over me if I will yield to God. Sin cannot compel me. I can yield to God now and receive His gift now and begin to live now. And that, in spite of all the past. I do not want to know the past. I would not have you tell me the past. There is only One ear that ought to hear the confession of sin, and that is the ear of God. Perhaps someone is saying: "The past is indeed with me; the sin of it, the shame of it, the smirch of it, the contamination of it, the horror of it, and the paralysis of it, and my trouble is emphasized by the fact that I once yielded to Christ and walked in power, but I have turned my back upon Him." Even if that be so, God desires to blot it out like a thick cloud and banish that past. He offers His gift without any reference to the past.

But something else must be said. There is no guarantee that this offer will continue. Therefore, the question is immediate; which way of life shall we take? The debate goes on in the human soul more subtly, more powerfully, more rapidly than any words of the preacher can describe. If this congregation could be seen from the higher heights, as the angels I think see it, what a battleground would be seen as to which way souls shall go.

The preacher's work is done. He must now stand aside, for there can be no final interference between the human soul and its own choice and its own destiny. Where God declines to interfere, who is man that he should endeavor so to do? Sometimes the preacher closes the Sunday night's service and goes away into quietness. He thinks of his congregation again; the congregation reverent, kind in their attention; then dispersing, passing along the streets in all directions, going into houses and closing doors. Such different places, so many different circumstances, such different consciousnesses, and yet, that whole congregation so scattered has been united by the service, all having taken action in the central dignity of their own humanity, all having made a choice, all having made a decision. If they are united thus, they are also divided into two companies: those who have accepted the gift and live; those who have sinned and are dying while they live. How shall we go? May God help us in the hour of our decision.

Romans 8:2. The Spirit Of Life.

Romans 8:2.

The Spirit Of Life.

The Spirit is described in the New Testament as "the Spirit of truth," "the Spirit of promise," "the Spirit of grace," "the Spirit of glory." "The Spirit of life" is a suggestive and comprehensive phrase, indicating the relation of the Spirit of God to all life. Two words are here placed together, both of which refer to life. The word "Spirit" suggests life at its very highest. Here, as always, where the reference is to God, the word indicates the originating cause. The word "life" marks rather a manifestation or a form of the essential than the origination and power thereof. This word translated "life" is a very interesting one. The Greek language is richer than ours in this particular, that it has more words than one to describe life. Where we use our word "life" to include many conceptions, there are at least two words in Greek literature, words that we have become familiar with by their adaptation into our language in scientific usage—the words *bios* and *zoe*, from which we have derived our words *biology* and *zoology*. These two Greek words indicate two thoughts about life, but in Greek classical literature they are other than the thoughts that they indicate in the New Testament. The order of suggestiveness is reversed in the New Testament, and this is an arresting peculiarity which demands attention. The Greek use of the word *zoe* indicated the purely natural—I may almost say the animal—side of life. The other word, *bios*, had in it something of an ethical value and a spiritual conception. In all Greek literature you find this contrast is maintained.

But when I take up the New Testament, uniformly I find the order is reversed, and when life is referred to by Jesus, by New Testament writers, the higher word in Greek thinking and Greek writing is relegated to lower uses and the lower word is elevated to higher uses.

Such a fact arrests attention, and a man is immediately driven to ask why this peculiar change—not a studied change, not a change of language adopted after some council had met and decided to adopt it. Then we might have questioned it. We are always open to question anything councils do. It was a change that came into the thinking of all Christian men so quietly, and yet so powerfully, that when you gather up the arguments of the Christian writings and put them into one, you find the strange uniformity. Jesus Himself, so far as the records reveal His teaching, adopted this change, and all the writers conformed to it. A new thought of life lies at the back of this change of word, a new conception of life is its originating cause. These New Testament writers saw life as the Greeks saw it, and yet quite differently. They saw the same things, the same men, the same women, the same animals, the same flowers, the same landscapes, the same seas, the same everything; and yet, without collusion, without decision of Pope, or Council, or Presbytery, or even Congregational Union—I suppose that was the only ecclesiastical court in existence then—without any of these things, I find these men made a change in terminology.

I believe the explanation will be found in the fact that the Christian man recognizes the original sanctity and holiness of every form of life. He has discovered that behind the "natural" of

theology—even Paul's theology—is the "natural" of Divine intention, and the "natural" of Divine intention is holy, and is directly due, always and everywhere, in every realm of life, to the activity of the Spirit of God. Without resolution, without decision of Council, the early Christian consciousness made its protest against the idea that life in any form is essentially evil. The early Christian consciousness is perfectly plain in declaring that life has become evil, that man has fallen into willful and rebellious wrongdoing; and it is in this very epistle that you have the most glaring and terrible revelation in literature of what the heart of man is by the choice of his sin. Thus Christianity, powerfully and pervasively, has taken hold of a word in current Greek literature, which always had upon it the taint of sin, and changed its meaning because Christian thought has been remade by the advent and presence of Jesus Christ.

But now, concerning the conception that this presents to our view as Christians, the relation of the Spirit of God to all life is too often forgotten by Christian people. Let me make this broad and inclusive proposition. All life is due to the direct action of the Spirit of God. The Bible never loses sight of that fact. As we take up this ancient literature of the Hebrew people and study it, we find a recognition of the relation of God and the Spirit of God to all life. That is the meaning of the first chapters in Genesis. "In the beginning God created." "Darkness was upon the face of the waters," but "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The original creation has behind it a spiritual explanation. Travel back as far as you will through aeons you cannot measure, and Genesis still sings the anthem of the beginning, "in the beginning God created"; and when there was to be a remaking of a disorganized and chaotic world, again "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." If you study this ancient literature you will find perpetually that the Hebrew heard the wheels of God in the thunder of the storm, and saw the flash of His chariot when the lightning illuminated the heavens. He saw at the back of all life the presence of the Spirit of God. The whole truth has been beautifully expressed by one of our more modern writers:

One Spirit—His

Who wore the plaited thorn with bleeding brows—

Rules universal Nature! Not a flower

But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain

Of His unrivalled pencil. He inspires

Their balmy odors, and imparts their hues,

And bathes their eyes with nectar; and includes

In grains as countless as the seaside sands,

The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.

You say that is poetry? That is scientific fact to the Christian soul, and science is always poetic if you know it. Think of that conception; what is it? That all the fragrance of the flower is the result of the breathing of the Spirit of God, and every touch of delicate beauty upon its petal is the direct, immediate, actual, absolute workmanship of the Spirit.

That outlook is wide, and radiant, and spacious. Let us confine our attention to the thought suggested in this spacious outlook as it affects man. We suffer today from too constant contemplation of man as he is, and a consequent failure to understand man as God intended he should be. We have been gazing so long and so intently at ruin that we have forgotten the fair lines of the Divine ideal and the plan toward which God is moving and working in all such as are submitted to His Spirit.

In my Bible I have two glimpses of this in human life. The first is spoiled ere I can see it in perfection. The second grows with increasing glory the longer I gaze upon it. I have the "first Adam" and the "last Adam." When I look at the "first" I see the picture of what the Spirit of God means in human life.

You will remember verse 7 in Genesis 2, which runs thus: "Jehovah... breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives," that suggestive Hebrew plural which is used poetically to indicate the fact of spaciousness and breadth which cannot be expressed in the singular number—"the breath of lives; and man became a living soul." Man is made in the image of God and given dominion over the creation of God. There are no details. The broad poetic facts are stated in that chapter. I turn to chapter 2, and I do not find a contradiction, but an explanatory account of a certain fact and phase of human life which had not been dealt with fully in the first chapter. Here there is revealed to us the nature of man. Man is dust and Deity; of the dust, God in-breathed; linked to the material, offspring of the Spirit, of the earth, of the heavens. It is all poetry, but it is true poetry. Man becomes the conscious and capable ego, when by this mystery, baffling all explanation, the God of heaven by breath Divine makes man.

What is this man's consciousness? First, he is subject to the government of God. That is the first consciousness of personality, as Genesis reveals it. Secondly, he is conscious of the creation that he finds about him. He is able to name things, able to till the soil, able to touch the resources of nature and make them blossom more perfectly. He is a being capable of co-operation with God, and all this in the power of the Spirit.

But I turn from the story. It is disappointing, it is heartbreaking. Just as the glory of it is growing upon the imagination, the vision is clouded and spoiled, and we leave it, and, passing through the centuries, come into the presence of the "last Adam." The story of the human life of Jesus from beginning to its unending condition—for there is no end to it—is the story of this truth, that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of life. All the human life of Jesus, naturally—not supernaturally—was life in the Spirit. His very existence was by the Spirit. He was a Man of the Spirit by processes different from those by which man at first was man of the Spirit. But God may change his methods, and yet do the same thing in the underlying principles of His government in exactly the same way. Once again, the breath of God, and the dust of earth, and the "last Adam," come into human life. His was development in the power of the Spirit—physically, mentally, spiritually, not spiritually alone, but mentally and physically, developing, growing by this very spirit life which He lived.

In His ministry it becomes more patent. He was anointed for ministry by the Spirit of God. He went down into the wilderness to temptation, driven by the Spirit of God. He came out of the wilderness and went back again to ministry in the power of the Spirit of God. He wrought miracles, as the record declares, by this selfsame power of the Spirit. He came to the sublime mystery of His death, and we hear the word again, "through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without blemish

unto God." He came to the morning of resurrection, and by the power of that Spirit He took life again, and came back into human consciousness and being. He tarried for forty days among His disciples, and, as Luke, the accurate Greek, the cultured scholar, tells us, He instructed His disciples by the Holy Ghost long before the Spirit was poured upon them. I open the Gospel of John, and read: "In Him was life"—essential life—"and the life was the light of men." What is the life of Jesus? Spiritual life, not spiritual life as we too often use the phrase, as though it were something distinct from human life; but spiritual life in the simplest, and broadest, and profoundest sense of the truth that all life is life by the Spirit of God.

It is this conception which reveals how deadly and dastardly a thing sin is. If I had a life apart from the life of God and the Spirit of God, even then sin would be ungrateful. But when I find that the very life I live is by the Spirit of God, then how dastardly a thing it is to take this in-breathed life of God and use it for purposes that thwart Him, and hinder His Kingdom, and spread the poison all abroad amongst humanity, insulting His love, and hindering His purpose.

The life of Jesus is life in the Spirit from beginning to end, and when I read that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men," I understand the evangelist to mean that if I want to know what life really is, I must look at Him—physically, mentally, and spiritually—and see this truth, that all life is by the Spirit of God. Man's being, in all its complex wonders, is the creation of the Spirit of God, and the proper use of all the powers of the being is possible only in submission to the Spirit of life.

So that when we speak of regeneration, or of the filling of the Spirit, or of the anointing of the Spirit, or of spiritual life in the deepest and profoundest sense of the term, we are not asking men to enter a range or realm of life for which they were not made. We are calling them back to normality, to naturalness, to the fulfillment of the deepest and profoundest meaning of their own first creation. A man does not by his new birth become something other than himself. He becomes himself, as he never has been until by that new birth he finds himself. Not angels did Jesus Christ come to make; and if His terms are drastic and hard, if ere He can baptize a man with the Spirit of life the man must consent to death, it is in order that he may find by the same new life, not some foreign life, but his own life. If you differ from the exposition, hear the actual words: "He that loseth his life... shall find it," the very life he is willing to lose. The very life which I lose by submission to Him, the life which I deny in order that I may find Him as my Lord and King, is the life I find. The baptism of God's Holy Spirit, and the filling and the anointing of that Spirit mean, first, the correction of the thing that is wrong, the putting away of the sin, the breaking of the power of sin, the subjection of the rebellious territory to the power of the Lord. But they mean infinitely more. They mean the cultivation of the rebellious territory, they mean the restoration of the thing over which the weeds have spread themselves, and where the briars and the thorns are growing. Not merely that the desert life of man is handed over in order that it may be possessed by Him, but that the desert life, being possessed by Him, shall be made to blossom as the rose. Not that the dry and arid distances of the wilderness are simply to be given to Him, but that He will make run through them the rivers of God, which bring life wherever they come.

I do not want by any generalization to dissipate the impression on my own heart that I fain would transfer to yours. I mean that the Spirit of life brings a man into the realization of the highest and best of all the facts of his life. When this physical part of me is really handed over wholly to the indwelling King, because it is originally also of God, it finds itself, and lives at its highest and best.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of life also in the mental sphere. It is only in the illumination of the Spirit that you obtain the finest literature, or the most perfect poetry, or the most matchless art, or the sublimest music, or the most correct science. Even the men who turn their backs upon revealed religion, in the measure in which they have been successful in music, art, poetry, or science, have been so in the life the Spirit created. Never forget that in the far country all that the prodigal spent was his father's property. You may be wasting your life, my brother, but the life you are wasting is the life God made, and the life you are wasting is the life which the Spirit of God has created and conditioned.

The second birth is that by which a man enters into the meaning of his first birth. Jesus Christ brings me by the Holy Spirit of His outpouring into an understanding of my own life, into realization of my own life, because He puts my life back into harmony with God. Regeneration is the first fact in the process by which the Spirit of life operates through grace for the renewal and restoration of man to the Divine intention.

There may be some of us who are very near, and yet have never had the baptism of this Spirit of life. Paul came down to Ephesus, and he found men naming the name of Jesus, and I do not know what he saw, but it is evident that he saw something that made him ask a very strange question. He said to them: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" "Why," said they, "we have not so much as heard that there is any Spirit given." Then his question, "Into what, then, were ye baptized?" And do not forget their answer: "Into John's baptism." Do not misuse that text to preach a second blessing. There is no such authority in it. These men had never been baptized with Jesus' baptism. They were men who probably had heard Apollos preaching the baptism of repentance only. Paul said, "There is more than repentance. There must be faith, and if there is faith in Jesus then there is the baptism of the Spirit, and in that moment they were baptized by the Spirit and entered into life."

Some of you may be as near as were these men of Ephesus. Some of you may imagine that you are Christians because you have gone as far as John's baptism can take you. You need to be born again, to yield yourself wholly to the Christ Himself, and believe on His name, and receive regeneration as a free gift of God's infinite grace. Wherever that is done, the Spirit of life, the Spirit to Whom you owe your first life, Whose dominion you have not recognized or acknowledged, Whose illumination you have lost, Whose energy you have so sadly failed to appropriate, will come back and remake you, not as an angel, but as a new man. God's meaning in you will be fulfilled as the Spirit of life takes possession of you.

But if we have received that Spirit, if we have yielded to Christ, and have been baptized by the Spirit into union with Him, the verse still has a call for us and a suggestiveness. Let us yield ourselves absolutely to the Spirit of life, that all His gracious purposes may be accomplished in us.

Do not let us be satisfied with so much of realization as will ensure us, as we think, entrance presently into the home of God. Rather let this Spirit of life, Who is in us, have perfect dominion, and then every part of the being—physical, mental, and spiritual, suffused with light, baptized with power—will begin to find out how broad, and generous, and spacious life really is.

Romans 8:9. Life; In Flesh, Or In Spirit.

Romans 8:9.

Life; In Flesh, Or In Spirit.

Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Romans 8:9

I propose this evening to consider the first half of this verse, postponing the consideration of the second half to our next Sunday evening.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. In that declaration is involved the truth, that He came to rescue man from the dominion of Satan, and to restore Him to the Kingdom of God. This involves another truth, that He does, moreover, restore man to the true balance and proportion of his own life.

The mission of Jesus Christ is not that of taking hold of human beings and changing their essential nature save as that nature has become polluted, spoiled, ruined by sin. Then He does completely change it, pardoning the sin, cleansing from pollution, remaking the ruin.

All these processes, of absolution, of cleansing, and of remaking, are in order to the restoration of man to the first Divine ideal. In this wonderful text, occurring in a supreme passage in the letter to the Romans, this truth of the restoration of man to the Divine original intention is brought before the mind, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

The almost startling "if" in the midst of the text brings us face to face with the fact that it is possible to live a human life, in which the Spirit of God has no place; and yet the text, recognizing the Divine ideal for man, indicates the fact that in whosoever that Spirit dwells, there is restoration to the first Divine and original intention.

Let me draw your attention first of all to a very simple matter, which is nevertheless a most important one to our study. The Revised Version, when compared with the Authorized, has a certain difference which I hold to be all-important to the understanding of the real thought in the mind of the apostle when he wrote these words. The difference to which I refer is not a difference in phrasing. There are alterations and omissions, but none to which I desire to make any reference now. The difference is in spelling, and that in a very simple matter. In the Authorized Version the word spirit is spelled with a capital letter in the majority of instances. In the Revised Version it is spelled with a small letter in the majority of instances.

Let me confirm my examination of that fact to this text. Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." In the Authorized Version, in the three occasions where the word spirit is used in that verse, it is spelled with a capital letter. In the Revised Version the first occurrence is spelled with a small letter, and the second two with the capital letter. In the

Authorized Version the thought of the verse is this. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit," that is, the Spirit of God, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." According to that spelling, in every case in that verse the apostle was referring to the Holy Spirit. The revisers have changed the spelling of the first word so that now the intention of the apostle as suggested is different, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit," the reference being, not to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

Accepting, without any doubt, after long and careful consideration of this whole passage, the spelling of the Revised Version, believing that the new spelling gives the most accurate interpretation; I shall ask you first to consider the facts concerning man by nature recognized by this passage, and secondly, to consider the fact concerning man by grace declared by this text.

First, then, the facts concerning man by nature which are recognized by this text. The essential nature of man is revealed by the terms, flesh and spirit. Human nature is a combination of flesh and spirit. Paul, referring to the whole of human personality in the great prayer for the sanctification of the Thessalonian Christians said: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Spirit, soul, body: that is a recognition of the threefold fact of human personality, physical, psychic, pneumatic. Consider that threefold division well, and see what it really means. Man is spirit and flesh; man has a mind, or consciousness. If the mind becomes blank, distorted; if a man shall lose his reason; he remains flesh and spirit; but by some failure of adjustment between the spiritual and the material the consciousness ceases, or is distorted. We call that madness. The essential fact in any human life is the spiritual fact, yet closely applied to that, and apart from it there is no humanity, there is the material fact. I lay that emphasis upon the fact that mind is a possession in order that we may recognize the fact that what a man's mind is, depends entirely upon whether he lives on the spiritual side, or on the fleshly side of his nature. Here are two men, put them side by side. They are both spiritual in nature; both have bodies; they live in the same street, in the same city, in the midst of the same surroundings, but their conceptions of everything are diametrically opposed. Their minds are entirely in opposition. One man looks at another man but he does not see what his friend sees. One man looks out upon the fields and the hills, but he cannot see what his friend sees. These two men are in this Church. They are sitting side by side, you and your friend, my brother. You are both spirit. You both have bodies. You both have minds.

That is the conception of humanity that lies at the back of this great statement of the apostle. The spirit is the essential. The body is the medium through which the spirit communicates with and receives communications from everything in the cosmos external to itself. The mind is the resulting consciousness.

Pass a step further. The apostle recognizes the fact that man can live in one of two spheres; either in the flesh, or in the spirit; on that side of his nature which is of the flesh, or on that side of his nature which is of the spirit. Mark the contrast between them. A man who lives in the flesh is a man who lives as though life were limited thereby. The man living in the flesh is near-sighted; according to Peter "seeing only the things that are near. He is deaf, he never hears the voices of eternity. He counts the man fanatical or deceived who declares that he does hear them. He is suffering from paralysis in the midst of life. Whatever path he treads he arrives presently at the place of darkness

and disappointment. Notwithstanding every attempt to satisfy the clamant cry of his own life, he arrives presently at the place of thirst and hunger; he comes at last to the hour when the consuming consciousness of life is lust—I use the word most carefully, not in its application to one particular form of sin, but in its accurate description of the burning desire that has no satisfaction. The man who lives on that side of his nature, in flesh, limiting his outlook by flesh, comes presently to hardness of heart; to being without faith, without hope, without love either of God or of man. That is the flesh life. These are some things Paul tells us concerning it. To live in flesh is to mind the things of the flesh. May I attempt to illuminate that wonderful word by quotation from the words of Christ. At Caesarea Philippi He said to Peter in stern language, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Peter's protest was a protest of the flesh. It was the shrinking of the flesh in the presence of the pathway of sorrow. It was the protest of flesh against those spiritual conceptions that did not fear men who killed the body, but feared only such as could harm the soul. The man who lives in flesh, minds the things of the flesh.

I particularly desire that this should not be merely the discussion of a theory, find out where you live. Take the week that has gone. I prefer to look back rather than on. By the grace of God next week may be better than last week, if we will have it so in His strength. For purposes of personal helpfulness let your eye range over the doings of the past days, and apply to them this very simple test, which though not entirely satisfactory, will be helpful for our present purpose. With what were you principally occupied during the days of last week. The test of the hours will help you. What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we be able to possess more of this world's goods? How shall we minister to the comfort of these bodies of ours? How shall we enter into the pleasures of life which are wholly of the flesh? Were these the master questions of the days? Perhaps not expressed so badly as I have expressed them, but still there, absolutely dominating the life. That is life in the flesh. The man who lives there minds the things of the flesh. What else says the apostle concerning this? "The mind of the flesh is death." "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." The mind of the flesh is not subject to the law of God. The mind of the flesh cannot please God. That is to live in the flesh, as though there were no God, as though there were no eternity, and (as though life had nothing to do with any world but this, as though the last and ultimate limit were reached in the hour of death. The atheist declares that these things are so, and vast multitudes of men and women who never declare that they are so, yet live as though they were so. There are gradations of life in the flesh. There are manifestations of life in the flesh that to the common thinking of men are more vulgar than others, but in the sight of high heaven they are all on the same level. If a man lives a life of the flesh and gives himself up without reserve to all the vilest passions of his own debased nature, that is life in the flesh. Or if a man, for purely selfish purposes and selfish reasons, abstains from the vulgarities, but is without worship, has no upward look, no commerce with heaven, no recognition of a hereafter, no conception of any reality except the reality of today and the dust; he is living in the flesh as surely, and in the sight of high heaven with as pronounced vulgarity, as the man who gives rein to his lusts.

Here again I pray you do not misunderstand me. If there be no God, if there be no eternity, if there be nothing beyond the shadowy portal of the grave, well then we will make a great difference between these two men; and that is the human differentiation between respectability and vulgarity

in sin. I am not here to make such differentiations. I am here viewing life in the light of this Book. I am here attempting to see humanity as it is seen from the heights and amplitudes of eternity. Life in the flesh. When you speak of your higher and your lower in that realm, you must find out how much higher or lower one is than the other, not by comparing the higher and lower in the flesh, but by comparing the whole flesh life with life in the spirit.

Turn then to the other side of the suggested picture, life in the spirit. That is life in which man recognizes that the essential part of him is spiritual, that he is not ultimately, finally, fundamentally of the dust, but of Deity; that this life is but school time, and probation, and preparation; and that all he feels within himself of essential life will come to its fulfilment and intensity beyond; the life which answers not the call of the flesh, but the call of the spirit.

All this study is illuminated by the Genesis story. There is a side of me that has come up out of the mystic, marvellous, creation of the material. I can touch the material and know it has to do with the dust. But there was a moment in the process of creation when God enwrapped that material, which in itself was infinitely higher than anything beneath it in the scale of creation, in His own breath, breathed into it forces eternal and spiritual. Thus man became a living soul. The gap between that God-breathed man and the highest form of life beneath him is the gap between eternity and time, between Deity and dust, between spiritual and material. Therein was the essential and final creation of man. A man can live on that side of his nature and what does it mean? Vision. I cannot use that word in that connection without there coming back to me a passage full of beauty and meaning in that great chapter in Hebrews describing the heroes and heroines of faith. This wonderful thing is said about one man, it is an illuminative truth, and thank God it describes exactly thousands of men today; "He endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." If you are living in the flesh you cannot understand that, and you may just as well say so at once. You smile at it, and you pity the man who as you say thinks he sees the invisible. I want to tell you in all tenderness and gentleness, he pities you far more than you can pity him. This is not a dream. How do I know he sees the invisible? By the way he endures. The demonstration of the far vision is courageous endurance. I am not talking of a bygone age. I made my quotation from the days of old only because it has a living application. Such men are right here in this building. There are men and women here as I speak tonight who see far beyond the preacher; it would be a sorry business if they did not; they see Him Who is invisible. When my voice is no longer heard, the voices from the eternal still sound in their ears.

Life in the spirit means acuteness of hearing; a sense of power; a thrilling emotion; ecstasy and rapture, through all things and forevermore; courage of heart enabling men to endure. Life in the spirit is life indeed.

In the context, Paul describes the mind of the spirit more briefly than the mind of the flesh, and yet more inclusively. The man who lives in the spirit minds the things of the spirit, and what of them? The mind of the spirit is life and peace. If we divide this congregation by the standards of men we have all sorts of divisions, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, high and low, noble and ignoble. I protest unto you, my masters, in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that in the division of heaven we are in two classes, men and women who live in the flesh, and men and women who live in the spirit.

These are the facts recognized by my text. That a man can live in flesh with eyes shut to the eternities, with ears stopped to the voices of the infinite, and heart insensate to the nearness of God. A man can live on the spiritual side of his nature, seeing the invisible, hearing the unuttered, knowing the undiscoverable.

Now finally, I pray you notice what the text reveals concerning man by grace. That is the text. The other things have been inferences. This is declaration, revelation, affirmation. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if—" I pause at that "if" before I pronounce the final words. I would ask you to notice how these first words make their appeal. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if—" I speak to the men who are in the flesh, but who would fain escape the imprisonment of the flesh ere this service is over. I believe there are such here. You are in the flesh. You are saying, How can I escape this life, this prison, this bondage, this slavery to the flesh. Already my inner life is pining for something, and how I have tried to satisfy that burning thirst, that devouring hunger. Can I again cross over the line from flesh into spirit? "If so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

The mission of the Spirit of God is to restore man, first to a true relation to God, and so to the true balance and proportion of his own life. Are you living in flesh? Then hear me while I declare you are living an inverted life. The Spirit of God coming into the life of a man takes hold of that man and turns the whole life around, putting it back into harmony with the Divine ideal, putting it back into the essential meaning of its own being. Have you lived in the flesh? Then your life has been a disappointment. If some of you do not believe that yet, there are scores in this house who will bear witness to the truth of it, even though they have not yet yielded themselves to Christ.

The coming of the Spirit of God into the life of a man means that the spirit of man is taken out of the prison and put on the throne; that from that moment the man will live not in the consciousness of the near, but in the consciousness of the far, not in slavery to the cry of the flesh, but in obedience to the call of the spirit. It is by entering into the life of the Spirit of God that the change is wrought.

Let us look at this generally as I close. The test of Christian profession is in this text. If I live in the flesh I am not a Christian. I may sing all the songs in the hymn-book, and recite all the prayers that were ever written by other men, or composed by myself, study the whole Bible until I know its literature from cover to cover; but if I live in the flesh I come under condemnation. All that is the burden of the second half of my text, I utter it and postpone it. Remember that this text is the test of life. If I am living in the flesh then I am not living according to the possibilities of my own nature. I am something less than man, something lower than man, something infinitely beneath the potentialities of my own personality. This is the truth I would fain bring to the attention especially of young men in this day. Over and over again young men tell me they imagine Christianity means the ending of life. Man, it means the beginning. I mean that quite literally. It means the beginning of this life. You cannot live human life at its fullest in London if you are living in the flesh. All the gaud and glitter of things temporal are the devil's methods for drowning thought. The one thing you dare not do if you are living in the flesh is stay to think. You must away to the glaring lights and the clashing music and the paint. God help you, man. That is not life. Life in the flesh is life in prison, and in corruption. Life deteriorating, degenerating, dying, doomed, and presently damned. I pray you deliver yourself in this hour from soft conceptions of what you are doing, and come to see the horror of the whole business. You were made to lift your face to God. God has put eternity in your

heart, so said the ancient preacher, and it is true. You can never satisfy the surging eternity of your own being with the nonsense of fleeting time. You can never satisfy the clamant cry of your deepest life in the painted glitter of the place of sin. Life in the flesh is disaster because it is failure.

The declaration of deliverance is here. I am flesh bound, flesh imprisoned, yes, but the I of me is not flesh. It is that which is bound, that which is imprisoned. It is myself, my spiritual nature, that which cannot die, that which presently, if I live in the flesh will pass out without a tenement into the eternities, naked, not clothed upon, having lost its way and its home. That is the essential of me and that can in these very moments, while the preacher utters his last words, in the case of every man and woman, come back into its true place through the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is waiting to enter into fellowship with the spirit of every man, and make that spirit dominant in the life of the man, so that from that moment the flesh serves instead of masters.

The way of full life is here. The spirit of man in fellowship with the Spirit of God; then what? Then the flesh of man is ennobled because the flesh of man is used only under the direction and inspiration of the Spirit of God, and becomes the true medium through which the spirit of man enters into communication with all God's earth, and God's humanity, and God's heaven, and God's eternity.

Is that life possible? Here is the last word. Is it possible, says some man in this house, for me to be done with the flesh life and enter into the life of the spirit? Quite possible. How? By the reception of the Holy Spirit. How may I receive the Holy Spirit? In the Gospel of John is a wonderful story of how Jesus once stood in the midst of the thronging crowds at the feast of Tabernacles, on the last day, the eighth day, and He said, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his inner life shall flow rivers of living water." Oh, you say, what did He mean by that? The next verse tells you, "this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." That declaration has a historic application and an immediate application; a personal application. Historically, it meant that until He was glorified by the way of the Cross and resurrection the Spirit could not come. The personal application, what is it? A man receives the Spirit in the hour in which he yields himself to Christ. Glorify Christ, trust Him, glorify Him with thy trust, glorify Him with thy submission, by yielding thy life to Him; then what? The answer to your faith in Christ is God's gift of the Holy Spirit. One Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. One faith, faith in Christ, the faith of the man who, conscious of sin and weary of the flesh, yields to Him. One baptism, the baptism of the Spirit whereby that man receives the Holy Spirit. Mark the process. It is an old story.

You are once again confronted by the Christ of God, the Saviour of men. Will you trust Him? Will you believe in Him? Will you yield your life to Him? Do it now, right at this very moment. Take that life of yours, in the flesh though it be, and yield it to Him.

Nothing in my hand I bring;

Simply to Thy Cross I cling;

Naked, come to Thee for dress;

Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly;

Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Will you so come? In the moment in which you do, He answers your coming by the gift of the Spirit. Though there be no tongue of fire, though there be no sound of a mighty rushing wind, God's Holy Spirit enters in, and His first work is to bring your spirit out of the dust and degradation of your fleshly life, and give it the consciousness of acceptance with God.

From that moment life is new, changed, different. You live then "as seeing Him Who is invisible," in the spirit instead of in the flesh, and under the discipline of His patient grace you will come at last to glorious fulfilment, in conformity to the life of the Son of God.

Romans 8:9. The Spirit Of Christ; The Supreme Test.

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Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

Romans 8:9

Two weeks ago, we confined our attention exclusively to the first part of this text, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." This evening we consider the sequel to that subject by taking the second part of the verse, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Glancing at the verse in its entirety, we at once discover a significant and suggestive change in its expressions; "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ." Each of these phrases refers to the One of Whom we speak as the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. This fact makes the change in the method of expression the more arresting. The second phrase has sometimes been treated as though it referred to the tone, the temper, the disposition of Christ only; so that one might read, "If any man hath not the disposition of Christ, he is none of His." While I hold that such interpretation is not final, nevertheless, I believe that to be the significance of the change of expression. Whereas the reference is undoubtedly to the Holy Spirit in the second part of the verse, as it is in the first part, the writer brings us in the second half, face to face with the fact that the indwelling of the Spirit of God does produce the mind of Christ. Speaking of the Spirit as the dynamic force of life, he uses the phrase "the Spirit of God." When desiring to deal with the result manifest in character, he uses the phrase "the Spirit of Christ." The first reminds us of the unseen and hidden secret, the indwelling Spirit of God. The second reminds us of the seen and manifest result, the Spirit of Christ.

The great secret of the beauty and glory of the life of Jesus of Nazareth was that He lived in fellowship with the Spirit of God. Born of the Spirit, sustained by the Spirit, led by the Spirit into the wilderness, He returned in the power of the Spirit to do His work, until He, "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God." He acted in constant cooperation with the indwelling Spirit of God, never resisting, never grieving, never quenching.

What then was the result of such living? The Spirit of God became manifest in the Spirit of Jesus. While the phrase does refer to the actual Person of the Holy Spirit, it refers, nevertheless, to that Person in the manifestation of character wrought out in the mind of Christ; in the tone, temper, and disposition of Christ. Therefore, these two phrases bring us to the consideration of the seen and unseen in the Christian life and character.

May we then, reverently and carefully, attempt to consider this second half of the verse as the test of our Christianity; bringing ourselves to its suggested measurements, yielding our lives to its

proposed balances, in order that we may so discover whether or not we have the Spirit of God. The absence of the Spirit of Christ demonstrates the absence of the Spirit of God. The presence of the Spirit of Christ proves the presence of the Spirit of God. Therefore, this part of the text which seems so simple in statement, flames with light and is one of the most searching tests to be found in all the apostolic writings.

I want to say one or two preliminary words on the subject of the importance and nature of character. The character of a man is expressed through his spirit, through his tone, temper, disposition. You cannot express character by the utterance of words. You do not express character finally in any particular deed. The character of a man cannot be decided by the thing he says, neither can it be discovered by the occasional thing he does. The meanest man in London may give the largest gifts to philanthropic purposes. The most generous man may have nothing to give. The saint may be discovered over and over again in some unworthy fashion of speech. The most vulgar man may drop into the language of sainthood. A man's character is always revealed in his disposition. Character is what a man is. Doing, saying, and having, possess no beatitudes. Being is crowned with the seven-fold garland of the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, let it be perfectly understood that the final truth about a man's character is known only to God. No man can know finally the truth about the character of his brother man. The searching I suggest for my own soul and for yours in the presence of this text is not an inquisition, or an investigation of my soul by another, or of your soul by the preacher. We come together into the presence of this declaration in order that in loneliness, as between ourselves and God, we may find out whether we belong to Christ or not.

Let us then, reverently inquire what was the Spirit of Jesus.

We want to discover the mind of Christ, the tone, temper, disposition of Christ; the quality of the Spirit of God as revealed through Christ; and in order to do this we must consider the spirit of the Man of Nazareth. Forgetting for the moment the supreme fact that the spirit He manifested was the Spirit of God, for in Him Deity was unveiled, we come to the human level and inquire, what was the mind of Jesus, what were its notes, its qualities?

You realize at once that the preacher has asked a question that is very difficult to answer, for how is it possible to express with anything like brevity or accuracy the truth about the Spirit of Christ? Ask me concerning His words, and I could give you some account of them, materially at least, realizing more and more their intense spiritual values and my inability to fathom their profoundest depths. Ask me about His deeds, and I can follow Him from place to place, and tell you of the deeds done, and the wonders wrought, but to see the Spirit of Christ is more difficult.

I am impressed first by the fact that the Spirit of Christ was characterized by simplicity rather than by complexity. I am impressed secondly by the fact that the Spirit of Christ was characterized by serenity rather than by feverishness. I am impressed finally by the fact that the Spirit of Christ was characterized by sensitiveness rather than by callousness.

Simplicity. Allow me to attempt to illustrate what I mean by simplicity. Nothing impresses me more as I read the story of Jesus than the fact that He never seemed to need to prepare for any occasion. He was always the same, transparent, natural, simple. Complexity may be defined by another term, hypocrisy. The Spirit of Jesus was absolutely devoid of this in any form. His was the

simple life, the life in which there was no twist, no iniquity. With an artlessness that arrests, He spoke the things of His inner life in the presence of men. He said things which from the lips of other men would have sounded of the very essence of egotism. Yet, in His own age, the things He said did not surprise. Standing one day in the midst of a critical, hostile crowd, Jesus said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." Imagine any other man saying that, and let the man of your imagination be the man you think most of as a spiritual leader; what would be the result produced in your mind? From that moment you would begin to question his sincerity. Yet, in the Gospel of John the statement which follows that declaration is this, "As He spake these things, many believed on Him." That was the result of the transparent simplicity and honesty of Jesus. We may put the whole matter in quite another way, expressing it in fuller language in His own words, "I am the Truth." Not that I preach it, teach it, expound it, not even that I hold it, but that "I am the Truth." There was perfect harmony between every side of His nature. He had no hidden chamber, nothing secret. As I watch Him through all the story of His life, I am growingly impressed with the simplicity of His Spirit. I need not pause to say that simplicity does not mean superficiality, but transparency. If you think of a great pool upon the rocks, it is simple when you can see through the limpid waters all the things that lie upon the rock foundation. The Spirit of Jesus, the disposition of Jesus, was that of absolute, transparent simplicity.

Serenity. I am impressed increasingly by the serenity of Jesus, by the fact that in hours when all others seemed to be swept by storms, or moved by excitement, He alone was quiet, calm, and full of dignity. If ever the great word of Scripture was fulfilled in human life, "He that believeth shall not make haste," it was in Jesus' life. One pauses as the illustrative pictures pass through the mind. Let me take one of the last. If ever there was an hour in His life when one would have expected to see Him moved as by tempest, it was that hour in which He approached the Cross. Yet the one calm, dignified, unruffled man was Jesus. The Roman Procurator, used to scenes of the kind, able with an iron hand to quell rebellion, was strangely perturbed. The priests were roused to white heat in their anger. The populace, fickle as it always is, was clamouring for blood. The one silent, calm, serene Spirit was that of the Christ.

Sensitiveness. Jesus came into the presence of no natural emotion which He did not share. In the presence of joy, He was joyful. In the presence of sorrow, He was filled with sorrow. If He came into the presence of the brokenhearted, widowed mother, as she followed her only son to burial, all the sorrow of her heart entered into His. If He came to the house of the marriage feast, all the gladness and joy was in His own heart. He was keenly sensitive.

These are ultimately truths about the Spirit of God, truths about God Himself. "In Him there is no darkness at all." The whole nature and method of God is that of profoundest and almost overwhelming simplicity. God is not forever changing as man is. He abides unchanged through all the processes of human change. He is forevermore a fire, either destroying or purifying, according to the nature of that which comes within its sweep. He is forevermore the sun of life, either producing fruit or burning to destruction, according to whether it touches a tree planted by rivers of water or stubble.

I need not remain to argue the serenity of God. The fact is that in the day of clash and catastrophe He is still unmoved, unafraid. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth," till He have established His law in the affairs of men. We are discouraged, we are full of

feverish excitement, we must demonstrate in order to make people believe. The serenity of Jesus was the serenity of the Spirit of God, which is the serenity of God.

Moreover, the sensitiveness of Jesus was the sensitiveness of the Spirit of God, and the very sensitiveness of God Himself. Faber sang truly when he sang that earth's sorrows are most keenly felt in heaven. I venture to add the declaration on that earth's joys delight the heart of God.

This was the Spirit of Christ. Simplicity, serenity, and sensitiveness, have we these? If we lack them we lack the Spirit of Christ. If we have not the Spirit of Christ it is because we have not the Spirit of God, for He ever produces these very manifestations. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Where shall we apply the test? Let us understand that the examinations of God are never special, are never fore-announced. All the method of human examination is utterly different to the method of Divine examination. The tests of the spirit come not at the announced hour for which we may specially prepare, but in the ordinary pathway of human life, or perchance in some unexpected crisis. If the crisis be expected it ceases to be a day of testing. It is along the line of the commonplace that I am to discover what spirit mine is. I am to find out, not tonight in this sanctuary, whether I have the Spirit of Christ; it is impossible to do it here; it must be done tomorrow, in my home, in my office. The spirit of a man is tested in adversity of prosperity, in the place of obscurity, or the place of popularity, in time of defeat or the time of victory, and most often, amid the thousand and one trifles of the busy hours.

Let us observe in general terms how spirits are tested in such circumstances. It is the hour of adversity, storms are sweeping, so that we are inclined to say with Jacob of old, All these things are against me. That is the hour in which the spirit is tested. One man in such an hour gives way to despair, gives up the struggle. Another is characterized by his patience, by his quiet endurance. The one is fretful, quarrelsome complaining. The other is quiet and peaceful. What is the difference? It is the difference of spirit. It is the difference of tone, temper, disposition. One man is living in the flesh. The other man is living in the spirit.

Or it is the hour of prosperity when everything is succeeding. Everything touched turns to gold, success attends every effort. That is the place to try the spirit. In that hour, one man becomes noted for his arrogance, his overbearing disposition, his contempt for the man who fails. But another man in that hour is characterized by beneficence and a desire to hold out a helping hand to the man who is struggling. One man makes his prosperity the throne from which he grinds his fellow beneath him. The other makes prosperity the hearth to which he invites his neighbour to share his hospitality. What is the difference? It is the difference of disposition. I am prepared to say that in a sense neither man can help what he does. He is doing what he is. The profoundest fact concerning him and his character is being manifested.

Or again. Here are two men, both in the place of obscurity; suddenly removed, it may be—let me speak in the realm of my own calling, my own work, and leave you to make the application to yours—suddenly removed from the place of conspicuous service to some place of obscurity, like Philip taken from the rush and glory of a great revival in Samaria to the desert loneliness, to talk to one man riding in his chariot. One manifests bitterness, complains that the fates are against him, that men do not appreciate him, and spends all his days murmuring against the hardness of his lot.

The other faces the desert and there sheds the fragrance of a sweet and beautiful content. I do not say he wastes his sweetness on the desert air, never was there such a mistake made. Sweetness is never wasted, even on the desert air. If some bird in its flight shall drop a seed on some fertile soil and it comes to flower, if no human eye sees it, God gathers the fragrance, and it is sweet and beautiful to Him. What is the difference between these two men? It is the difference of spirit.

Or, on the other hand, a man is brought from obscurity to popularity, to use the word of the world, and immediately becomes proud and distant, forevermore rejoicing in the fact that he has become conspicuous. Another put into the same position comes and brings with him all simplicity, all humility. Humility never announces itself. The man who tells you that he is serving God in his humble way is the proudest man for five miles round. Humility, like love, "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly." In the light of conspicuous success, or popularity, the man of the Christ Spirit is simple, sweet and full of everything that woos men, soothes their weariness, heals their wounds, and helps them upon the way.

Yet again, it is the hour of defeat. One man becomes a coward and the other man becomes a hero. A hero in defeat, you say. Yea, verily. It takes more heroism to suffer defeat than to win a victory. There is a fine air of dignity about some men in the hour of defeat. When men go to pity them, or condole with them, they can do neither, because of the heroism with which they suffer defeat.

Or it is the hour of victory. One man becomes a tyrant and the other manifests great gentleness.

Or most often, amid the thousand and one trifles of life, the spirit we are of will manifest itself in the midst of the commonplace trifles of our own home life far more than anywhere else. I think I had better leave you to make the applications. The late breakfast may prove whether or not you are a Christian, more than the song in the sanctuary. I do not say that to make anyone smile. If you are laughing at your own folly, repent of it. Come to an understanding of the fact that a man is revealed, not on the public platform, you cannot know him there, but is revealed in the little incidental things of his home life. There are men to whom the papers would give whole columns of notice, but if we could have the story of their wives, and we never can, for woman is far too heroic, we would know them as non-Christian, notwithstanding all the papers say. It is the spirit, the tone, the temper, the disposition that is supreme. If any man have not the creed, not the orthodox view; No, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

As I have already said, I am not bringing you to a judgment throne as though I were the judge. God forbid, I am a sinning man. I am not asking you to accept the opinion of friend or neighbour. I will not accept your opinion, I care nothing for it. I am absolutely independent of it. I have lost all fear of what you say or think concerning me. Nevertheless, in the inner secret shrine of my deepest life, I stand in the presence of His judgment bar, and I know that my relationship to Christ is tested by my spirit.

I do not think I would dare come to that text if it were not for the first part of it which we have already considered, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." I go back to it because there are those who are saying, Such a judgment seat as that condemns us! If our Christianity is to be tested not by our creed but by our spirit, then we are guilty. There are those who, saying that, are now inquiring, How can we have that Spirit of Christ?

How can we become like Him? How can we be rid of the thousand and one hypocrisies that have blasted our lives, and find our way into the simplicity of absolute truth? How can we be freed from the dastardly conventionalities which make us lie in polite society, and find our way into the straight and enduring grandeur of simple truth? How can we find our way from the panic that so often seizes us, the feverishness that makes us impulsive, and makes us fail; into the quiet, dignified serenity of the Spirit of Christ? How can we escape the callousness that for long time has made us incapable of tears in the presence of sorrow, or of laughter in the presence of joy? How can we escape from the spirit which is the spirit of the self-centered, flesh-mastered life, and find the spirit which is the spirit of the God-centered life?

Now the inquiry is answered, "Ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Remember this; I say this especially to young men and women who are struggling toward the ideal, seeing it in its beauty; remember that you cannot create spirit by the government of externals. By saying I will never again speak an unkind word, you will not create the kind spirit. Sooner or later, the actual fact will flame out again. If your spirit is unkind, for a long time out of self-respect you may curb your tongue, and prevent the poisoned word, but the hour of provocation will come and it will break loose. Not by the government of externals is the spirit ever remade.

I go a step further than that. Not by admiration or imitation does reproduction ever result in matters of the spirit. There is the vision glorious, of the simple, serene, and sensitive Christ. I will admire it. I will imitate it. I will make Him my Exemplar. These things will never reproduce His likeness. There will be but bitter disappointment for the man who attempts imitation of Christ, apart from the necessary preliminary.

Then how can I have the Spirit of Christ? The Spirit of God is alone equal to producing the Spirit of Christ. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Unless the Spirit of God is there, the Spirit of Christ will never be there. Unless the unseen Spirit is there, the manifest Spirit must necessarily be absent. So, therefore, that which we need in order that we may have the Spirit of Christ, is the Spirit of God Who clears the vision that we may see indeed the ideal, and Who does infinitely more, who supplies the virtue in order that we may imitate the ideal in strength. The indwelling Spirit of God transforms the spirit of man until it becomes in very deed the Spirit of Christ. Brethren, do you not know it is true? Have you not seen it so? Have you not seen the man fierce and unkind become gentle and patient by the indwelling of the Spirit of God?

Finally, let us remember that the matter of supreme importance is that of our spirit. What is your disposition? How many a man is blaming his father for his disposition. How many a man is saying, Everything is against me, I inherited this from my father. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Absolutely untrue. That proverb became current in the days when Israel sat by the waters of Babylon and mourned over their fathers' sins; until Ezekiel and Jeremiah alike nailed the bad coin to the counter forever by saying, This is not true, "Ye shall not have occasion anymore to use this proverb in Israel." If your teeth are on edge, you have been at the sour grapes! I grant you your evil disposition, but remember this, it can be changed, or I have no gospel. In its place there can be the very Spirit of Christ. That is the supreme matter. Oh, it is important what a man believes, or disbelieves; but these things are important only as they manifest themselves in works. The creed that does not blossom into conduct and become

gracious character is of no value whatever. It is the spirit that matters. If that be true, how many un-Christly things are done in the name of Christ. I have heard the orthodox faith so preached as to drive men and women away from Christ. It is the spirit that matters.

This also let us remember. We too often attempt to correct the center from the circumference. Let us rather correct the circumference from the center, by handing over all our lives to the Christ Himself and so receiving the Spirit of God. When that Spirit of God is enthroned, we live no longer in the flesh but in the spirit, and then, not all at once, for the full fruitage of Christian character does not come in a moment to perfection; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; but when the Spirit of God is in the life there will be the first promise of the Spirit of Christ, and we shall "grow up in all things into Him Who is the head."

I urge that we all come to this judgment seat alone, when the service is over, when the preacher's voice is silent, when the associations of the sanctuary are gone; with our own New Testament let us go somewhere by ourselves, and let us inquire if we have the Spirit of Christ. If not, know that it is because we lack the Spirit of God; and knowing that, let us crown the Christ by trusting Him, and so receive His Spirit that we may become like Him.

Romans 8:24. Hope.

Romans 8:24.

Hope.

By hope were we saved.

Romans 8:24

The experience of hope is that of triumph over conditions and circumstances which are calculated to produce despair. Where there is no place for despair there is none for hope. If there is no danger of despair there is no possibility or necessity for hope. The old English word "hope," in all its mutations, has retained the sense of expectation, of something desired and not yet attained. The Greek word, of which it is a translation in my text, coming to us as it does from a primitive word meaning anticipation, and almost always anticipation with pleasure, has exactly the same significance. Indeed, the word is used in the New Testament invariably in the sense of anticipation with pleasure, and in the sense of desire. When that which is anticipated is realized, there is room neither for despair nor hope; when faith is lost to sight, then hope in full fruition dies; or, as the writer of this letter says in immediate connection with my text, "Hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopeth for that which he seeth?" This, then, is peculiarly a word for days of stress and strain. Hope comes to its brightest shining in the presence of the deepest darkness. The function of hope is conditioned by the prevalence of conditions making for despair. We need not enter into any lengthy consideration of the distinction between faith and hope. Hope is an aspect of faith. According to the Biblical presentation of faith, it will be perfectly safe to say that the soul of man, looking upward in faith, is conscious of perfect confidence; that the soul of man, looking onward in faith, is conscious of hope; that the soul, looking around in faith, is conscious of peace. Faith is an attitude of the soul, hope is the experience which that attitude creates with regard to the future.

The apostolic declaration is made in connection with an argument in the course of which conditions calculated to produce despair were most clearly recognized, and, indeed, described. The whole passage is one in which, in broad statement, the Apostle recognizes those things which persist until this hour: the trouble, the turmoil, the travail, the groaning of the world. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together;... we ourselves groan within ourselves;... the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The way in which hope saves will best be apprehended if we consider, first, the nature of the hope which is referred to by the Apostle; second, the foundation of that hope; and, third, the effects which that hope produces.

If we are to understand the nature of the hope referred to, we must begin by a yet more careful examination of the need for this ministry of hope. It is important that we recognize that it is discovered in the very conditions causing despair. By repetition of the quotations already made in a slightly different language I think we shall discover these conditions. "The whole creation

groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "Ourselves also groan within ourselves." "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The first of these declarations was the Apostle's recognition of the fact that the whole problem of pain and suffering, of evil in the widest sense is the problem which constantly assaults the soul of the man of faith in God. It may be well that we remind ourselves that pain presents no problem to any man except to the man who believes in God. Pain becomes a problem only in the presence of faith. When, ever and anon, some believer, it may be one whose faith at the moment is trembling, challenges the world's agony, the challenge is always uttered in the presence of the consciousness of God. When the soul cries out in revolt in the presence of the abounding suffering of men, the cry is always born of the wonder how God can permit this. There is no other problem. Blot God out of His universe and you will still have pain, but no problem to assault the soul. It is only faith that has to face this perplexity. It is Habakkuk who suffers most in the day of the declension of the people of God. It is Habakkuk who says, "Oh, Lord, how long?" I cry murder and Thou dost not hear. I cry violence and there is no answer. What is God doing?

It was Carlyle, rough, rugged, peculiar in many ways, and yet a man of the greatest faith, who, when Froude attempted to Comfort him by telling him that God is in His heaven, said, "Yes, but He is doing nothing." I never repeat that without being inclined to say to believing souls, Do not be angry with Carlyle. It was not true, God was doing something, but there is neither man nor woman in this house who has ever come very near, and remained near to the world's agony, who has not had that thought at some time or another. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain, and the proportion of our nearness to God is the proportion of our sense of this problem of pain, for it is the love of God shed abroad in the heart that renders the heart keen and sensitive to the world's agony. The heart of man, taught by the Divine love, questions the Divine love, until, presently, the heart of the man discovers that the very agony he feels which makes him question is the result of the presence in his soul of the God of love, and, indeed, it is an expression of God's own agony. It is when we become sensible of that prevalent pain that we need hope; and unless hope shall save us, then we shall indeed be lost.

The second state of the apostolic description, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, the redemption of our body," is one of the most illuminating sentences on personal Christian experience in all this writing. The Apostle here describes the increasing sense of failure and shortcomings, the cry and the sob that come out of life with intenser meaning as the years go on: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" It is the man who comes into the closest association with Christ who also comes to the acutest sense of his own defilement. We groan within ourselves in the baffling defeat of the soul in its attempt to reach the heights; we wait for the redemption of the body, conscious that the tabernacle in which the spirit dwells is the instrument of defilement for the spirit. It is in hours when the under side of our nature wins its victories that we cry out in agony and almost in despair. It is then that we need the gospel of hope.

Then we come to the last and highest word, most mystic and most difficult of interpretation, "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." In that word we have a description, not merely of our sense of the general pain of the world, not merely of our sense of our own particular limitations and defeats, but of the Divine discontent which, within the

soul of a man, makes him angry and puts him in agony; that knowledge of God which generates restlessness with everything that is unlike Him and unlike His peace; that hot turbulent protest of the soul against every form of wrong and of tyranny, against the conditions that blight and spoil the universe of God. The Spirit Who knoweth the deep things of God, the profound emotions of the Divine heart, touches the heart and spirit of a man with the selfsame feelings until the man himself rises unconsciously to a plane of prayer on which he expresses to God the things which God Himself is feeling.

Now, it is this sense of the world's pain, of our own pain, this sense of anger and agony born of our communion with God, that makes hope necessary. These are the things that fill the heart with despair.

What, then, is the hope? This, again, is a most necessary question for consideration, for if it be true that we are saved by hope, it is equally true that men are lost by hope. Unless the hope be true it destroys. The will-of-the-wisp creates a hope in the heart of the wanderer over the marshes, but it destroys him because it is not a true light. The lights lit by the wreckers along the Cornish shore in the olden days created hope in the heart of many a mariner, but they destroyed. And so, unless hope be true, it will not save, it will destroy.

The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Moule, in his "Commentary on Romans" in the Expositors' Bible, has suggested a translation of this text which is certainly illuminative. What he suggests is a fair implication of the text. He suggests that, instead of "We were saved by hope," we render here, "It is as to our hope that we were saved," as if the text should mean that we are saved as Christian men by hope because of the nature of the hope that is presented to us. What, then, is the Christian hope? If we go over these passages again, we shall find that in every case the hope is declared. What is our hope for creation? That it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the children of God. That is one of the greatest sentences in all the writings of the Apostle. It presents a vision of the whole creation, ultimately led out from the bondage or corruption, of that which disintegrates, spoils, mars, ruins, into the liberty of the children of God. A doctrine of the world is involved in that statement, and it is the Biblical doctrine, the doctrine of the cosmos as under the dominion of man. The cosmos is seen suffering pain and tribulation, because its lord and master, man, has lost his scepter and his power to govern. That same cosmos will come at last to the realization of all its beauty and all its glory, because the children of God, men and women after the Divine image and likeness, and fulfilling the Divine relationship, will govern it, so that the creation will realize itself and pass out of corruption into full and complete realization.

The feeling of the poets helps us here. There lay the dead sea mew, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning sang,

Our human touch did on him pass,

And with our touch, our agony.

It was the symbol of the whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain.

Thomas Blake, the father of our Nature poetry, sang:

A robin redbreast in a cage

Puts all heaven in a rage;

A dog starved at his master's gate

Predicts the ruin of the State.

Superlative language, you say. The superlatives of earth are the positives of eternity. At last there will be no starved dog anywhere, no caged robin, no mauled sea mew, nothing left in creation which results from the misgovernment of men. Creation will escape its corruption and enter into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

We groan within ourselves, waiting—for what? The adoption, the redemption of the body, the ultimate mastering of the body that it may become the fitting instrument of the spirit. Or as Paul put it when writing to the Philippians of his personal experiences: He "shall fashion a new body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory."

Concerning that groaning of the spirit, that restlessness of God interpreted to the soul and creating the agony and the power of prayer, what is our hope? The ultimate rest and joy of God in His completed work, which, perhaps, we most clearly express when we quote the prophecy and the promise concerning the Messiah Himself, that at last He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

What are the foundations of this hope? Inclusively, we may say that our hope is set on God, and that through the unveilings of Himself and of His activity which have been granted to us in Christ. To say that is to say everything. God is our hope in the presence of the problem of pain. Our fellowship with Him has created the problem. Who is God? What is God doing? Is God doing anything? Does God care? These are all questions arising out of faith in God. Blot God out of the heavens, blot God out of the intellectual concept, say there is no God! What then? Ah! but our faith has created our problem, and we shall not solve our problem by denying the God Who created our problem. We have seen a universe in which pain is a wrong, but we should not have seen that if we had not seen God. Therefore, inquiring still more deeply, turning the soul back upon itself, facing the problem, we affirm that the very ultimate ground of hope is God, and that the unveiling of Himself which He has given us in Christ is the very inspiration of hope. It is out of that unveiling that hope comes back to us.

Let us inquire a little more particularly about the aspects of these unveilings which inspire hope. And, again, we will confine ourselves to this very passage, for in it the very foundations of hope are laid bare. I base my hope, first on the suffering of God, on the fact that the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; second, on the suffering of the saints, that they, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, suffer; and, finally, on the suffering of creation itself. In regard to the creation, the Apostle has linked another word to the word "groaning": "Groaneth and travaileth." It is the word that suggests birth rather than death. This is the wondrous alchemy of Christianity: pain is the ground of confidence that pain will end.

The first ground of hope is that of the suffering of God. "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." "The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God." When we speak here of the Spirit we are thinking of God, and included in the thought is that of infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite power.

God, infinite in wisdom, therefore making no mistake; infinite in love, therefore never failing in love, for "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds"; infinite in power, therefore able to do all that wisdom reveals and love dictates.

The revelation that is given to us of God in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is that He is conscious of this agony and is active in the midst of it. He, being the sum total of all things, and being more than all the things in which pain is to be found, has gathered the whole within Himself and knows it to its depths. When I look next on the problem of the suffering of the innocent with the guilty, let me remember I am looking on the problem of God's suffering. I admit that this is a problem, a profounder problem than anything London presents, or Europe presents, or the world presents. The problem of a suffering God is indeed profound! But there is a solution. It is the solution of a loving God expressing Himself in a thousand ways in every generation if men had but eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand; expressing Himself assuredly in the suffering of every innocent soul that consents to suffering on behalf of the guilty; expressing Himself centrally, and this in some senses finally, in the Cross! You talk to me of the problem of evil in London. I take you to the Cross. There it is focused. You talk to me of the problem of those who suffer. It is centralized in the Cross. You talk to me of the problem of evil, evil winning, evil crushing good, evil mauling that which is high and noble. I take you to the Cross. There it is, in its vulgar tragedy, focused, centralized, made vulgar, as it is vulgar!

In that unveiling God has revealed the fact that wherever there is suffering, there is He also. He, the infinitely wise and loving and powerful, is conscious and active in the midst of all suffering.

On that I build my palace of hope. I stand in the midst of the world's agony, and I say this is also the Divine agony, and therefore my heart believes that at last, how, I cannot tell, by what methods, I do not know, but at last the very creation will be delivered from its corruption and find its way into the glory of the liberty of the children of that God Who has not absented Himself from human sorrow, but Who remains within it, gathering its most poignant power into His own being, and vicariously suffering in the midst of the universe blighted by sin.

If I pass from that wider outlook and look again at the saints, I build my hope on their suffering far more than on their rejoicing, for in their pain they are sharers of the Divine pain, making up that which is behind in the suffering of Christ, and having fellowship with His suffering. They are also sharers of the Divine power and of the Divine patience.

Who are the saints? Take any one Christian man or woman in the life of this city, or far away on the mission field; take an isolated case for the illumination of the general fact. What is this man? What is this woman? This is humanity reborn and regained for God. To use the word of Jesus, this individual is the seed of the Kingdom. New born souls constitute in earth's soil the seed of the coming Kingdom. Then I hear the word of the Lord spoken on another occasion, and I link it to this declaration: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." By the suffering of the saints the Kingdom is to come.

This is very well as a general statement. Its particular and personal application must be reserved for loneliness. Let us get away presently, somewhere quite alone, those of us who are suffering in the cause of the Kingdom, or in fellowship with the Kingdom, or as the result of our loyalty to the Kingdom. Does there seem to be no connection between such suffering and the Kingdom? It is

false seeming, for by that suffering, by that pain, by that anguish, we are in fellowship with God; and by that fellowship in pain the victory is to be won and the Kingdom is to come.

So with the whole creation. I remind you again in a passing sentence only of the suggestiveness of the word, "groaneth and travaileth together in pain." It is the word of birth pangs! The sobbing of creation, its sigh and its agony, are the declaration of its rebirth. "Behold, I make all things new," is the perpetual word of God. He makes all things new by the way of travail. Thus our hope is born of the transmutation of the causes of our despair.

What are the effects of this hope? I will speak of two only, one named in the immediate context, and one named by the Apostle John. The effects are patience and purity. "We with patience wait." "He that hath his hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." What is patience? Patience is simply remaining under. Remaining under in order to bear. To attempt to withdraw is to leave God. If I am to be in co-operation with God in the processes that are to lead to the final restoration, I must stay in the midst, I must remain under; fellowship with God in service is patience, remaining under, not merely to bear but to lift. To save the life is to lose it, because to withhold the life from pouring out is to exclude God, Who is ever pouring Himself out in sacrifice. The mental experience of such fellowship is patience with God, patience with ourselves, patience with creation.

Patience means staying underneath, in fellowship with God, because of the assurance, not that at last I shall climb the height, but that at last He will perfect that which concerneth me.

The second effect of this hope is that of purity. "Everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." At your leisure, contrast the passage in John with the one in Romans, and see how close the thoughts lie to each other. Creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, and we who are the children groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, and the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. So run the thoughts of Romans. Then I turn to John, and I read, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, for He is not yet manifested." There has been no manifestation yet of this sonship of God in all its finality and its glory and its beauty. But we know that when He shall be manifested as He is, we shall be like Him. Paul says that creation is waiting for the sons of God. John declares that the Son of God will be manifested with the sons of God. The man who has that hope set on God purifies himself, even as God is pure. The responsibility is that of purification, the type of purity is that of the purity of God.

If that were all, I hardly dare read the passage. Is there power for such purification? The Apostle goes on to declare that He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

And so, as we are conscious of the sorrows of the world, the perils threatening us in our home life, the perils of our prosperity, the persistence of pain everywhere, the failure and disappointment verging on despair, we are saved by hope! Our hope is built on Him Who is our God. Our hope, therefore, is based also on the very sense of defeat and despair and pain that cause our agony; for by these things men live, by these defeats they climb to the higher heights, by these bruising and these batterings of the iron life is molded and shaped to the Divine purpose. The only man who has no hope is the man who has no God.

But that must not be the last note. The last note must be this: God is our abiding hope, and by hope we are saved.

Romans 8:32. Promise At The Cross.

Romans 8:32.

Promise At The Cross.

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 8:32

We now come to the last of these studies around the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a series in which we have attempted to deal with some of the rich and gracious provisions of the Cross; here we shall consider some phases of that all-inclusive and plenteous redemption which God has provided for us through the Son of His love by the way of the Cross.

We have seen the Cross of Christ standing amidst human ruin and helplessness at the very center of redemption, and as the channel of power.

We have endeavored to watch the progress of its work in the experience of the soul who surrenders to Christ.

We have first seen how pardon is ours, that we "have redemption through His blood... the forgiveness of... trespasses"; we have seen how purity comes to us by the way of the Cross, seeing that our consciousness may be "purged from dead works to serve the living and true God" by that same most precious blood; we have seen how peace comes to us by the way of the Cross, for He "has made peace" by the blood of His Cross; and, last, we have considered how power comes to us, for "the Word of the Cross," the Logos of the Cross, "is the power of God to such as are being saved."

Let us once more take our stand by this selfsame Cross, and observe how it flings its light out on all the future, and on all possible needs and contingencies that may arise.

This is an aspect full of value to us. We are all growingly conscious of our limitation, of the fact that there are more things in heaven and earth than have been dreamed of in our philosophies. This growing consciousness very often affects our thought of, and relation to, spiritual things, the things of the soul, the things of redemption. There are moments when the trusting soul trembles through its own limitation of knowledge and vision.

Have there not been moments in your own Christian life when the very consciousness of the unending ages has been almost too great a burden to bear, when the consciousness of the illimitable spaces that lie unmeasured and immeasurable around you has almost crushed your spirit? We have all had such moments, in which we have asked questions about those ages, those spaces, those infinite things round about us, and there have been moments when we have asked questions about our own relationship to God in the light of these things.

Let us go back to the eighth chapter of Romans, and if there has seemed to be something of the nature of speculation in my introductory words, I want you to listen to Paul. These are some of the questions he asked: "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

It is impossible for any who know the Lord Jesus, and have come into the blessings that have lately occupied our attention to read those questions without the tone of challenge creeping into the very reading of them. I am perfectly sure that this was in the mind of Paul when he wrote them. "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?"

Remember where the great questions occur in the scheme of this epistle; they do not come in the early part in which the Apostle is dealing with the need for salvation, nor in the central part in which he is laying down the plan of salvation, but in chapter eight, the chapter of the final triumph, in which life in Christ is so wonderfully described, life by the Spirit, which is life in Christ; the chapter which, as so often has been said, begins, "no condemnation," and ends, "no separation." Beyond the first part of the chapter, beyond the present experience of the power of the Cross, these questions occur. To pardoned, purified souls, at peace and having power, all these questions come sooner or later. Happy and blessed indeed are the men and women who can face them as Paul faced them, so that in the asking of them there is a tone of challenge, the great ring of a sure triumph.

"Who is against us?" What attack may be directed against our souls? "Who shall lay anything" to our charge? Can any other accusation be brought against us? "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?" They are all questions born of the soul's consciousness of limitation. We are coming day by day to have a widening conception of life; we are living in an age in which the universe is a great deal larger than it seemed to our fathers. The discoveries of science—I say nothing of their speculations, I am always willing to wait while they speculate—have put the horizon back much further than it seemed to be. Theories which sounded like speculations to them are now ascertained facts; indeed, so great has the universe become that some men deny the relationship of the individual to God. All this is born of the ever enlarging sense of the universe.

These widening conceptions of life, this deepening sense of personal frailty, lead us to ask such questions. Can anyone be against us? I know some of the foes, but are there others of whom I know nothing? I read in my New Testament of "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world," and all this phraseology has grown in meaning with the passing of the years. I do not say it means more essentially, but it means more to us than it did.

As one in this little planet, one in this ever widening universe, ever widening to human conception, how do I know what lies beyond in the dim distances? Who can be against us? Is there some spiritual antagonism I have never yet faced, ready to attack me? Is there some accuser who will rise up and set my life in relation with other laws? Shall I find myself a sinner in some deeper sense? Is there any accuser? And the final throbbing, agonizing question, until we come to the Cross for an answer, is, "Who shall separate?" Can anyone?

Every question is in itself a demand, a reverent demand, the demand of the soul; and when I ask, "Who is against us?" I am asking for defense against all possibility of attack. When I ask, "Who

shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" I am asking that my justification shall be a justification in the presence of any and every possible accusation. When I ask, "Who is he that shall condemn?" I am asking that my acquittal at the bar of Infinite Holiness shall be from any possible condemnation that may arise. When I ask, "Who shall separate us?" I am asking that my communion with God shall be so arranged that all need arising from the new nature and the new conditions and the new demands shall be met.

I tremble on the verge of the eternal, I am, in my own poor personality, afraid in the presence of the immeasurable and the infinite that stretches out beyond. I stand, a man, a speck amid immensity, and I do not know what cohorts are hidden behind the distant hills ready to come against me. I do not know what traducers may yet bring charges against me. Can anything separate me from the love of God?

These are great questions. They do not always take this form, but they come to us all, sometimes very simply, and perhaps, therefore, the more subtly, with more far-reaching and deep-searching agony of soul.

In view of such questionings the greatness of my text is revealed. It is an answer to one of the questions, but I take it because out of it come the values that answer all the questions. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things."

I suppose every man who preaches the Word sometimes feels as though there is nothing more to say when he has read his text. That is certainly how I feel about this. Note its historic basis, "He spared not His own Son." Notice its logical conclusion, "Shall He not freely give us all things?"

When God gave His Son, He gave His best; and now human language must be imperfect. He emptied heaven of its richest; He had nothing more worth the giving. He gave in that moment not something better than the rest by comparison, but something that included all. The Apostle here says, in effect, when God gave His Son, with Him "He freely gave us all things." It is not merely that if He spared not His Son He will give other things. It is really that when He gave His Son He gave all. Take another statement of this same Apostle, from his Colossian letter, which deals with the glorious Christ, and remember his words about Jesus, "Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created... and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." There is no far distant part of the universe of God that is not held together in orderly array by Christ. No mystic secret of the Divine procedure is unknown to Christ. No foe of humanity lurking in any of the infinite spaces that baffle and affright me is hidden from Christ. God gave His Son, and when He gave His Son, He gave the One in Whom all things consist, from Whom all things came, to Whom all things proceed. In originating wisdom and creating force and upholding power, He gave the sum total of everything when He gave Christ, so that when I ask a question about the infinite spaces I am asking a question about the things that are as familiar to Jesus as are the few grains of sand that I can hold in my hand and look at, and far more familiar, for I cannot tell you the deepest mystery of the grains of sand, and He knows the last mystery of all the universe. When I ask my question about the days that are coming, I am asking a question about things that He will make, for He it is Who fashions not only the worlds of matter, but the worlds of time, the rolling ages as they come. God has given this Son of His love—Framer of the Universe in infinite wisdom, Upholder of it on its onward course to the final

goal—given Him freely for us all.

Now, the Apostle says, "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that shall condemn?" "Who shall separate us?" Notice the questions again, and notice them as they are set against the great declaration.

First, "If God is for us, who is against us?" How do I know God is for me? He gave His Son. There is no other demonstration. If you doubt the Cross you have no proof that God is for us. If you lose the sight of the Cross, and do not hear its message of the Divine good will and favor, there is nothing in Nature to show you God is for you. Nature is red in tooth and claw. We are told sometimes that it is kind, and so it is if we are kind to it; but offend it, break its laws, and it will crush you with merciless severity.

And this also is a merciful provision, for the crushing of anything effete is good for the things that remain. God by salvation has not come to save effete things as effete things. He has come to save things from effeteness and make them new. Nature will laugh in sunshine on the face of your dead child; there is no message in Nature that tells you that the God behind it cares for you.

But this man, weak and frail, suffering the loss of all things, the pity of all worldly-minded souls, says God is for him. How does he know? "He spared not His own Son." That is the infinite proof. The Cross is the revelation of the Divine interest. If I have that Cross, there God has given, in the mystery of that dying, His own Son, and I am prepared to challenge all the universe. "Who can be against me?"

As I learn the lesson and repeat the challenge there will come into it, not merely a tone of challenge, but the tone of contempt for everything that is against me. Circumstances are against me; let them be! God is against the circumstances! Another man says, My parentage is against me. God becoming your Father cancels the evil inheritance with which you entered into life.

But these are things of today. What lies beyond? I do not know. What infinite forces will be born in the new ages, the ages that will come fresh as the morning from the wisdom of God? What forces may be born with new principalities and new powers? Perchance some of them will be against me. It does not matter, they will be born of God, and God is for me, and the man who stands by the Cross of Jesus and knows that that is God's gift for his redemption knows that nothing can emerge out of the endless ages, or gather from infinite spaces, that can harm, because by that Cross he knows God is for him. Who can be against us?

As to accusation, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." We must interpret this word of the Apostle by his previous use of the word in the same argument. How does God justify? "Being, therefore, justified by faith... we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and... rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Who shall lay anything to my charge? It is God that justifies me. How? By that Cross of Jesus. You may lay to my charge what you will. You may see in me the imperfection that contradicts your sense of law. I am talking in imagination to the principalities and powers which may be created fifty millenniums hence. God has justified me by the Cross, which does not mean for one single moment that He has covered and excused my sin, but by the infinite mystery of the pain borne in that Cross, He has made my sin not to be, canceled it, put it away, and in this justification God acts, not out of pity, but on the basis of eternal justice

and righteousness.

I challenge all the accusers. Who are you? Lay your accusation. Yes, it is true, perchance even in the holy service of today, perchance even in the service of the ages to come, there will be the falling short somewhere. I do not mean wilful sin. Do you not know that God charges the angels with folly? When I measure my service, even in the infinite hereafter, by the compulsion and propulsion and constraint of the Infinite love, I think that we shall always have to cast our crowns at His feet and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." If someone shall lay a charge against me that the thing is not as high as it ought to have been, then in the infinite ages the Cross of the Christ abides, God's eternal provision, so that none can lay anything to the charge of such as He shall justify.

Or again, "Who is he that shall condemn?" "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather"—hear the music of it, if death were all, the condemnation would abide—"yea, rather, that was raised from the dead," and in the mystery, and miracle, and marvel of that resurrection there is the demonstration of the truth that the dying was efficacious, that in the dying He accomplished the purpose of His heart, in the dying He put guilt away and bore sin so that I need bear it no more. "Who shall condemn?" The soul, afraid of possible condemnation, hides again in the cleft of the rock, and points to the Cross and the empty grave, and says for evermore, By virtue of that Cross and that empty tomb, there can be no condemnation to the trusting soul.

Once again, "Who shall separate us?" Paul always seems to me, at this stage, as though he had climbed to some great height and was looking out on all the dimensions. "Death," he puts that first, because that is what men are so often afraid of as a separating force. "Life," which is far more likely to separate us than death, even though men do not fear it. "Angels, principalities," the whole world and universe of created intelligences. "Things present—things to come," in simple sentences he sweeps through all the ages. "Powers, height, depth."

Notice carefully this final phrase—"nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Did you notice the Apostle's outlook on all these things? "Death?" That is a creation. "Life?" That is a creation. "Angels" and "principalities?" Creations. "Things present?" Creations. "Things to come?" Creations. "Powers?" Creations. "Height?" Creation. "Depth?" Creation. All had issued from God. How can created things separate me, says the Apostle, from the Origin of the created things, seeing I am bound to Him through the work of Jesus, His own Son? I cannot be separated by things created by the Creator, for the Creator has bound me to Him by giving His Son, and brings me back with His Son into eternal union with Himself. "Who shall separate me?"

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,

With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;

For who aught to my charge shall lay?

Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.
When from the dust of earth I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Ev'n then, this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.
Jesus, be endless praise to Thee
Whose boundless mercy hath for me—
For me, a full atonement made,
An everlasting ransom paid.
O let the dead now hear Thy voice;
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.

The Cross of Jesus, the rough Roman gibbet, brutal Cross so far as man had anything to do with it; the Cross of nineteen hundred years ago, which was the manifestation of the great mystery and passion by which God redeems men, that Cross flames with a glory far greater than is needed to illumine the little while, and the here and the now. Its light fills all the universe; its glory rests on all the coming ages. At its birth every new-born age will be baptized in the infinite light that streams from the Cross of Christ. I do not know what they will have in them. One of the joys of the contemplation of the hereafter is that God is infinite in wisdom and power, and my own consciousness of eternal existence becomes bearable as I remember that there can be no monotony with God, always new ages, always new creations, always new manifestations of the one Eternal, incomprehensible Being Whom I call God.

And I do not know what, or how, how long, how brief, how great, how simple. But this I know, that by the Cross I have been brought into the love of God even though I was a sinner; and this I know that nothing He creates can ever separate me from Him Who does create. I know it by the Cross. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." When? By the way of the Cross. Men may know the exceeding power and wisdom of God if they study Nature, but they never find His heart.

There is only one way in which men find that—by the way of the Cross. But when a man comes that way, he comes at last to the point where he can write such a chapter as the eighth of Romans, and looking out from the midst of conscious weakness, out into the infinite spaces, as the questions throb through the mind, "Who?... who?... who?" He can answer them all with a quiet, calm assurance.

A man at the Cross challenges all attack, all accusation, all condemnation, all separation, and ends in the glorious declaration that none can be against, none can dare accuse, that none can condemn, that none can separate.

In conclusion, let me ask, what is the law of appropriation? There is no specific law of appropriation here; this aspect of promise leans back on God and the work accomplished in Jesus. Yet there is a law of appropriation; it is that of the realization of all that we have spoken of before. If I have never been to the Cross for its pardon, if I know nothing of the purity of consciousness that comes by it, if I am not now at peace with God, and within myself, therefore, if I know nothing of the power of the Cross in this life of probation, then the Cross brings me no promise, but condemnation.

The Cross of Jesus brings me all light, or banishes me to all darkness. Our fathers used to preach about the sin of rejecting Jesus. We do not hear very much about that today. And yet, believe me, it is the sin of all sins, it is the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is no sin so deep, so heinous, so awful as that. If I will not have its pardon, or its purity, or its peace, or its power, I cannot have its promise. Then if I ask this question, Who is against me? a myriad forces of evil charge on me to destroy me. If I ask, Who is he that lays anything to my charge? the great accuser stands before me and before God. If I ask, Who is he that shall condemn? the very God of love that would redeem, condemns. If I ask, Who shall separate me? I am separated by my own choice; and the question now becomes, Who can unite me? There is none can unite me if I reject the Cross of His dear Son.

Then let us rather come to the Cross, and in submission yield to its claim, and so receive its blessings.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

I fain would take my stand—

The shadow of a mighty Rock,

Within a weary land;

A home within the wilderness,

A rest upon the way,

From the burning of the noontide heat,

And the burden of the day.

O safe and happy shelter,

O refuge tried and sweet,

O trysting place where heaven's love

And heaven's justice meet!

As to the holy patriarch

That wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Saviour's Cross to me,
A ladder up to heaven.
There lies beneath its shadow,
But on the farther side,
The darkness of an awful grave
That gapes both deep and wide;
And there between us stands the Cross,
Two arms outstretched to save,
Like a watchman set to guard the way
From that eternal grave.
Upon that Cross of Jesus
Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One
Who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart, with tears,
Two wonders I confess,—
The wonder of His glorious love,
And my unworthiness.
I take, O Cross, thy shadow
For my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than
The sunshine of His face:
Content to let the world go by,
To know nor gain nor loss—
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the Cross.

The Cross is God's giving, and the proof of His giving. His giving, "He spared not His Son." The proof of His giving, "Shall He not freely give us all things?"

The Cross is the place of my receiving. I look back, and the Cross brings me pardon. I look within, and the Cross brings me purity. I look up, and the Cross brings me peace, I look around, and the Cross is the Word of power. I look on and out at the infinite and unknown possibilities of eternity, and the Cross is the message of promise. Here and now, as I know my own life, as I know my own heart, I have no hope for today or tomorrow, for life or death, for time or eternity, but in the Cross of my Saviour. I have that hope, for

In the Cross of Christ I glory,

Towering o'er the wrecks of time,

All the light of sacred story

Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,

Hopes deceive and fears annoy,

Never shall the Cross forsake me:

Lo! It glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming

Light and love upon my way:

From the Cross the radiance streaming

Adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,

By the Cross are sanctified;

Peace is there that knows no measure,

Joys that through all time abide.

1 Corinthians 1:18. Power By The Cross.

1 Corinthians 1:18.

Power By The Cross.

For the Word of the Cross... unto us which are being saved... is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

The aspect of the Cross of Christ which is now to occupy our attention is one that has application only to a certain number of people, whom the Apostle refers to in the words, "to us which are being saved." We have spoken in this series of meditations first of pardon, and then of purity, and lastly of peace by way of the Cross.

We are now to speak of a third blessing—power by way of the Cross. We are often reminded of the fact that in the great experience of salvation there are tenses. I was saved; I am being saved; now is my salvation nearer than when I believed—that is, I shall be saved. The particular aspect of the Cross which is before our minds deals with the present and progressive tense of salvation. Pardon full, sufficient, perfect, is granted in the very moment in which we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Purity is in that selfsame moment placed at our disposal; whether we appropriate it or not may be another matter. Power is also at our disposal from that moment and ever onward, but we necessarily come to understand it and make use of it as we live the Christian life. The Word of the Cross is the power of God to those of us who are being saved. The soul pardoned and purified immediately confronts the future, and nowhere is weakness more keenly felt than at that moment. Often men are kept from that great act of surrender to Jesus Christ, which brings them into the position of pardon or purity, or of both, by fear of the future. And though men yield to the call of the Lord, and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins; even though they submit themselves wholly to Him, and claim the great purging of conscience which comes by such surrender; even though the great peace of God is in their hearts, yet when they face the future the sense of weakness comes, perhaps as never before. To that sense of weakness the Cross brings an evangel, and as by the way of the Cross I have pardon and purity and peace, so also by the way of the Cross—blessed be God!—there is power for me.

Let us think for a moment of the need of the soul pardoned, purified, at peace. The new relationship to Jesus Christ does not remove us out of all the old relationships. We are still left on the probationary plane. We shall live in the same store, the same workshop, even though our sins are for-Christ. We shall go back to business in the same office, the same store, the same workshop, even though our sins are forgiven. All the peculiar forces that have played on our personality prior to our relationship with Jesus Christ will still operate tomorrow, though He has forgiven us, purified us, and brought us into the place of peace. All the ordinary conditions and contingencies will recur to the soul that has come into new relationship with the Lord. The old temptations will come again, and will be felt far more keenly than they have ever been felt before. The old temptations will come through the old avenues; there are but three—the physical, the

spiritual, and the vocational. Bread—that is the first; tampering with confidence in God—that is the second; attempting to possess the kingdoms in some other way than by treading the Divinely appointed pathway—that is the third. The devil has no other. These avenues are still open when I give myself to Jesus Christ. I still live within the physical tabernacle; I still am dependent on God for everything, and must live the life of trust; I still am called to Divine purpose in the world. And along every one of these avenues temptation will come to me, even though I am forgiven, purified, and at peace. My consciousness of temptation will be far keener than it ever has been; temptation will be more subtle; the tempter will be more busy. The devil is far more eager to spoil that new life dedicated to Jesus Christ than he is to pay any attention whatsoever to the souls that lie asleep in him.

Not temptation only, but suffering will still be my portion. Bereavements will come to me, as they come to others; defeat will sometimes overtake my endeavor, as it overtakes the endeavors of all men; treachery may lurk in the pathway to harm me; I am still in the place of tears, the place of suffering, the place of sorrow. Again, I am still in the place of joy. I now belong to Jesus Christ, but that will not rob me of the rapture of success; I have been pardoned and purified, and am at peace with God, but that will not interfere with the delight I have in the comradeship and friendship for others of my kind. I have indeed seen Him Whom to see is to find light and life and love and liberty; but there is still within me that which asks for gold on the morning sky. Hope will still take hold of every promise and build on it some great expectation. I am still in the midst of the old circumstances. I must still live the old life.

Once again, the dedication of my life to Jesus Christ, and all the answering blessings that come by the way of the Cross: these things do not remove me out of the place of mystery. I am still limited in my outlook. Phantoms will flit across the seas of life, threatening me and affrighting me; questions will still arise in the inner life as they did before. Yielded to Jesus Christ, I am not at the end of the questioning mind, I have not solved the last riddle or probed the deepest problem.

The man pardoned, purified, and at peace, abides in the place of peril. He must live where he lived, and as he lived, must strive for bread, and prosecute his business, and touch the world. At least, that is the Divine intention for him. And if any man shall attempt to live the Christian life by escaping from these conditions and hiding within stone walls, he will find that he has cut the very nerve of saintship, and has made it impossible to be all that Christ meant him to be. "As is the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Christianity is not an exotic which flourishes in hothouse atmosphere, separated from all difficulties. Christianity is a hardy perennial that blossoms among the thorns; and if a man moves from such surroundings he will move from the conditions that make him strong.

Yet it is not merely in order that we may meet these things that we need power. When we yielded ourselves to Christ, and received blessing at His hand, we were brought into a new realm of activity. New demands were made on us. When I come to the Cross and receive these benefits, I, by that reception, commit myself to its responsibilities. When I come to the Cross, and there, a lost and ruined soul, see that I am found and redeemed, in the act by which I receive the Christ I take the oath of allegiance to the One Who saves me. In that moment I commit myself to all the enterprises of God. He demands that what there is of my life shall be surrendered to Him, and that from that moment I shall be a worker together with Him, in fellowship, partnership with Him. From

that moment I am to stand, wheresoever my lot may be cast, for righteousness, and not for policy merely—I am to put my whole life into the great business of bringing about a reconciliation of men to God. From that moment in which the blessings of the Cross become my own, my life is committed to the publication of the evangel of the Cross to all men; from that moment in which the compassion of God becomes my salvation, I am called on to live in the power of that compassion for the salvation of others. Standing on the brink of the new life of service, with its demands so great and wonderful, the soul says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Pardoned, purified, at peace, I have to live and serve. How can I live and serve?

What I need is that there shall come into my life a new force that is equal to all the demands. Power to resist temptation, power to endure suffering equally, power to endure joy that I be not spoiled thereby, power to wait amid the mysteries until His light shall shine on the pathway.

For service I need power. If I am called to this new service I need the passive power that will enable me to stand four square to every wind that blows; I need the active power that will enable me to accomplish the work God puts in my hands as a saved man; I need persuasive power to constrain men to this selfsame Cross where I have found my blessings.

Now, I take up this letter to the Corinthians because in face of difficulties and divisions and misunderstanding the Apostle insists on this one thing, that "the Word of the Cross is the power of God."

Now, the question arises, simply and naturally in the heart of each one of us, In what sense can it be true that the Word of the Cross is the power of God to them that are being saved? Not merely the power which enables a man to find salvation, but the power that he needs to live this life, which is in itself a procession and probation of salvation. In what sense can the Word of the Cross be said to be power? If you approach from the standard of merely human intellectual strength you will come to one of two conclusions. You will come to the conclusion of the Jew or of the Greek. You will come to the conclusion that the Cross of Jesus is either a stumbling-block or utter foolishness. These are perfectly-natural conclusions. The Jew said the Cross is a stumbling-block, a skandalon, something in the way, over which men fall. Put the Cross into its relation to the life of Jesus as the Jew saw it. Take the disciples, not the great crowd that neglected Him: they learned of Jesus, and learned to love Him, and desired to follow Him. What was the Cross prior to Pentecost? It was a stumbling-block; the moment Jesus mentioned it they drew back from Him, and why? Because they thought the Cross would hinder, not help. There was no power in the Cross to the mind of Peter when he said, "That be far from Thee, Lord." It was the thing that ended power, that robbed Jesus of power to the thinking Jew unilluminated by the Spirit of God, who had never seen into the mystery. After the Cross and resurrection, when Jesus walked to Emmaus, two men talked to Him about the Cross. They said, "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." In imagination I will join the group, and ask these men a question. Do you not still hope? No, we have lost our hope. What killed it? The Cross killed it. So long as He was careful, or seemed to be careful of Himself, so long as when men were angry He went away into the country and waited awhile, and went on with His teaching, we hoped; but when He became reckless and set His face to go to Jerusalem, and we could not dissuade Him, that Cross was the stumbling-block; there He fell, there our hopes were ruined. There is no other conclusion; they were perfectly right, judging by natural law.

Or if not, then what? Then, still within the realm of the natural, you say with the Greek, the Cross was foolishness. It means the same thing underneath. It is absolutely foolish to talk about a Roman gibbet lifting a man except that it may kill him. Foolishness to the Greek. When Paul began his ministry in the Greek cities he came to Athens, the center of the culture of the time. They said, "What would this babbler say?" I think that word "babbler" simply means, as they used it, this teller of tales. There were men who traveled through these Greek cities doing nothing but telling tales of travel, adventure, things seen in distant places; and the men of the time who listened had itching ears—and they have successors today—men always seeking for some new thing. When Paul came to tell them the story of how Jesus lived and was crucified and rose, they said: This is a tale, and it is just foolishness, we will amuse ourselves and listen to it. The Cross is still that today to some. There is nothing that vitalizes the intellect until you are born again; there is nothing in the Cross that helps on the redemption of the race until you are born again. It is a cold, dead, lifeless stumbling-block, and some men are doing their very best to get rid of it. I am therefore limited in all I say now. "To us which are being saved."

What is it to us who are being saved? "The power of God." What is the "power of God"? The "Word of the Cross." Not the preaching of the Cross—one of the most important changes in translation here—not the preaching, but the Logos, the Word, exactly the same phrase which you have in John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "The Word of the Cross." It is not the preaching of the Cross that is the power. Thank God there is a sense in which the preaching of the Cross is the power of God; it is by the preaching, the heralding, the proclamation of the Cross that men find the Word of the Cross. But it is not the act of preaching that is powerful, it is the thing preached. Some years ago a theological professor said what seemed to be a smart thing to his class. He said, "Gentlemen, remember God has chosen the foolishness of preaching, not the preaching of foolishness." If he had looked a little more closely he would have found he was wrong. God has chosen the preaching of foolishness, foolishness to the Greek. What is this foolishness? "The Word of the Cross." Let us take the phrase and look at it for a moment, very reverently. "The Word," "The Word of the Cross."

Have you ever made anything like careful and patient study of what the Bible says about the "Word of God"? Have you ever taken that phrase and traced it through? The Bible says wonderful things about the Word of God. I go back into the Old Testament, and there is a wonderful amount of New in the Old. I turn to one of the Psalms and I read this:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:
He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the Lord.
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spake, and it was done;

He commanded, and it stood fast.

Listen to a statement of the New Testament, "Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." "Upholding all things by the word of His power." Hear once again. An angel visitor is talking to the Virgin, and in the midst of her sweet and holy questioning he says, "No word of God shall be void of power." The word of man is a wish! The Word of God is a work! It is always so. I speak, and then I must do it; He speaks, and it is done. I utter a thought that is in my mind; it is a dream, a prophecy, a desire, a disappointment perchance. When God expresses Himself, the thing He expresses, is. The Word of God is the expression of God, the Speech, the Revelation, the uttering forth, the going out, and with the Word is the Work.

In the fulness of time "the Word was made flesh." And what did men do with that Word made flesh? They crucified Him. I know perfectly well that at this moment—God help us to be reverent—we are standing in the presence of the burning bush. It is well that we take our shoes from off our feet, and say to our hearts that we are looking on the ineffable glory, and cannot explain it. We stand and peer into the mystery, and never understand it; yet, I pray you, think a moment in the realm of analysis.

Reverently let me take that great Word of the Cross and see how power is in it, in the mystery of defeat, in the hour of dying, by listening to the words of the Word of the Cross. If you will take the words spoken by the Word in the supreme agony of the Cross, you will find every one of them tells of defeat and of victory, of weakness and of power.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is the word of an unutterable pain, but the pain is the plea that prevails.

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It is the confession of defeat; not often have we said so, but you must take the word and put it into Jewish thinking. Paradise, what is that? The place of departed spirits, and men do not want to pass into the place of departed spirits. He says in effect: I am passing, I am a dying Man, I am going to Paradise. But you will not leave it like that; you know full well it is the passing of a King, that it is the voice of the Master of all defeat, that it is the voice of One Who in supreme defeat utters the word of an eternal victory, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

"Woman, behold thy son," "Behold thy mother." His heart is bereaved, and He knows His mother's heart is pierced through with a sword, and yet He knows that there, through that bereavement and that agony and loss and suffering, the suffering of sympathy for His own mother, there He creates the new kinship, the new relationship, gives His mother a son in the bond of His love, such as she never could have had in any other way, gives Himself back to His mother through John in the new discipleship of John, and begins that gracious work that He has carried on ever since, of healing broken hearts with the new kinship, the new relationship, the new family of God. It is a great triumph through a great sorrow.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That forsaking that so appalls you as it appalls me, what is it but the way of approach? The forsaking is the pathway to fellowship.

"I thirst." Out of that thirst there springs the living water of which thirsty men shall drink, and never thirst.

"It is finished," and we sing of it tonight, not as the declaration of a Man who is beaten and defeated. We know the ending was the beginning. That is the dawning of the new order and the new life.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." The actual passing is the coming back to the Father. Take any of the words, and I will defy you to explain them. Crucified in weakness, and yet throbbing through the weakness rivers of power, which, by the way of the resurrection, have passed out into all human life. "The Word of the Cross" is "the power of God." He spake at creation; it was done. He spoke in Jesus, and it was done. Pardon and purity and peace, and all the power that man needs to live a life and render a service come by the way of the Cross.

Now, brethren, finally, how am I to realize this power as an actual positive fact in my own life? The abiding condition of the manifestation of Divine power is that of weakness. This, carried to its logical and proper conclusion, teaches us that the supreme condition for the working of the power of the Word of the Cross in our lives is that we know what it is to be crucified with Him, to enter into the place of death with Him. It is when I come to the point of the cessation of my activity in the power of the flesh, in the power of my own intellect, that the power of the Cross becomes operative in me, and through me. Here is where we stand away, and do not know His power, even those who are His. Someone writes me. I open the letter, and I read it. It is such an old story. It says: "I am a Christian, and have been one for long years, but I cannot overcome this temptation, this besetment. I want power to overcome." Or the letter says: "I have been trying to work for God for long years in the Sunday school, in the church, it may be in the pulpit, but there is no power. What am I to do?" And my answer in every case must be the same. "The Word of the Cross.... is the power of God."

But how am I to make contact with that power, that I may overcome? How am I to appropriate that power in order that I may serve in power? There is only one way, and it is that I get to the end of my own attempts to do without God, that God is able through the mystery of this power of the Cross to come into my life, and work in victory over temptation and sin, and in all the service that His will appoints. "I have been crucified with Christ," said the Apostle, and sometimes one is almost afraid to quote the passage, it has been quoted so often, it has been preached on so constantly. Yet never until I come there shall I know what power is in my own life. That great power of the Cross operates in and through only men and women who are content to die with Him, to be at the end of self, that He may be the one supreme enthroned and crowned Lord of the life. Oh, it is this dying that hinders us. These ambitions must be laid aside, these prejudices must be crucified, this pride must be humbled; that goal toward which I have been running, which is, in the last analysis, pure selfishness, must be swept away, and I must be willing to say, "I live, yet not I." It is that canceling of the "I" in the life of the Christian that creates contact with the power of the Cross. It is only as we are prepared to go down into the death of the Cross that we shall begin to find its dynamic and its thrill, and shall know its mastery in us, over all that is against us, and through us, over all that is against God. Thank God, it is the "Word of the Cross," and it is "the power of God." No human philosophy can explain it, and no human investigation along the lines of scientific method can account for it. Here the fact remains, and the simple illustrations are to be

found everywhere. Here is a frail man, battered and bruised by his own sin, who comes at last to Jesus for pardon, claims His purity, finds the peace of God, and then goes out to begin his life anew. Beginning it anew, there is no dependence on himself. He says, "I have tried and failed; I yield myself to Him, willing to be nothing, sinking to the place where I count not my life to be anything. I cast ambition as dust beneath my feet, or, in the words of old, 'I lay my treasure in the dust,' and all I counted as dear is to be counted as dross and dung. I am nothing." Easily said, but not so easily consented to. It is when a man gets there—and now I am out of the realm of explanation, but I am in the realm of faith—that this great Word of the Cross, the Cross that is the death of sin, the Cross that cancels sin, the Cross that brings the power, begins to thrill and throb through that man's life. He is able to sin no more.

God is sufficient for all the life and service of His people. No exigencies can surprise Him, no combinations can defeat Him. But the element of human trouble and weakness has ever been the self-life. Where that ends, God, through the mystery of His Cross, the Cross of His Son, resumes His government, resumes His activity; then the life touches the place of omnipotence. I thank God for the pardon of the Cross. I thank God for purity that is mine by the way of the Cross. I thank God for peace; but, oh! sometimes—and I suppose it is because it is the last thing one thinks of in God's great gifts is always the best—this power that has come into the life and made it equal to the things to which it was unequal, this present power of God, how great and gracious a thing it is! If you and I, who tremble and are afraid as we face our surroundings and our service, will but consent to all that is meant by crucifixion with Him, we shall find that that Cross, which was a stumbling-block to Jew and foolishness to Greek, is to such as are being saved the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:30. Wisdom: The False And The True.

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Wisdom: The False And The True.

But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.

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Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

A.V.

This letter of Paul was addressed to "the ecclesia of God which is at Corinth." There can be no full or final interpretation of it, save as we understand the significance of that introductory description. I do not feel that the opening verse is so arresting to us as it must have been to those who dwelt in Corinth. The Greek citizen would have said: What does this mean? I know what the ecclesia of Corinth is; but I know nothing about the ecclesia of God in Corinth.

It is that distinction which is important. The ecclesia in Corinth was the municipal authority. Every Greek city had its ecclesia. The ecclesia—I hardly like to put it this way, and yet the modern phrase will certainly help us—was the town council. The ecclesia, moreover, was composed of free men. No slave could become a member thereof. It was a called-out company, governing the life of the city.

Now let us come back to the epistle itself. Paul here made use of a term which our Lord Himself had employed, the explanation of which was the peculiar stewardship especially committed to him. He was pre-eminently the apostle of the Church. His Gospel was supremely that of the Church. Wherever he went he planted churches. As men believed in Christ he gathered them into fellowship, and thus constituted an ecclesia. The ecclesia of God in Corinth, then, was God's authoritative fellowship in Corinth, the fellowship of souls in Christ gathered together in order that God's voice might be heard, God's authority be found, and God's will be made known. When Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth he was not at all anxious about ecclesiastical order merely for the sake of ecclesiastical order. He was anxious about ecclesiastical order and life for the sake of Corinth. It was in order that the city might be reached, that the city might have a true light, and a true love, and a true life; he was anxious that God's fellowship of governing souls therein might be in such right relationship with God that their testimony might be a testimony of truth, and a testimony of power.

The city of Corinth at that time was noted principally for its schools of philosophy, for its luxury, and for its lasciviousness. It was the day of decadent philosophy in the Greek life. Intellectually, in Corinth it was the hour of debates, discussions, divisions, disputes. Men ranged themselves

around emphases into sects, and parties, and schools.

Moreover, at the time this letter came to it, Corinth was morally depraved. The standard of morality was at the very lowest. It was degenerate, wallowing in bestiality.

And, once again, Corinth at this time was religiously materialistic. Men had fastened their faith on the idols they had erected. Men were living in the atmosphere of a Sadducean philosophy, a rationalistic philosophy; and religion was devitalized because it had become materialistic.

Now, when we take up this letter to the Corinthians, we discover that all these things in Corinth had invaded the Church of God in Corinth. The Church, which had been placed in Corinth in order to interpret to Corinth the will of God, had been affected, influenced, demoralized by the forces of Corinth. The Church that should have invaded Corinth, strong in her own essential life and light and love, had been invaded by Corinth, and her testimony had been weakened. The Church was affected by the spirit of the times, and was weakened in her influence.

Our text occurs in that section of the letter which is devoted to the intellectual condition of the church, resulting from the fact that she had fallen under the influence of the intellectual condition of the city. Throughout this section the apostle puts two things in contrast: the "wisdom of words," and "the Word of the Cross." Corinth was the center of the wisdom of words. The philosophical discussions were discussions around words. This spirit had come into the church. Men had listened to the different emphases of Christian teachers, and, disputing around these, some had said: We are of Paul; others, We are of Apollos; and yet others, We go back to the true foundation; we are of Peter. Lastly, there were those who said—it is wonderful how these things continue through the centuries—you are all wrong if you name these names; we are of Christ only. Here we find the spirit of disputation invading the church, and Paul dealing with this wisdom of words, proclaimed anew the Logos of the Cross. In the course of his argument he claimed that this is the true wisdom; it is the wisdom of God.

To the Hebrew, the Cross was a stumbling-block, something across the pathway of Hebrew progress. That is what all the Hebrew disciples had felt—Peter, James, and John—when they had protested against the Cross.

To the Greek the Cross was unutterable foolishness, characterized by a lack of intellectuality. A cross, a Roman gibbet, and a crucified man, and some empty talk about resurrection—unutterable foolishness!

All this Paul admitted; but, continuing, he declared that to us who are being saved, to those who having heard the evangel, have yielded themselves to it; to those who are determined to test the evangel, not by their own inability to understand it, as the Greek, not by their own prejudices as to a Divine economy, as the Hebrew, but by yielding to its claims and seeing what result it produces in the lives of others—to such it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

In that connection Paul made this great declaration: "Christ Jesus. Who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." The text is the summarized word concerning Christian wisdom made by this Christian apostle in a Greek city. He admits that it is foolishness to the Greek mind, but he emphatically claims that it is wisdom.

We observe, further, that the text falls between two passages which constitute a contrast. The apostle first declared that we are not to glory in the things in which the world glories. He finally declared that we are to glory in the Lord. Between the two declarations he utters this word of wisdom, and declares that Christ Jesus is the Wisdom, and therefore as men know Him and come into living relationship with Him they have, on the foundation of the profoundest philosophy and the most perfect wisdom, the true cause for glorying. Such is the argument of the apostle.

For a moment let us glance at our text quite technically. There is a difference of opinion among expositors as to whether the apostle here refers to four values when he says, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God; righteousness, sanctification, redemption"; or whether he names one, Wisdom, and then gives the qualities of that wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption. I am not going into any discussion on the point; but immediately assume the latter view, which I believe to be the true one, and that in our Revised Version we have a more illuminative translation than in the Authorized in this particular passage. But even this translation might be amended, so that the text should read: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God; both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." The apostle had said everything when he had written wisdom. What, then, is this wisdom? He immediately gives an analysis of it; righteousness, sanctification, redemption.

Now carefully observe—for this is most pertinent to our meditation—that if we take the text in this way, Wisdom as the one, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption as the three in the one, we have matters that stand in immediate contrast to things already referred to.

God chose the foolish things of this world. What are they? The things of wisdom, that is, things of Christian wisdom, the foolish things of the world. God's wisdom is the Cross whereby Righteousness is made possible. God hath chosen the foolish things that He might put to shame the things that are wise, all the philosophies of men, which had not prevented Corinth becoming unutterably corrupt.

God hath chosen the weak things of the world. What are they? The things of righteousness, the things which in Corinth were held in supreme contempt as being weak: the things that men did not believe in, the things that men there did not take into account when arranging municipal or national affairs. Righteousness was at a discount, it was a weak thing. God hath chosen the weak things, that He might put to shame the things that are strong. All the things in which men had trusted for the realization of human life individually, and socially, and nationally God will put to shame by the way of the things the world counts weak, which is righteousness.

Yet again, "the base things of the world, and the things that are despised." What are they? The things of sanctification, the things of holiness, the things of separation to God, the things of the spirit life, which the world looks on as despised things, base things, things not to be taken into account. God has chosen them.

Finally, "and the things that are not." What are they? The things of redemption, as the word redemption is used in my text. The particular Greek word here used is one that signifies the ultimate in redemption: resurrection, the renewal of humanity, and the realization of full spiritual life in a realm beyond the material. The world says, These things are not. There is no life beyond. There is no resurrection. There is no spirituality which will ultimately triumph so that life shall be

renewed in larger meaning, and for fuller purpose. The things that are not, God has chosen these.

Christ has come into the world to make known God's wisdom to men, and to carry out its purposes for men. God's wisdom is expressed in righteousness, in sanctification, and in the ultimate redemption and realization of human Life. The foundation is righteousness, the process is sanctification, the ultimate goal is that of full and perfect redemption. The wisdom of God is a wisdom that deals with humanity in such a way as to be able to save it from corruption, to realize it, and to remake and glorify it. Therefore we will not glory in the philosophy of Corinth, which looks on the Cross of Jesus as foolishness; but we will glory in the Lord, through Whom God's wisdom is thus made manifest.

Let us pass over the text again in another way, taking the great words one by one. The word "wisdom" was the common word of Greek speech; but it is to be very carefully noted by the diligent student of Holy Scripture that this word is therein used only of God, or of good men, except where the sense is most evidently ironical. It is a word that stands for the highest thought in wisdom. It has reference to a clear intelligence, rather than to capacity for intelligence. It has reference to that insight and understanding which are essential and final wisdom. It is what the Greeks were seeking in all their discussions in the schools of Corinth. All their philosophies were attempts to be wise, to come to an ultimate knowledge of truth, to see things as they really are, and understand the deepest and profoundest secrets of life. Paul said that ultimate wisdom is not in man, it is in God; and he claimed that while men were disputing over the wisdom of words and looked on the Gospel as foolishness, while they looked in contempt on the Cross—in Christ and in his Cross the ultimate, final, clear, essential wisdom of God had found speech.

The test of Wisdom is that of the results produced; and the results produced by this Divine Wisdom may be expressed in these very words.

Righteousness. The word signifies in the New Testament, and from the pen of this Christian writer, perfect conformity to the Divine standard. Christ was that in Himself. He appeared in human history, One Whose whole human life was conformed to a Divine standard, to a Divine pattern; One, the keynote of Whose life had been struck in boyhood's years when He had stood in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem and said, "I must be in the things of My Father." From that moment to the last the music of His life had been true to that chord of the dominant; it was a life adjusted to God; it was righteous life. And yet righteousness meant far more than that in the case of Jesus, and in the case of all Christian writers. We may illuminate its meaning by going back again to the New Testament story, and listening to the second of the recorded words of Jesus. As He came up out of the waters of baptism, baptized by the last of the Hebrew prophets, the Spirit descended upon Him. As He passed into the waters He said to John, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." That is one of the profoundest words, I reverently affirm, that ever passed His lips, a word not declaring that He was obeying a prophet, or keeping the law, but that He was fulfilling righteousness. How was He fulfilling righteousness? In that mystic baptism the Sinless was identifying Himself with sinning men and unveiling forevermore to the sons of men the fact that God's righteousness is not merely purity, integrity, but a passion of love that must find a way by which unrighteous souls may be made righteous. God's righteousness cannot be fully satisfied by the ninety and nine that need no repentance. It must go out after the one that is lost, and bring that one back again. God's righteousness can never find its ultimate

expression in the vessels that were never marred in the hand of the potter; it can find its fulfilment only as it goes into the potter's field and gathers up the waste and broken materials, and makes them again conformable to Himself. Righteousness when we see it in Christ is far more than hard, cold, ethical accuracy; it is fire, passion, sacrifice to make failure a success, to uplift the fallen. There is ransom in it, redemption in it. Righteousness is not a pattern merely, but a potentiality; and a potentiality at the disposal of man through the infinite mystery of a passion and death that no man yet has fathomed.

The foolishness of all this to the Greek, and the foolishness of all this to the philosophy of the twentieth century, is self-evident. I am afraid that the philosophy of the twentieth century has so invaded the Church that there are people in the Church a little questioning, and inclined to think that it is all very foolish. Yet, I pray you, mark the wisdom of it in the long years. Admit all the failure of the centuries, recognize the sad fact that the Church of God has never yet come to the fulfilment of her own life, or of God's ideal for her; recognize it all, I say, and yet mark this fact, that through that Man of Nazareth, that central Person in human history, there has been flowing down the centuries, among all sorts and conditions of men, a new river of energy, which touching men, has made to live those who had been dead, remade those who had been ruined. Righteousness has been realized as the result of the work of the Christ.

This surely is "wisdom from God." That is not wisdom which merely erects its standard of life, and speaks of a high ideal, and gathers all who realize it into some select circle, while the flotsam and the jetsam are swept away to the sea of ruin. That is wisdom which fastens on the ruined and the spoiled, and remakes, remolds, revives, and gives back to humanity its lost sons and daughters, enabling them anew for life. Righteousness, then, is the first note of the Divine wisdom as an ideal and a dynamic.

Immediately following it, and expressing a process, we have the word sanctification, a word that signifies purification by separation to the will and service of God, a word that indicates the life as entirely at the disposal of God and harmonizing with God in His purity. This is the second fact in the mission of Christ. He was Himself sanctified, as He Himself did say; and He, taking hold of men, sanctifies them by putting them into that fellowship with God wherein they walk after Him and with Him, and rise into His life and into His light and into His love. Oh, soul of mine, the process is slow; I know it, not by observing others, but by living with myself! But however slow the process is, this also I know, that the passion for it is within the heart, and the aspiration of it is ever with the soul; and slowly, stumblingly, and, ah, me, shamefully, unworthily, we are yet growing up into Him Who is the Head, even Christ.

Redemption is the great word, a word signifying the final loosing of the life from everything which destroys it, the final loosing of humanity from all the things that break up and spoil. This word occurs only ten times in the New Testament. It is always used in connection with the thought of the ultimate victory. There is a sense in which a man is redeemed in the moment when he yields to Christ. There is a sense in which he will not find his full redemption until the work of God be perfected within him. That is the ultimate value. Given the righteousness which is in Christ, and the sanctification which is through Christ, the redemption by Christ is assured.

Let us take the thoughts and make them personal, particular, individual. What is righteousness? It is Christ imputed to me. No, my brethren, we cannot get away from that word! It is a great word,

one that our fathers more often used than we do; but it is not the final word of Christian experience. When a man, not merely a sinner racially, but a sinner polluted and weakened by his own sin—such a man as knows sin in his own heart—when that man trusts himself to Christ he is not immediately conscious of the fulness of strength, for the habits of the Christian life have to be formed, just as evil habits had to be formed. Do not forget that. Here is a young man who gives himself to Christ, or a man far on in life, and he talks of the difficulty of being a Christian. Let such men remember that they have to form habits of Christian living as surely as they formed the habits that spoiled them. There is a growth into habit, and we must be patient in the process. Nevertheless, in the moment in which a soul casts itself on the unutterable mercy of God, in that moment Christ is imputed to that soul, and the spirit is immediately readmitted to fellowship with God. That is righteousness, Christ imputed to a man for the salvation of his spirit.

When, then, is sanctification? Not Christ imputed, but Christ imparted to the soul. Now we touch the realm of process and of development and of growth, the growing up in all things to Him Who is the Head, the growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the process of separation by which Christ is imparted to the life. This is the realm of slowness. This is the place where we mourn. It need not be so slow as it too often is. Do not let us excuse our slowness. I came across something in my reading recently, just a conversation between two people. One man said to his friend: "Well, you know, thank God, He knoweth our frame, He remembers that we are dust." "Yes," was the reply, "but we need not be any dustier than is necessary." We often quote a text like that, and then stay in the dust when we need not. But there is a necessary slowness in this process of sanctification as Christ is imparted. But slowness is not failure. The growth into Him is continuous. If we are Christian men and women we are growing more like Jesus—I will take the old, dear, sweet, ineffable name of the Nazarene—we are growing more like Him. Are we? There is no person more evangelical or orthodox in the universe than the devil! He holds no heresy, he knows all the truth. A man may know all the truth, and yet not be like his Lord. The thing that matters is that we should be actually growing up to Him in all things, that He should be imparted to us, that we look with His eyes, and become like Him, love-mastered, and light-illuminated souls. That is wisdom surely, God's wisdom in Christ, bringing men into conformity with Him Who was perfectly conformed to God; and so having them realize their own humanity.

Then shall come the hour, the final hour. How shall I speak of it, that final experience when Christ: shall be not merely imputed as righteousness, or imparted as sanctification, but implanted as redemption? That is the hour to which the seer looked forward when he said: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him." That is the hour to which the psalmist of the old economy looked forward, not so intelligently perhaps, but with equal glory of expression, when he said: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." Perfect redemption!

The Greek philosophers were unequal to producing these effects in human lives; and there came into Corinth an apostle of the Gospel, and he preached, and a few souls believed, and the process commenced. In their Church fellowship these souls became the new regenerative center for Corinth, if Corinth would but hear and obey. This is wisdom on the highest level, because it is not the wisdom of an idea that vaporizes, it is the wisdom of a truth that energizes, and, touching life, heals it and helps it.

We do not wonder that the apostle said: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Christ is the Wisdom of God, and all earthly wisdom is but foolishness. The philosophies of men are vain when we come into the presence of corruption and sin, and the undoing of humanity! But when He comes, lo! the desert blossoms as the rose, the marred vessel is made again, and I, even I, withered, paralyzed, darkened in the mind, groveling in the dust, even I begin to breathe, live, hope, aspire, and climb. We glory in the Lord!

Christ is the Righteousness of God. All earthly strength and power will pass and perish. Man is unequal to the maintenance of himself, or of those relationships which make for permanence. This righteousness will take hold on the individual man, and will remake him as within himself, setting back into true proportion and balance his complex nature of spirit, mind, and body, until at last he himself shall be a veritable kingdom of God. By the multiplying of the number of such grows the Kingdom of God. We glory in the Lord!

Christ is the Sanctification of God. All earthly values fail, the things that the world counts of worth. The honored and the noble things of men are base and mean. It is true that the honored and the noble things of God are base and mean in the view of the worldly philosopher; but yet we know that at last purity will abide. We glory in the Lord!

Christ is the Redemption of God. All earthly hopes are doomed. The goals of men are but mirage. The final realization of the spiritual purpose, and the beatification of humanity in the Kingdom of God, this is the hope that burneth like a beacon and flasheth in perpetual glory. It is in the presence of this that we lift up the heart, and are assured. We glory in the Lord!

Our glorying in the Lord is vain save as we are abandoned to Him in will, and so co-operate with Him in power. Our position is sure. Our promise is certain. If we have believed in Him we are responsible only for the process. We shall demonstrate to our intellectual satisfaction the wisdom of the Gospel of the Cross only as we yield ourselves to its claim. In proportion as we do that it will produce in us the effects that demonstrate its infinite and abiding wisdom.

Let us, then, submit ourselves to that indwelling Spirit Who carried forward the process, and go forth, for our own lives, and for all our social outlook, and our racial hope, to glory in the Lord, Who is the Wisdom of God, "both righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

1 Corinthians 2:16. We Have The Mind Of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:16.

We Have The Mind Of Christ.

This is one of the superlative apostolic claims for the Church of God. It has nothing to say of organization, of polity, or of methods of service. It is concerned with its philosophy, or wisdom, with that whole of truth which is to express itself through the organization to be the criterion of its polity, and to govern the method of its service.

These words were written to "the Church of God which is at Corinth... them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called... saints, with all that call upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." Such were those of whom Paul thought when he wrote the words: "We have the mind of Christ." At the time, Corinth was one of the wealthiest of the Greek cities; it was also a center of learning, a haunt of the schoolmen. Its abounding wealth made it a seething center of corruption, while the professed leaders of thought were engaged in disputes over terms, and thus were contributing nothing of moral value to the civic life. This letter of the apostle shows that the Church had passed under the baneful influence of this false wisdom, and to correct this the letter was written. Paul declared that his preaching to them had nothing in common with these things. The wisdom of those scribes, those disputers, was a wisdom of the world, and its rulers were coming to naught.

Moreover, there was no need for the Christian Church to be thus influenced. It possessed its own wisdom. There was a Christian philosophy which was a mystery, which had been hidden in the past, but now was revealed through the Spirit.

Now, the whole truth as to the fact of this wisdom and its possession by the Church is contained in our text: "We have the mind of Christ." This is as true today as at the time when Paul wrote the words. Leaving, then, all the apostolic application to the then existing conditions, let us consider the statement in itself, that we may apply it to our own conditions.

And this we shall do by giving attention to three matters suggested by the text: first, the Mind of Christ as the sum total of Wisdom; second, the Church of Christ as the depository of that Mind; and, third, the consequent Responsibility of the Church.

We begin, then, with this phrase of Paul: "The mind of Christ." In writing to the Philippians, Paul charged them: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Now, the word of that Philippian letter and the word of this Corinthian letter are not the same. They have connections: there are vital relationships between the words both translated "mind"; but for the purpose of our present consideration we must keep them separate and not confuse the thoughts. The word in the Philippian letter which appears today as an abstract noun in our translation is, as many of you know full well, a verb. "Have this mind in you" might be rendered, Be thus minded, which means, Let your habit of mental activity be that of the Christ. The word there refers to an exercise of mind,

an emotional exercise, and, consequently, an inspirational exercise, creating an activity: the mind of Christ, that emotional activity which was the inspiration of His self-emptying, His descent to the human level, and His final ascent to the throne of universal empire.

The word in our text is not this word. I say again that the underlying conceptions have close connection, but the word "mind" in our text refers to the understanding, the intelligence, and that not as capacity, but as consciousness. The mind of Christ here is not that instrument which enabled Him to apprehend, but the apprehension which resulted from the exercise of that instrument. The mind of Christ here refers to the whole knowledge of Christ as it produced emotion or feeling in Christ and resulted in definite choice of the will, not only the capacity for thinking, but the thought; not only the capacity for feeling, but the feeling resulting from the thought; not only the capacity for volition, but the definite choice made on the basis of emotion proceeding out of perfect knowledge. To summarize, the declaration here is that we have the knowledge of Christ, His consequent feeling, and His resultant will.

Passing, then, from that which is thus most technical, and yet most important, we will endeavor to understand the conception which is suggested by this pregnant phrase: "The mind of Christ."

Here we must first remind ourselves of the limitation of our consideration and of its unlimited inclusiveness.

First, its limitation. The conception is limited, and it was the limitation which caused the Greek philosopher to call the Christian philosophy "foolishness." That view of the Christian philosophy grew out of the fact that in all the presentation of that philosophy by apostles, evangelists, and prophets there was a clearly marked limitation. The limit of consideration is human failure. The knowledge of Christ, His emotion, His will, are seen only in relation to human failure; wisdom is conceived of only as it affects human failure. Consequently, the supreme sign and symbol of the Christian wisdom is the Cross of Jesus Christ. This is our limitation. When we quietly consider this phrase, and begin to think what the conception is, what is connoted by this wonderful bringing together of simple words, "The mind of Christ," we are compelled to remember that we can think only within this limited sphere of human failure.

Yet, finally, it is unlimited, for this central fact affects and includes all things, and the whole concept of Christian wisdom concerning human failure has at its heart a great belief that failure may be set right, and emerging out of that belief, we see the possibility of the full realization of the divine ideal, and so, at last, we discover that: the Christian philosophy affects all the facts of the universe. Was it not that profound conviction which moved the apostle when he wrote to the Colossians words which I venture to say to this day are full of glorious mystery, suffused with suggestions we hardly dare believe—when he said that Christ is to reconcile all things to Himself, not only things on the earth, but things in the heavens.

What, then, was the mind of Christ as finally revealed by the Cross? If the consideration is limited in the way I have suggested, it is yet so vast that there is the greatest difficulty in speaking of it, as there is initial difficulty in thinking of it. I shall attempt to speak only from the standpoint of personal apprehension and realization, for there must inevitably be infinitely more in the suggestion of the phrase than I have yet understood.

As I think of the mind of Christ, I find three supreme facts therein. First, there was the unfailing and undying sense of the beauty of holiness; second, there was the forever undisturbed conviction of the possibilities of all lost things, and, finally, there was the supreme and always victorious conviction of the glory of the work of realizing lost things, even at infinite cost, in order finally to establish the beauty which is the outcome of holiness.

In the mind of Christ—His outlook on things, what He thought of things, His conception of them—I find, first, the fact of His consciousness—and I borrow the phrase from the old Hebrew Scriptures because of its exquisite delicacy—of "the beauty of holiness." First of all, Christ knew God, had perfect knowledge of Him. It was out of that knowledge that there came His tremendous word on one occasion: "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God." He had that knowledge, and, consequently, all things were viewed in their relationship to God. He never thought of man as separate. He saw the whole universe related to God. He knew God, and He saw everything in its relation to God. Therefore, He knew that the secret of beauty in flower and bird and man was holiness, and that the issue of holiness is always beauty. In Himself, wherever He has been understood and yielded to, He has proved Himself to be the fountainhead and inspiration of everything that is truly beautiful, and that because He lived in perpetual relationship to the God of Whom a prophet in a high ecstatic moment of vision said, "How great is His goodness, how great is His beauty!" He realized through all His thinking, never forgetting it, always declaring it, that only holiness is beautiful, that beauty is always holy, that at the heart and center of everything fair and beautiful in the universe is God. From the grasses that deck the field with beauty to the souls of men that worship in the high and holy place the reason of beauty is holiness, adjustment to the Divine will, articulation with the Divine thought, correspondence with the Divine character. The mind of Christ was, first of all, the perfect understanding of the relation of beauty to holiness. That was evidenced in all His living, in all His teaching, but supremely in the Cross.

Everything of refinement today in human hearts and lives has come from that Cross, that Cross in which He first, amid its shame and vulgarity, did vindicate the holiness of God, and, consequently, that Cross through which He was able to give to men a life that permeates their thinking and their acting, and that through every succeeding age will blossom into beauty, the beauty of holiness.

All this may be described merely as Christ's high idealism, His acceptance of all the things that are highest and best; but when He came into the world, what did He find? Beauty everywhere spoiled, because everywhere holiness was violated. Now, I inquire, how will this Man of such high and wonderful ideals look on such a world as this? The answer is that of the New Testament. He looked on the world, believing always in the possibility of restoring, renewing, regenerating, re-creating everything on which His eyes rested. As I said concerning His vision of the beauty of Holiness, that He knew God, so now I say concerning His conviction of the possibility of lost things, that He knew men. In a moment of rare insight John the Evangelist and apostle, the lover of the Lord, wrote these words concerning our Lord: He needed not that any should tell Him what was in man, for He knew man. A great generic declaration, not merely that He knew individual men, though that also was true, but that He knew humanity. In all our Lord's relationship with men He treated man as supreme in the universe; according to the conception of our Lord and Master, everything was beneath man in the scale of being. He believed that man, in spite of all that He saw in man of failure and ugliness and depravity and ruin, was capable of being redeemed, was yet worth dying for. From that standpoint if from no other, the Cross of Jesus Christ forevermore flings

the light of hope across all human darkness, and writes hope on the face of the most brutalized countenance that my eyes have ever seen. For such a man also Christ died, and His dying was the outcome of His conception of the possibility of lost things.

In which is involved what I state separately. The final thing here in this wonderful mind of Christ was that He not only knew the beauty of holiness and forever acted on it, not only believed in the salvability of humanity and the possible restoration of all lost things; but that He considered that a self-emptying, which involved in it the unutterable and unfathomable darkness of the Cross and Death, was, nevertheless, the highest glory that could be granted unto Him and unto all who will come into association with Him. The glory of reclaiming lost things was the master inspiration of His mind in all His pathway through this world of ours. He emptied Himself! Inevitably, the words must be quoted here. Why? It was an action of mind growing out of a mind which ever conceived the connection between beauty and holiness, which believed in the salvability of the lost, which considered no suffering too great that results in such saving. The master passion of His heart, then, was to glorify God in saving man, to realize the beauty that is conditioned by holiness, in the desert, in the barren soil, where the briars and weeds are, to realize the glory of the rose and the myrtle tree. In order to do this He counted it all glory to suffer. He was crowned with glory and honor, says the inspired apostolic writer, that He might taste death for every man. The crown of glory and honor was not that of His sinlessness, nor of His ideals; it was the high and holy authority which He received from His Father to lay down His life, that He might take it again on behalf of the lost.

Reverently we turn from that principal thought to the declaration of the text. The Church of God is the depository of the mind of Christ. "We have the mind of Christ." The statement gives us pause. We are a little afraid, and we begin to look around and wonder. I ask you to postpone all such halting and all such inquiry—perfectly right and proper and necessary presently—and to consider the declaration in itself. The Church of God has the mind of Christ; she thinks with Christ; the measure in which she does so is the measure in which she also feels with Christ; and the measure in which she is true to her thinking with Christ, and her feeling with Christ, is the measure in which she chooses with Christ. The Church of God has the capacity to see with Christ, to feel with Christ, to choose with Christ. This is true, not only as to capacity, but as to consciousness. The Church of God knows what Christ knows: the beauty of holiness. She feels what Christ feels: the possibility of the lost. She wills with Christ: to suffer in order to save.

The Church knows the beauty of holiness. Alas, and shame on us, that we do not always do the things we know. We know the beauty of holiness. The Church also feels the possibility of lost things. In spite of its theology, the whole Church knows and feels the possibility of lost things. And, again, the Church chooses, in the measure in which she really is true to her Lord, the glory of the Cross to rescue man, not His Cross only—His Cross supremely—but her own cross, in fellowship with His sufferings, in making up that which is behindhand in His suffering. The Church expresses the mind of Christ not when she asserts, I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, but when she is out in the wilderness, seeking the lost, pouring out her life blood in the business of bringing the wounded and the bruised and the spiritually halt to spiritual life.

I am perfectly well aware that it may be objected today that all this is so ideally, but not actually. I reply it is actually so, if not actively; and it is actively so whenever the Church is truly loyal to her

deepest life.

Disloyalty to these truths presently destroys the capacity for them, and there is such a thing as cutting out the fruitless branch that it may be burned with fire because it is fruitless. If we come from the catholic outlook to the individual, the question is, Have I the mind of Christ? Do I see the beauty of holiness as He saw it? Do I believe, as He believed, in the possibility of saving the lost? Am I ready, as He was ready, to pour out my life in sacrifice, that the great work may be done? That is the test of Church membership, and there is none other. It is the final one for the true Church, the mystic Church, the Church whose membership is known to God.

If this be a fact how are we to account for it? The Church shares the life of Christ. Now, what are the elements in the Christ life? Light first, love also, liberty consequently. The Life of Christ being Light, His thought is of the beauty of holiness; His Life being Love, His feeling is of the possibility of lost things; His Life being Liberty, His choice is being bound on the Cross by love, that He may be the Saviour. The Church shares that life. This is the condition of entrance to the Church. A man becomes a church member, not by being baptized either in infancy or in adult years, not by the vote of a church meeting, not by writing his name on a roll. He becomes a member of the Church by being born again, by receiving the new life, the very Life of Christ. Consequently, if I am a member of the Church, then in me is this Life: light, which reveals the beauty of holiness; love, that brings conviction of the possibility of lost things; liberty, in which I am free from bondage, that I may be bound with Christ to the altar of sacrifice on behalf of others.

This is so, moreover, because the Church, thus sharing the Life of Christ, is ever taught by the Spirit, by Whom her members are born into her most holy communion, by Whom she is always indwelt, and Whose one mission is to reveal and realize the things of Christ. So we have the mind of Christ.

Finally, I will indicate lines of consideration, rather than follow them, on the subject of the consequent responsibilities of the Church. These are threefold, and result from the facts we have been attempting to consider. The Church is responsible, first of all, for continuing to proclaim by her doctrine and her conduct Christ's ideal, the ideal of the beauty of holiness. The Church is responsible for continuing consistently to announce His confidence, and to act in accordance therewith in the salvability of lost things. The Church is responsible, finally, for being His instrument to express through her activity His activity, the activity of sacrificial service.

I say the Church is responsible, first, for proclaiming His ideal of truth as the foundation of all order, of justice as the law of life, of righteousness as the one strength of peace. The Church cannot neglect these fundamental matters. The Church can never consent that in the interest of freedom from suffering, in the interest of the cessation of conflict, these things should be denied. In proportion as she is true to the mind of her Lord, the Church of God stands for truth and justice and righteousness.

But the Church is also called on to announce our Lord's confidence in the salvability of the lost. She must declare the possibility of the emergence of a new order whenever humanity is plunged in such a cataclysm as that in which we are today involved. In the midst of an hour when it seems as if ideals were gone, hopes were lost, and all the progress of centuries was being destroyed in blood and fire and vapor of smoke, what is the Church to do? She is to declare that these very

things, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, are the signs of the day of the Lord. She is to declare that out of chaos cosmos must come. By her sacred and solemn minstry she is called on to lift her anthem in the day of defeat to declare

That cannot end worst which began best,

Though a wide compass first be fetched.

She is called on to

Argue not

Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot

Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer

Right onward.

That is the Christian message. The Christian Church is to declare anew the hopefulness of Christ, that out of the worst must come at last the realization of the highest and the best.

The Church is called on to express our Lord's activity. That activity is self-emptying, ceaseless service forevermore made intense and powerful by the element of sacrifice. The Lord was concerned not only about the salvation of a man's soul, He was also concerned about opening blind eyes, and giving steadiness to palsied limbs, and comforting broken hearts. The Church of God is called on supremely to fulfill that function. I thank God for the measure in which the Church is doing that work today, and for the measure in which the whole nation, as beyond the Church, is learning the lesson of the Church and is doing that work. For some of us just now the mind of Christ is revealed in bandages, and in visiting the fatherless and orphans. Oh, dear Christian woman, do not undervalue your service as, with smiling face and cheery words, you pass from bed to bed in a hospital. That is Christian service.

In conclusion, the supreme matter of the moment for those who have the mind of Christ is that they shall bear testimony to holiness as right relation to God, and of holiness as the one and only condition of beauty. Not by the victory won by the sword will beauty be re-established. That is for the moment necessary with a ghastly necessity; but unless spiritual idealism shall go beyond it, and men everywhere shall see that not by victories won over each other, not by policies arranged as between each other, but by restored relation to God, there can be no beauty. The new internationalism may be as ghastly as the old, unless it is the outcome of relating men to God. The work of the Church is to insist on that, and on the possibility of realization in spite of the darkest outlook. Therefore, the Church is to say that nothing which is salvable is to be destroyed, nothing that can be saved must be destroyed.

The Christian Church has also to teach men the glory of working toward the end of saving the things that may be saved. And because we want to see the saving of things that may be saved, peace must be on the basis of righteousness, and in its making the element of sacrifice must be included.

Finally, mark this word, this apostolic word—mark it well and consider it in all planning and arranging. The rulers of this world who know not this wisdom will come to nought; but the rulers of

the world who learn this wisdom, this mind of Christ, will come to victory, and the victory shall be that of the beauty of holiness.

1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:13. The Limitations Of Liberty.

1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:13.

The Limitations Of Liberty.

All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify.

1 Corinthians 10:23

The Apostle Paul was preeminently the apologist of Christianity. His mind was naturally alive to all the thinking of his own age. Its Hebrew training made him familiar with the highest religious conceptions. Its Roman sympathy caused his vision of empire. Its Greek interest made him conscious of the philosophies of the intellectual world. Yet his relation to Christ affected, rather than was affected by, all these things. To him the essential in each was included in the Lordship of Jesus and thereby redeemed. His message, therefore, was perpetually paradoxical, as he admitted, and then denied the ideals of his own age. He was the uncompromising foe of the tyranny of the Hebrew priests, and yet he argued passionately for the priesthood of the saints. He most evidently admired the far-reaching splendor of the Roman Empire, but for him it needed correcting, until it should become a commonwealth, answering the law of One Head and feeling with the fervor of one heart. He was captivated by the analyses of life and the mysteries of the Greek philosophies, but for him the former needed restoration to naturalness, and the latter purification by light. In Christ this man found the truth lying at the base of all error, and his teaching was uniformly directed to the work of correcting error by the declaration of the truth. It is this method which obtains in the two verses which I have read as text. They occur in a letter written for the correction of the life of a Christian Church in a Greek city. This letter reflects as in a mirror the conditions obtaining in Corinth at the time. The false conditions in the Church were caused by the fact that the Church had passed under the influence of the city. In the divisions which had sprung out of discussions around the "wisdom of words" is seen the counterpart of the philosophic discussions then obtaining in Corinth. The lack of discipline which was cursing the Church was the reflex of the toleration of impurity in the life of the city. In the lawsuit which the Apostle condemned I see the shadow of the ceaseless litigation which had become almost a method of amusement in the Greek cities. The prevalent impurity within the Church which he so sternly denounced was possible in the atmosphere of the corrupt life of the city. The disorderly observance of the Lord's Supper by these Christians reflects the degradation of religious rite and ceremony in the Greek temples. In the violation of love against which he so strongly protested is manifest the selfishness prevalent among men outside. Finally, in the difficulties about the resurrection which he combatted in so stately and magnificent an argument, is discoverable the effect in the thinking of the Christian people, of the materialization of ideals which characterized Greek thought. The cause of these

conditions of life was very largely the Greek conception that man was independent of all law external to himself. This was the Greek idea of liberty. It was expressed in a proverb which, being translated, runs: "Man is the measure of all things." Within the circumference of that conception men were living and claiming liberty, declaring all things were lawful unto them. It was a doctrine of liberty. Paul affirmed it, and corrected it. When the Greek philosopher declared all things were lawful, Paul answered, "All things are lawful for me; but—"

There are two matters for our consideration. First, the Christian affirmation of liberty—"All things are lawful." Secondly, the Christian description of limitation—"All things are lawful; but—" First, then, the Christian affirmation of liberty—"All things are lawful." Notice the inclusiveness of the affirmation. Here I must trespass on your patience while we look carefully at words, for if words be indeed the channels through which truth is conveyed, we need carefully to examine them, or we may miss the truth they are intended to convey. The Apostle made use of one word, *panta*. We must understand what it means if we are to perfectly realize the measurement of Christian liberty. It is the plural form of a Greek word which simply means "all." Theyer tells us that when the word stands in the plural without the article, it means all things of a certain definite totality, or the sum of things, the context showing what things are meant. In this Epistle the expression "all things" occurs no less than thirty times, and every time it is necessary, according to Theyer, to interpret the meaning by the context. I have been making a careful selection of the occasions in which the widest use is made of "all things," and I shall ask you to traverse the ground in order that we may know what the Apostle meant thereby.

First, let us remember that when the Greek used this phrase and declared "all things are lawful," he referred to the sum total of material things and moral values, and all the forces of life of which he was conscious. How, then, did Paul use the term "all things"? We are not left to speculation. In the third chapter is his own definition. "Wherefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours," and then there is a parenthesis evident in the fact that the main argument is taken up at the twenty-third verse, so that if you read directly from that central word of the twenty-first verse to the end of the twenty-third verse, you will find the main statement, "All things are yours... and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Between the first affirmation, "All things are yours," and the latter words there is Paul's exposition of his own use of the phrase, "all things" "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." Not only, therefore, does the Apostle include all that the Greek philosopher included, but he sweeps out into a realm that far transcended anything that the Greek philosopher saw or understood. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." The naming of these men is the naming of emphases of truth for which they stood. Every system of thought is yours. Again, "the world" is yours, with all its forces, and its movements. And "life," which you are perpetually attempting to analyze and account for; and "death," which to you is but a cessation of life, and a mystery, both are yours, that is "things present," an inclusive phrase which is the boundary of the thinking of the Greek philosopher; and things to come, which Greek philosophy denies, but which Paul includes in his "all things." Thus, when Paul wrote, "all things are lawful to me," he included all the schools of thought, and the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come. Then notice the claim in its nature as well as in its inclusiveness, "All things are lawful." Here, again, we take the word "lawful," and ask what its real meaning is. The root idea of the word is that of being out upon the public highway. It is the opposite of imprisoned. With regard to all things, I have liberty, I

am not in prison, I am not shut away from any of them. I am on the great highway walking amidst them, and I am free. I have power and authority in respect to these things; they are permitted to me. He thus affirmed the freedom of the Christian man with regard to all things in the universe of God—material, moral, and spiritual. If we are to understand what the Apostle means there must be contextual exposition. You will find in the fifteenth verse of the second chapter a principle of discrimination. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." The Christian man in the midst of things lawful to him does not take them promiscuously, but with discernment. He puts upon things lawful to him the measurement of the infinite. He that is spiritual judgeth or discerneth all things. Further on, we have a balance of relationship. "All things are yours" is not his last word, for he adds, "and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." The final thing for the Christian man is not the all things which are lawful, but the Christ who reigns over him, and God Who is at the back of the Christ. It is a great cosmic conception which the Apostle gives us here. First, the infinite God, then Christ, then the Christian man, and, finally, all things stretching out beyond him, the man recognizing that he is crowned in the midst of all things, but never forgetting that he must exercise the principle of discrimination in dealing with them.

Then, in the eighth chapter at the sixth verse, is a great philosophy of the universe. "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him." I go a little further, and I see this cosmic conception still dominating his thought, for in chapter nine and verse twenty-five I read, "And every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." That defines the attitude of Christian endeavor in the midst of all things. In the tenth chapter at the thirty-first verse, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is the law of action in the midst of the all things which are lawful. At last, in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses of chapter fifteen, I find Paul's vision of consummation. "He put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all things in all things." That is one of the most magnificent and stately passages in the whole of the Apostolic writings, and I can only hope that its majesty may break upon our consciousness as we read it. If we take these passages—and I am perfectly conscious that what I am saying is calculated rather to provoke thought, after the service, for I cannot cover all the ground tonight—we shall discover the Apostle's conception of "all things." It is as wide as the universe. It sets the horizon far back and widens the outlook, making the magnificence of Greek philosophy appear poor in comparison with the tremendous sweep of the Christian conception. Standing related to all, he says, "All things are lawful for me." There is nothing essential to the universe that I have not liberty to use. By hint and suggestion, he shows the relationship existing in the universe—God, Christ, the Christian man, and everything beyond him. He declares the direction that everything is taking in the universe, all things centering in the Christ, to be finally presented to the Father, until at last God shall be in all things, and all things shall find in God their perfect fruition. I interpret the Apostle's word only by his own writing; I would not have dared to say he meant so much if I had not taken all his argument and followed the movement of the phrase to this great consummation. The Christian man stands at the center of the universe, of the present and the coming things, known and unknown, material and moral and spiritual, and he is Christ's and Christ is God's.

Now notice the limitation of Christian liberty. It is threefold—

"... But not all things are expedient."

"... But I will not be brought under the power of any."

"... But not all things build up."

This is the threefold test of how far I may use the things lawful. The test of personal progress—not all things are expedient. The test of authority—I will not be brought under the power of any. The test of social relationship—not all things build up.

First, the test of personal progress. Not all things are expedient. I think the word is almost unfortunate, not in its first meaning but in its present-day use. We have come to speak of a thing as being expedient when it is a thing that pays, without reference to principle. That is the degradation of the word. The word simply means foot free, set at liberty. The figurative idea of the word is that of freedom to make progress upon a pathway. The thing that is expedient is the thing that hastens the traveler upon his journey. The Greek word means "to carry together," that is, to co-operate, and the best translation you can possibly have of the word is "profitable." The profitableness is to be tested by the lawfulness already considered. Paul stands in the center of the universe, and he says all things are lawful to me. Art is lawful; also music, science, games, meats—all are lawful. But some of the things that are lawful are not expedient; they will not hasten the running; they will not minister to the progress; they will not make for development into perfect union with the cosmic order, which centers in Christ and God. That is the first principle as to the thing we may do, or may not do. There are a thousand things lawful to me in London that are not expedient, that will not help in my progress, that will not make me any stronger for the ultimate issue—things that will not minister to my strength for co-operation with Christ and God. All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. Something is expedient for you that is not expedient for me; something is expedient for me that is not expedient for you. Every man stands alone in the great cosmic order, and every man must find his own relationship to lawful things, first by this principle: Is this something which ministers to my development so that I may fill my place in God's ultimate will and intention?

Secondly, there is the test of authority. "I will not be brought under the power of any." As a matter of fact, in the Greek there is here a distinct play on words which is not apparent in translation, nor is it possible to express it in English exactly. I may suggest it by saying, All things are in my power, but I will not be brought under the power of any, or perhaps by saying, All things are permitted me, but I will not ask permission of any. Here, again, is a great principle. The man submitted to Christ must submit to nothing else. The man under the authority of Christ must have no other authority over his life. Man must test relationship to all things by this principle, this thing is lawful but it must not master me. This thing comes within the scope of the universe, into which I am brought to have dominion over, never to be dominated by. Perhaps if I leave the principle there it is hardly helpful, so I take a simple illustration or two. What is the true relation of the Christian man to money? Money is lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of money. What is the relation of the Christian man to knowledge? Knowledge is lawful, but I will not be a slave of knowledge. What is the relation of the Christian man to love? Love is lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of love. The Christian man asserts his liberty by recognizing its limitations; his liberty to use

anything perishes when the thing he uses becomes his master and he becomes its slave. This is a wonderfully searching principle if we will but have it so. This thing is lawful to me, but if this thing, habit or friendship, or manner of thinking, or passion of living, masters me, then have I not lost my liberty? And is not the fact that a man loses his liberty when he is brought under the power of anything a revelation of the necessity for the testing of liberty by this principle? I sometimes think I would have these words, "All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any," printed so that every young man could see them rather than any others. All things are yours, but ye are Christ's. Keep that balance of relationship and you are safe; change it and you are in peril. One is your Master, even Christ, and all things are lawful to you, but you must not let them master you; for if once the innocent, legitimate, proper thing becomes master it is no longer innocent, it is absolutely illegitimate, it is unutterably improper. Love, for father, mother, wife or child, becomes improper when a man is so brought under the power of it that he no longer yields first allegiance to the throne of the Christ and the throne of God.

One other test: "Not all things build up." That is the test of social relationship, and my reason for saying so is the context. "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good." Here, again, is a limit on my liberty. All things are mine, but there are some things which if I take and use I shall not build my neighbor up by so doing. Such things are not lawful. I beseech you notice carefully that this goes infinitely beyond what the Apostle has said in another letter, "Destroy not thy brother, for whom Christ died." This is more. He not merely says that the thing which is lawful to me becomes unlawful if it destroys my brother, but that the thing which is lawful to me becomes unlawful if it does not build up my brother. As a Christian man I am to recognize that over me are Christ and God, and under me all things—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, and life and death, things present and things to come; but I am not to indulge in any of them save as I bear in mind that side by side with the necessity for my own advancement is the necessity for contributing to the building up of my brother's strength, and the thing that builds not up is not lawful to a Christian man.

This great affirmation of the Apostle makes it necessary for us as Christian men to assert our liberty, our possession of all things. That man is sadly mistaken who imagines that we as Christian men are excluded from anything that is essential to the universe of God. All things are lawful. We make a yet more terrible mistake if we imagine that we may exercise our liberty by indiscriminate use of the things that are lawful. The tender, strong love of God in Christ lays restrictions on our liberty; first, things lawful are to be exercised for our progress toward Christ's consummation; secondly, things lawful are to be kept under us while we are under Christ; and, finally, in the great, far-stretching universe, in which all things are lawful, we make illicit use of the lawful things if we ever forget for a passing moment that we cannot live alone, that our brother's life and our brother's edification are part of our responsibility. I thank God for the breadth and the narrowness of Christian liberty, and I pray that we may ever remember that there are limits to the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and that to keep within the limits is to live in spacious liberty.

1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1. Ambitions.

1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1.

Ambitions.

... desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you. Follow after love....

1 Corinthians 12:31; and 1 Corinthians 14:1

We are all familiar with the word "Ambition." Coming to us from the Latin, it has acquired a significance quite other than that of its first meaning. Quite literally, it simply means going round. In process of time, it came to signify going round for votes. Today, it stands for that mood of the soul which makes a man go round for votes; today it stands for earnest desire, especially desire for honor in some form. Thus it will be seen that the word originally described a method, an action; while today, it is used rather of a purpose, an inspiration.

The question which has been under consideration this month by our young people has been: "What would you consider the greatest honor that could come to you; and why?" It will immediately be recognized that the purpose of the question was that of discovering the ambitions which are inspiring their lives, or which ought to inspire their lives; for it is possible for a person to cherish an ambition which is not an inspiration but which is a dead weight. The answers which I have received have been most interesting, and in some ways I cannot help saying remarkable; but I will come to them presently.

Let us first take time to consider this subject of ambition, as to its place, its peril, and its power in human life. This we shall do in the light of the text selected. I recognize that there are far larger values in this text than I intend to deal with. There is, however, exactly the light we need if we are finally to understand the proper place and power of ambition in human life.

In considering this, therefore, we will first of all dwell with some technical care upon the word of which the apostle made use, and which the revisers have translated "desire earnestly"; and King James translators, "covet." It is one word in the apostolic writing. It is the Greek word from which two well-known words in our English language have been derived. I refer to the words "zealous" and "jealous." Zealous is a word full of suggestiveness, its root idea being that of fire, of passion. Zeal is the driving force in endeavor; jealousy is that which guards the way. Thus in our two words, we have two aspects of the same central thought. The activity suggested by the word is that of mental approbation which expresses itself in strenuous endeavor. The idea is expressed exactly by our modern use of the word "ambition." It is a strong desire to obtain position, power, honor, in the best sense of that word honor.

There is a prevalent notion that ambition is wholly evil. You will remember what Wolsey said to Cromwell:

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.

By that sin fell the angels; how could man, then,

The image of his Maker hope to win by it.

Or, again, Mark Antony:

... The noble Brutus

Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;

If it were so, it was a grievous fault;

And grievously hath Caesar answered it.

Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest

(For Brutus is an honourable man;

So are they all, all honourable men),

Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral

He was my friend, faithful and just to me;

But Brutus says he was ambitious;

And Brutus is an honourable man.

In each of the quotations the conception is that ambition is evil. This is not necessarily so. The fundamental principle of society is that of individual self-preservation and self-realization. There will be no perfected society that is not made up of perfected individuals. A chain is as strong as its weakest link. A castle is as strong as its least-guarded door. If in society there are links that are weak, society is weak. If in the great household of men there are individuals that are imperfect, then the household of men remains imperfect. Perfect units are needed for the perfect unity. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of individuality is not individuality, but the realization of the commonwealth. The ultimate reason why every man must be perfect is not that the man should be perfect, but that the community should be perfect. Therefore, every individual must aim at high things, noble things, and desire honor. This is ambition in its simplest, purest form; and this is not evil, but wholly good.

There is one brief prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, a simple prophecy among the great utterances of the prophet of thunder and of tears, a prophecy uttered to one man, to Baruch, the man associated with Jeremiah in his work. The heart of the prophecy is contained in these words: "... seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;..." Jeremiah did not tell Baruch that he was not to seek great things; he told him he was not to seek great things for himself. There in a flash we have the revelation of the difference between true and false ambition.

That reveals the peril of ambition. When the whole is lost sight of and its well-being is not sought, ambition becomes deadly. Then action growing out of it becomes cruel and ruthless. When a man seeks great things for himself, what cares he how many suffer so that he succeeds; how many are

downtrodden so that he may rise; how many are flung out by the whirling wheel, so long as he arrive at the goal? Such ambition is the spawn of hell, the progeny of Lucifer who fell from his high estate by ambition that was entirely self-centered.

When a man seeks great things, not for himself, but in the interest of the community, then ambition is godly, sacred, pure, the inspiration of all that is noble.

To desire honor for oneself without reference to its effect upon others is wholly evil. Along that line all despots have climbed to the thrones from which they have crushed and cursed humanity. But to desire honor for oneself in order that the honor gained may be made the occasion of help and blessing and healing is the very way by which—I say it reverently, but I say it—our Lord and Master has climbed to the throne of universal empire and will at last heal all wounds, end all weariness, wipe away all tears, and lead the race into the beatific Kingdom of God.

Therefore, true ambition is a great and gracious power. To desire, to covet in that sense, is necessarily to strive. Thus it becomes the secret power which contributes to the realization of the commonwealth itself.

The great subject of the apostle in this letter was that of the Christian church; he was dealing with its unity and its diversity; with the fact that it is unified by the indwelling Spirit of God, with the fact that it is diversified in all those gifts which the Spirit of God bestows upon the individual members of the church; all which gifts are bestowed in order that those possessing them may exercise them, not for the benefit of themselves, but for the benefit of the church. Whenever Paul dealt with the church in this world, he dealt with it as realizing and revealing the Kingdom of God, the true social order, that which is to be established here in the world. Paul ever saw the church in this world as the instrument of the Kingdom and its revelation, because within itself the Kingdom principles are realized. Therefore, to members of the church he said: "Covet, desire with passion, the best gifts, not that you may hold high position and become famous, but that you may minister to the good of the whole church, and that the commonwealth may be realized most perfectly because of the gift which has been bestowed upon you."

In the church, therefore, and in the Kingdom of God, individual members are to be ambitious; they are to desire gifts as capacities for usefulness; and the very possession of such gifts is honor of the highest kind. In the Christian atmosphere, everything is conditioned by a man's relation to his fellow man. In the atmosphere created by the teaching of Christ and the presence of His Spirit, honor consists in the ability to serve. True honor within the church of God, within the Kingdom of God, is the possession of that, the use of which helps others and blesses them. Finally, the apostle teaches that the one true way of ambition is the way of love.

From that survey of the subject, let me turn to the answers to the question. I have received one hundred. A few missed the point of my question. One or two filled up their paper preaching against the sin of desiring any honor at all! That was due to their very limited conception of what honor means. If honor meant what they thought it meant, I should agree with all their preaching.

The majority, however, answered quite naturally. My purpose now is to group these answers generally, selecting one or two for special treatment in order that I may say some final words of counsel and help.

There were certain conspicuous facts in the answers received. The first was the almost remarkable unanimity of unselfishness of motive. To be mathematical, out of the hundred, that was true of at least seventy-nine of the answers. The answers that were of a more personal nature, nevertheless, revealed desires on a singularly high level. Among the hundred answers, there was one note of despair, and to that one note of despair I shall come in the last five minutes. The others I have grouped, and will deal with them so, saying one or two brief words in each case.

Twenty-two young people declare in one form or another that the highest honor which could be conferred upon them would be that of ability to help those who are in need. In many ways this desire was expressed among those twenty-two answers; but the desire to help the needy, the wounded by the way, the weak, the crippled, was found in answer after answer, and when I read them alone quietly, they moved my heart singularly.

The chances are everywhere! You can realize your ambition if that is it. Do not make the mistake of nursing an ambition, which does not become an inspiration to activity. Do not sit down and sigh for some great opportunity of helping the needy in some large and magnificent way. Remember Charles Kingsley at this point:

Do the thing that's nearest,
Though it's dull at times;
Helping when you meet them,
Lame dogs over stiles.

That is a perfect and magnificent piece of Christian philosophy. Never shall I forget sitting in this pulpit and listening once to Dr. Broughton as he preached from a group of texts. When he read them, I remember I could not think what he would make of them "... as He went..."; "... as He passed by..."; "... as He was in the way!..." That great sermon was intended to show that nearly all the works of Jesus were wrought as He was going to some place, on the way. Thank God for your ambition to help. You will have a chance before you get home if your eyes are open. By the way, the ambition may be in part realized; and if you will begin then that ambition will be the dynamic of service that moves in rhythmic harmony with the highest intention and activity of God.

Nineteen answers expressed this same desire only perhaps in a more essential way; to be able to win souls for Christ. Can there be any higher honor than that?

Again I say to you knowing how difficult it may seem to you to be, yet it is true; your chances are all about you. I venture to say to anyone who has that ambition, if you will dare to begin with all courtesy and sanity, with all manliness and womanliness and naturalness, you will be surprised to find that the very people you were afraid of have wondered why you never spoke about Christ before.

Eight declared that no greater honor could be conferred than a distinct call to enter the mission field.

I want to suggest to those who wrote that, that they take time to consider quietly whether it may not be that they have had the call. I will say no more about it than that. If not, unless you are quite sure

about it, keep and guard as a sacred thing the sense that it would be an honor if it were conferred upon you. Remember, that if He is not calling you to go to the mission field, He is calling you, as His child, to hold the ropes for those who are there and to help in the great work that they are doing.

Six declared in different ways that their supreme ambition was that of pleasing Christ.

Five expressed the same thing in another way, by definitely saying that no higher honor could come to them than to hear Jesus say at the end of life, "... well done...."

How inclusive that is! And yet how searching! Let me say to my own heart and to such we may rest assured that Christ will never look into our eyes and say "... well done..." unless it has been well done! Then let us also remember that in order that things may be well done, He says, "... lo, I am with you all the days...."

Six answers, all of them from women, touched my heart. They said that there could come to them no greater honor than that of having committed to them the care of little children either in the homeland or in heathen countries. That is a great, gracious, beautiful, motherly desire, coming up out of the hearts of these girls and women.

Let me say to these that there are crowds of little children that they may care for near at hand. It is a great ambition. The first word of the final high commission of Jesus to Peter, in the shimmering light of morning, as it played upon the Galilean Sea, was this: "... Feed My lambs."

From thirteen came the answer that the highest honor that could come to them would be that of love, issuing in marriage; with the dignity of fatherhood, motherhood, and home. I thank God for every answer so honestly written. The theme is too big for me to begin to deal with here. Let me only say to all who feel that, the sense is a sacred one; guard it. You have noticed, if you have read the Song of Solomon carefully, that three times in the course of the great love song, the voice of a singer is heard who is not one of the chorus, but who sings a recitative, and these are the words:

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem...

That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,

Until he please.

Thus in the midst of the music there is a pause, and the voice of the singer is heard in warning. At the end of the marriage, following the wooing, before the betrothal, and in the midst of the united life, that revealing caution is uttered. I would that interrupting charge could be written in letters of gold and hung in every hall in which young people assemble. In the presence of the glory of love, it warns them not to trifle with that most sacred thing in life. It is a great ambition. I thank you, my brothers and sisters, who wrote for my eyes without your name appended that thought which you nurse within your heart; the great honor of the marriage relationship, of the making of home, and of caring for your own children. Never allow anyone in your presence to speak even flippantly of the great subject. Cherish the ambition; only do not wake up love until it please, and ever remember that the crowning glory of parenthood is the exercise of one of the most distinctively divine powers bestowed upon humanity.

All of these were expressions of desire that life may be of help and blessing to others.

Then I had a group of those that were more personal, but none the less high and beautiful. There was one answer which gave me pause; I am not quite sure about it, and therefore, I do not want to be unfair. One man wrote and expressed the wish that the day might come when his name should appear in the King's birthday list of honors, giving as his reason that such an appearance would be a proof of integrity on his part recognized by the nation. It made me pause, because I am not sure that its meaning is always as it appears. That is what it ought to mean. I take his wish at that high level. Perhaps that was the most selfish thing I read, yet the motive was not low; it was high.

One was a pathetic answer; hardly an answer, yet sincere. "The highest honor that could come to me would be that someone could make it possible for me to believe in God." That is pathetic, but it is full of hope. A man who will write that is on the highway to the light. As I have often said before, and I say again, the agnosticism that is an agony, is a birthpang; presently there will be the light! The agnosticism that is a pleasantry is a profanity. When a man flippantly tells me he is an agnostic and smiles, I know him to be an ignoramus and a fool, for agnosticism is never the final resting place for the honest man. I would counsel that one to cherish the ambition and make the ambition find an answer.

Someone quoted the verse from Proverbs, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches..." That is scriptural. Nothing could be better than that, only it must be remembered that Scripture must be defined by Scripture. What does Scripture mean by a good name? A good name is like ointment poured forth! The woman breaking the alabaster box of ointment upon the feet of Jesus is the illustration. The biblical good name is not a name of hard equity and righteousness. It is like ointment poured forth. It is the good name of the soul that gives, serves, and spends.

Someone else wrote this, and here again is a strange piece of wistfulness. "I should consider it the highest honor possible if only I could see a miracle wrought through my faith and my prayers!"

Here, again, is a soul feeling after great things, and again I say, guard the ambition, only consider the statement most carefully. Remember this: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," and understand that you cannot measure the influence of your prayer by anything that appears. That is not a demonstration of the greatness of prayer which is startling and wonderful. Think again in this realm, my friend. I would not dampen that ardor or speak slightly of the desire, but I would ask you to consider it.

Then I got one that was touching and beautiful. I think a hundred could have written it, but one girl wrote: "The highest honor that could come to me would be to know that in my life my mother's prayers are answered!" I know what your mother prayed for you; I know what mothers pray for us; I am with you! If presently, for it has not been so yet, if presently all my mother prayed for me can ever be true of me, that is the greatest honor I want. Cherish that ambition, live toward it, strive toward it! That ambition will be the inspiration of great living and of great service.

Another wrote, "The highest honor that could come to me would be to be loved and trusted by all in sorrow." Is not that fine? Let me ask you a question. Who is your neighbor? That question was asked quite cynically of Jesus, and you remember how He answered it. He did not tell the man who His neighbor was; He gave him the parable of the good Samaritan. Do you want to be loved? Then love! Pour out your love on some needy soul, and the answering love will satisfy you.

Another answer was written by a woman. "The highest honor that could come to me would be to have good health and a strong spiritual life." I am ambitious for these things.

I wondered as I read that, how much pain lay behind it, how much weakness and suffering. If I could find that woman and talk to her alone, I would say this to her: "Whom He loveth He chasteneth." There is a profounder meaning in your pain and weakness than yet you know! God grant you His peace!

It seems to me it is good thus to ask ourselves what our ambitions really are, and then to ask why we have such ambitions. I suppose soldiers are ambitious for the Victoria Cross. Well, they can buy them! They are worth about 7 1/2 d., I believe, as metal. But it is not the Victoria Cross men are eager for, but the thing that it signifies; the heroism that deserves it! If we have discovered what our ambition is, let us submit that ambition to the apostolic test. Love must lie at the heart of it, or it is a perilous and evil thing. If the ambition stand that test, if the reason why I desire this or that thing as an honor, is the love within me, then let me cherish my ambition, cling to it; let me be jealous and zealous in the prosecution of that which will issue in the realization thereof.

If our ambitions do not stand the test, what shall we do? Begin all over again by coming to the Christ Who sees the whole. His ambition was to reach the throne of universal empire as Saviour. The throne of universal empire, as empire, did not satisfy Him; He had that; but He "... emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." What took Him thus down? Ambition! "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow,... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...." The name He won and bore aloft to the throne of imperial, universal power was Jesus, and the name Jesus He bears because "... it is He that shall save His people from their sins." His ambition was to sit upon the throne, not as sovereign merely, but as Saviour. To that Lord, let us come, and to that One, let us yield ourselves, that we may re-adjust our ambitions.

Now in conclusion, someone wrote upon the answer paper these words from Jean Ingelow:

To strive—and fail. Yes, I did strive and fail.

I set mine eyes upon a certain night

To find a certain star—and could not hail

With them its deep, set light.

Fool that I was. I will rehearse my fault;

I, wingless, thought myself on high to lift

Among the winged. I set these feet that halt

To run against the swift.

That is a note of despair which suggests there was honor coveted and not won; ambition cherished but never realized; and the writer seems to me to be settling down upon that terrible

disappointment.

Seeing you chose to express yourself in poetry, let me answer you in poetry. Let me ask whoever wrote that answer to take Robert Browning's *Grammarian's Funeral*, quaint, peculiar, strange in many ways, but wonderful poetry. Read this, and read it all:

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it;

This high man with a great thing to pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit;

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find Him.

That is finer philosophy than the other. What did you tell me, that you set your eyes upon a certain night to find a certain star, and you could not hail them with its deep-set light? You did better than you knew probably. The only wrong you have committed is that of imagining that you did not attain that toward which you were aiming. It is the aim, the ambition, and the consecrated activity that grows out of it, which matter! No, who is there here among us who has ever seen anything of the real glory luring him or her to the heights who has already reached them?

We had better get back to the Bible. This man Paul when he had been three-and-thirty years following Christ, wrote his autobiography in a love letter, for the Philippian letter is preeminently a love letter. In the third chapter we have these words, and here is nothing finer in literature:

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal...."

Mark his attitude, dear friend of mine who wrote that poetry. Take heart! The night is black, the stars are not seen, but they are there! Keep your eyes toward them, and presently, ere you know it they will be seen! Or, it may be that you will never see them, because while you look, the morning will break and the stars are never seen when the sun is shining!

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 19. If Christ Did Not Rise--What Then?.

1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 19.

If Christ Did Not Rise--What Then?.

If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.... If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.... If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.

1 Corinthians 15:14; 1 Corinthians 15:17; 1 Corinthians 15:19

In these words we have the Apostle's estimate of the place and value of that great event which we commemorate today in common with the whole Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. It is a most startling statement, made without apology and without condition. Everything depends upon this one central fact: a risen Christ, or empty preaching and false faith, and a state of abject misery. This man did not think for a single moment that there could be any continuity of the Christian fact and force if the resurrection were disproved. Now, we must understand in considering so startling a declaration as this that we do not occupy exactly the same ground as Paul did when he wrote these words. The difference between his position and ours is a very great one in some respects. He wrote these words somewhere about a generation after the death of Jesus. The Gospel stories were not all then in circulation, but men had gone out from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria, and with new force and power from Antioch to the regions stretching beyond, and as they had passed out they had everywhere told the same story of Jesus of Nazareth, who had lived a sinless life, had died a sorrowful death, and had risen again in power and in glory. A generation only had passed. Consequently Paul's statement in this letter to the Corinthian Christians, who were familiar with questions rife in Corinth concerning the possibility of resurrection under any circumstances, makes its appeal to a generation of experience, and therefrom gathers its greatest force as a challenge. We go back to these words and read them with a slightly different accent. Their essential meaning is not changed, but we are not gathered together at the close of one generation of the telling of the story of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. The generations have multiplied themselves into centuries, and the centuries have rolled onward until nineteen have run their course, and through all of them the messengers have been pressing on, telling the same story with like results. Consequently, there is something less of the argumentative in the text for us than for the men of Corinth. We take these words and read them, and there is but one conclusion. The Apostle says if Christ did not rise, then "preaching is vain"; but preaching has not been vain, therefore Christ was raised. He says, if Christ hath not been raised, "faith is vain"; but faith has been fruitful for nineteen centuries, therefore Christ hath been raised. He says, if Christ hath not been raised, "we are of all men most pitiable"; but we decline the pity. We have marched through nineteen centuries with banners floating and songs lifted, and today we are a jubilant host raising songs of gladness that thrill through all the world. We are not pitiable, and with charity and tenderness, and yet with scorn, we decline the pity of the man who lives in dust and ashes. Therefore Christ hath been raised. If these conclusions are not right, then the Apostle's statement

was wrong; he made a false deduction. According to the statement he made, the victory of preaching, the fruitfulness of faith, and the jubilation of the Church are final evidences of the fact of Christ's resurrection. We believe that they are. I submit to you that the surest evidence of actual and positive resurrection from the dead is not documentary evidence, is not argumentative evidence, and I will include in that the sermon I am about to preach. The final evidence is the Church, that holy company of men and women, and, thank God, little children, gathered from among all nations, irrespective of geographical boundaries or temperaments, or times or seasons, gathered as the result of the foolishness of preaching Christ crucified and risen. The supreme demonstration of the fact of the resurrection is in the fruitfulness of faith. Faith has fastened upon the Evangel, with what result? Impurity has perished, and purity has resulted. Selfishness has been smitten to death, and sacrifice has been the order of life. Bonds have been broken, and men have gone forth into freedom. Faith has taken hold upon this Evangel of the resurrection and believed it, and, lo, chains have fallen, the burden has rolled down the hill into the valley, and Christian has set his face toward the Celestial City with a new song and a new victory. The final demonstration of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the joy of the Church: may I pause to say, alas, and alas, that we give so little of it to the world! We ought to be a singing people. We do occasionally hear people break out into song about their household duties, and in the streets, but all too seldom. One of the greatest curses of our age is that we are afraid that kind of thing is not respectable. Do not ever again hush the emotion that wells in your heart, whether you are in the train or on the street, or wherever you are. It is not that the song is not there, but we have tried to check it with respectability. In spite of all false checks, however, we are a singing people. You talk to me of musical London. There is more singing in the sanctuary than anywhere else. You tell me of the development of music in the history of the ages. There is no music yet quite equal to "The Messiah." When you have sung your Hallelujah Chorus, let there be silence. The Church has given the world its music. We are not pitiable. I claim that these things are the final demonstration of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Understanding, therefore, that we approach our subject from a slightly different standpoint, having all the added testimony of the passing centuries, I yet desire to take you back to Paul's affirmation, and, if I may, intimate the changed position we occupy by slightly changing the form of his declaration. To indicate the fact that we are looking back rather than that we stand in the presence of a newborn Gospel, I want to consider this theme thus—if Christ had not been raised, what then? Was Paul right when he said that faith would have been fruitless? Was Paul right when he intimated that upon the very children of song there must have come an inevitable sadness which would have made them the most pitiable men in the world? Was he right? I affirm at once that I believe he was absolutely right. Let us think of it for a few moments.

Suppose Jesus had not risen from the dead, what would it have meant so far as He Himself was concerned, so far as His work was concerned, so far as His avowed purpose to build His Church was concerned?

If Jesus Christ had not risen, what would it have meant so far as He Himself was concerned? It would have proved, first, that the greatest claims He ever made were valueless. It would have resulted inevitably in the demonstration of the fact that the work upon which He set His heart in absolute sincerity of endeavor He was utterly unable to accomplish. If Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they "slew, hanging Him on a tree," and Whom, with tender, loving solicitude, some disciples

robed for burial and laid in the tomb, never came out of that tomb, what then? Then the greatest claims He made were valueless. I do want to state this carefully. I will not even suggest that the claims He made were false, that is to say, I will not hint that when He made them He did not mean them. I cannot consent to adopt that position even for the sake of a passing argument. But I say they were valueless, and all He meant to do according to His own teaching He failed of in His dying. He said to the crowds when they criticized Him for that first cleansing of the Temple, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They did not at the moment understand Him. The interpretation of His meaning came by way of the resurrection. He said upon another occasion to the cynical seekers after a sign: "There shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet.... For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He said upon another occasion, speaking in the hearing of the critical multitudes, "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." None of these things was true in issue unless He rose again. According to the appearance of things, if you deny the resurrection, His life was taken from Him by cruel hands that mastered His weakness and hammered Him to the cross with brutal nails, and He never took it again if He never rose. If I had been, which is not at all likely, more patient than His own disciples, I might have waited for the three days to pass, and if the seal had still been upon the tomb and the Roman cross successful, I should have gone away with agony in my soul. I should have said, He meant to come back, but He is as frail as I am. He is mastered as I shall be mastered. He is beaten. If He did not rise, His own supreme and glorious claims are all valueless.

If He had not risen, what would it have meant concerning Himself and His actual work from the standpoint of the history which has been written for us of those days? When He was crucified all the little company of people that had been gathered about Him left Him. I am not criticizing them; the more I know of my own heart, the less I can do that; I am stating the fact. One disciple betrayed Him, another denied Him, then at the end of three years' public ministry we have the whole tragic story in this one sentence, "They all forsook Him and fled." That is the end of the whole thing—unless He came back. The reverberation of the hammer that drives the nails is the thunder that scatters His followers. They have all gone. The Christian ideal has perished. It was fair and glorious and beautiful. It captured a few hearts and held them, but it is over. He is dead. He is in the tomb. "They all forsook Him and fled," not through lack of love, but because they felt that He could not do the things they had hoped He was going to do. With the death of Jesus the whole movement is at an end. Men are hurrying back to fishing nets, to farming, to sit at the receipt of custom, to hide the shame and disgrace of having associated themselves with a Man, Who, however good, was still a failure. If Jesus had never been raised from the dead, there in Joseph of Arimathea's garden lay the dust of the fairest dream that ever broke upon the throbbing, surging heart of humanity; but it was past; the whole thing was absolutely over. It was merely that the great dreamer had been murdered, and that is the only meaning of His cross.

We talk of the atonement. We do not perfectly know all its method and its meanings, but we know its victory. Where is the Atonement if this man has gone down to death to abide in death? Where is the proof that in the death grapple in the darkness betwixt old systems and the Word, the Word was triumphant? He hated sin. He claimed to be sinless. He flung Himself against sin. He made

other men ashamed of sin; they blushed in His presence, and blanched with fear as the lightning of His denunciation smote them in their hypocrisy. But sin is still rampant. Sin has smitten Him to death. Sin has laid its grasp upon Him and has put Him in the tomb. He is mastered by sin. How can He break my bond, or set me free, or blot out my transgressions? If He rose not, preaching is empty. If He rose not, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins, held by them, bound by them, mastered by them, damned by them.

If He rose not, His was an ordinary death, and the doctrine of justification is unutterable nonsense. Men often say about existence beyond death, "No one has ever come back to tell us." If He rose not, that is true. There is no certainty of the life beyond if He came not back.

There would have been no justification, and there would have been no song in the cemetery if He had not come back.

If He had not risen, what of the Church? The Church could not have existed. Two things have made the Church. First, the Church consists of a multitude of people who have seen the vision of perfect life. Secondly, the Church consists of a company of people who have received power to enable them to realize the pattern. Jesus was at once pattern and power. Pattern in the glory of His life, power by the fact of His resurrection. If He rose not from among the dead—and now hear me carefully—I affirm that the Church has lost her pattern. Deny the resurrection of Jesus, and I can no more admire the beauty of His life. But you say to me, "Why not? You have already admitted that He may have meant well." Think again. The things He uttered were things in which He, with great distinctness, laid claim to such relationship to God as no other man ever laid claim to. If men murdered Him and He remained under the bands and bonds of death, no more able to break them than other men, then He was none other than other men. We are compelled ultimately to the conclusion that unless He was the Son of God, He lacked modesty, He lacked meekness, He lacked in the deepest fiber of His personality the simple elements of truth. He was the Son of God or the most disastrous deceiver that ever trod the earth. If you put Him in the grave and leave Him there, murdered by other evil men, and never see Him rise again, then He was indeed only man as I am man, and if He was only man as I am man, I repeat, He was the most successful, the most awful, and the most tragic impostor that ever trod the earth. How is He demonstrated the Son of God? By the resurrection from among the dead!

Once again, if Christ did not rise, what did happen? The living Church proves that something happened. What did happen? How were men deceived? I take the Bible up and find the story, and read the things these men affirmed to be true. You say they are not true, that He never rose, that He never presented Himself in that upper room while the doors were closed, that He never stood upon the shore and built a fire and prepared breakfast for cold, tired fishermen, that Mary never saw Him, but that she saw the vision of her own imagination. Tell me, then, what did happen? I have been told that the whole thing was a fraud, that the disciples invented the story to save themselves. But from all earthly standpoints the invention of that story ruined them. If they had abandoned the story they could have saved themselves. All the persecution, all the stripes, all loss and agony came because they would say, "He is alive." I think that needs to be stated today, and to be carefully considered. If the Christians going back to the Temple had said, "We have found a new system, a new ethical teacher, and we propose to form a school around His name," Judaism would never have been angry. It would have taken them in, and there might have been a School of

Jesus to this day within the Hebrew economy. Judaism flung them out because they said, "He whom ye slew is alive." I submit to you that they lost everything from the worldly standpoint, and I have yet to be convinced that for nineteen centuries men would continue to suffer pains, imprisonments, loss, agony, death for a lie. Men will occasionally suffer a little while for a lie, but if this thing were a fraud, either cowardice or courage would have declared it ere many years had passed. Cowardice, to escape the scourge, the dungeon and the cross, or courage, as conscience awoke, would have said, "The thing is a lie." The first witness was Peter himself, when, as is chronicled in the fifth chapter of Acts, he stood before the High Priest—who was a Sadducee, believing neither in resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit—and said, "The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree. Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." And hear him now, "We are witnesses of these things." By which he meant not merely, "We are the men who talk about these things," but rather, "We are His proofs, His credentials, His arguments." He meant to say to the rationalism of his own age, as it was represented by the High Priest, "You have no right to deny the fact of the resurrection until you have accounted for the change that has been wrought in us by our belief in it." When you tell me the story of the resurrection was a fraud, it was a fraud which made men pure and strong, and this is to reveal the absurdity of the charge.

If it was not fraud, what then? To take only one other suggestion, I am told it was a visionary appearance. We are told that people see what they expect to see, and I believe there is a great deal of truth in that. I have been for a great many years looking for a ghost, and I have never seen one. I have not joined the Society for Psychical Research, although I am greatly interested therein. I have read all Mr. Stead's ghost stories. I have walked churchyards at night and seen all sorts of uncanny things, but I have never yet seen a ghost. I will tell you why: I never expected to see one. Some of you who have seen one may pity me. You did expect, and you saw it. That is it. So I am told today by a cheap philosophy that these people saw what they expected to see. They thought about Jesus and hoped to see Him. They thought they saw Him, and there He was. But the facts are against that. They did not expect to see Him. They were startled when they did see Him. The most astonishing thing that ever came to them was the news that others had seen Him, and Thomas was not alone when he said, "Except I see and feel I shall not believe." They did not expect Him. And it was to men not expecting that He came. And it was a man who did not expect who said, "My Lord and my God." The visionary appearance argument does not hold, because you cannot deceive five hundred people with a visionary appearance. If it had been only the women, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome who saw Him, these latter-day philosophers might have had some ground. I hardly like to admit it, but you remember that the two men walking to Emmaus said, "Certain women of our company amazed us... saying,"—and that emphasis lasts until this moment. Yet be very careful how you use the emphasis. Augustine said a very beautiful thing of Mary of Magdala, that she was *Apostola Apostolorum*, because she was the first sent with the Gospel of the Resurrection. Do not forget this. Sometimes when you are struggling along by logical processes your wife will see the thing long before you. Do not be angry because women see more than you do. But it was not to women only that Christ appeared, but to five hundred brethren at once! Did you ever hear of five hundred people being deceived in that way, and they not for long? But five hundred people at once on a mountain side in broad daylight cannot be so deceived. That idea must be absolutely abandoned.

If you say it was a lie I can at least argue with you, but when you suggest that it was a visionary appearance you make an appeal to a credulity that I do not possess.

I end where Paul ended his argument, "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead." The testimony of the disciples, already referred to, is our first line of proof. These varied appearances, the unequivocal testimony of the witnesses in spite of their own previous unbelief, involving all manner of persecutions, upon the basis of which they suffered, and served, and won, that is the first line of proof, but not the final one. The testimony of Paul himself is also proof. Paul is such a living force today that in one of the most recent books issuing from the more rationalistic side of theological thinking it is suggested that Christianity is more the religion of Paul than of Jesus. I do not quote that as accepting it—I think it is unutterable folly—but to show the influence this man has exerted on the thinking of the centuries. We all know how he sought letters from the High Priest which should empower him to send to prison and death men who believed in the resurrection, and in the Corinthian letter he tells how "last of all, as to one born out of due time, He appeared to me also." One has heard in these recent days that what happened on the road to Damascus was that Paul had an epileptic seizure in a thunderstorm. Supposing that were true, then I should set to praying for epilepsy and thunderstorms at once. Oh, the unutterable folly of it. What changed this man? What made Saul the persecutor, the champion of the old, into Paul the flaming missionary of the new? He saw Jesus and heard Him, and found out that He whom he had thought of as dead was alive, and so forevermore the motto of his thinking and preaching was, "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead."

The final line of defense is that to which I referred at the beginning—the Church of Christ today. Its very existence demonstrates the fact of the resurrection, or else you have this strange anomaly in human history, a great institution making always for purity born in a lie, for it was the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus that gathered the scattered disciples together.

There is another demonstration of the fact of the resurrection which is personal. Individuals who trust Him share His life, and that life is manifest as it masters them and changes them, until today on thousands of faces wherever you go you may see the very lines of the grace and beauty of the Son of God. There are men and women here tonight by the hundred able to bear witness, and if there were no other, hear me as I speak reverently and make my boast in the Lord—I know He rose, for His life has come into this poor life of mine, and while mine has still much to do, His is already changing it, and forces that harmed are mastered, and new desires, new aspirations, new outlooks are mine. If Jesus were only such as I am, a man who died and passed to the dust in Joseph of Arimathaea's garden, He could not do these things. I can admire the genius of Milton dead, but I cannot share his life and see the vision he saw. I can admire the very melancholy of Dante, but I cannot see with his eyes. Jesus has come into me, and I have seen the Father to be what Jesus said He was, and my brother to be what Jesus said He was, and the world to be what He said it was. I know that Christ rose, because His life is in me. I am not admiring a dead thinker. I am living and walking and singing in comradeship with the living Christ.

Christ is risen! Our preaching is not vain. Pardon follows it. Peace comes after it. Power results from it. Your faith is not vain. The Living Person is the demonstration of its truth. The proof of pardon is in your heart, though it defy logical statement; the pledge of immortality makes you challenge old death as he rides upon his pale horse. These are the final proofs. Preaching is not

vain. Faith is not fruitless. We are not pitiable.

We go back once again in thought to the grave in the garden and look at it that we may believe, that we may preach, that we may sing. Oh, wonderful garden, wonderful grave.

Seals assuring, guards securing,

Watch His earthly prison.

Seals are shattered, guards are scattered,

Christ hath risen!

Now at last, old things past,

Hope and joy and peace begin;

For Christ hath won

And man shall win!

Where our banner leads us

We may safely go;

Where our Chief precedes us,

We may face the foe.

His right arm is o'er us,

He our guide will be.

Christ hath gone before us;

Christians, follow ye!

1 Corinthians 15:14. The Value And Proof Of The Resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:14.

The Value And Proof Of The Resurrection.

If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain.

1 Corinthians 15:14

Strauss, who was one of the most brilliant of the critics of Christianity, and one of the most unbelieving of the apologists of Christ, declared the resurrection to be the center of the center. That declaration harmonizes with the view of the greatest exponent of the Christian faith in apostolic times. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." No language can be clearer. The resurrection is the groundwork of faith because all else in connection with the affirmations of Christianity must be interpreted by it. If Christ hath been raised, then evangelical Christianity is true. If Christ hath not been raised, then all other matters of our faith are misinterpretations. If Christ hath not been raised then God was no more manifest in flesh in Christ than in other men. If Christ hath not been raised then the teaching of Jesus has no other authority than the authority of His own personal conviction, and must be tested by subsequent thinking and speculation. If Christ hath not been raised then the Cross of Calvary was nothing more than the tragic ending of a mistaken, if noble life. All the values of evangelical Christianity are dependent on interpretations of the person and mission of Jesus resulting from acceptance of the central fact of His resurrection.

I desire to speak first of the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption, as revealed in the Scriptures of Truth; and second, of the values of the resurrection as a basis of faith for all such as are crying out after purity, and after God.

First, then, the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption. The Christian religion is pre-eminently a religion of redemption. Its whole message may be summarized in the words of our Lord concerning Himself, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." That tells the story not merely of the mission of Jesus, it reveals the real meaning of the Christian religion. It begins with man as incompetent, and has to do with the method of his saving, his remaking. That is the distinctive note of Christianity. In that it is differentiated from any and every other religion of which the world has ever known anything. Other religions are ethical, and attempt to interpret to men the higher ideals of life. In so far as they do so they also have Divine authority. Yet others insist upon the necessity of man's culture of his own life, and almost invariably tell him with strange, weird, awful honesty, that his endeavor will be of no avail. The Christian religion comes to man everywhere, and says in effect, Thou art lost, but mayest be found. Thou hast

failed, but thou mayest succeed. Thou art ruined, but thou mayest be redeemed. The content of the Christian religion is the declaration of pardon, and of power, and of peace.

In the Bible there is one central figure, and one central truth. The central Person in the Bible is Jesus of Nazareth, called as to person, Son of man and Son of God; bearing as supreme title, indicating the meaning of His mission, the Christ of God. There can be no intelligent study of the Bible that does not show the pathways since His life in the world started with that life, and owe their direction to His indication and His impulse.

The Christian religion may be summarized in one very brief sentence, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." I therefore take the life and ministry of Jesus and divide it into four parts. First, there is the fact of incarnation. Second, there is the ministry of His life, His teaching, and His deeds. Third, there is the Cross. Ultimately, there is the resurrection. Let us interpret these facts by the supreme word, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." To do so is to recognize that the whole life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth was an unveiling of the truth concerning God. God was speaking out into speech that men could understand the infinite and eternal things concerning Himself. In the incarnation God did not come any nearer to humanity than He had been before. I go back into the twilight of the Old Testament, and I find the stupendous recognition of the nearness of God to human life. When the prophet at the Babylonish court charged the king with sin, he said, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." The Psalmist declared, Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off.... Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there." The singers and the writers of the past were thus conscious of the nearness of God. Paul speaking in the midst of the culture of Athens, said to the philosophic Greeks, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Men knew the nearness of God, but they did not know the God to Whom they were near. The incarnation was not the method by which God came nearer to humanity, but the method by which He came into the observation of humanity, and took the speech that man was able to understand. The Word, inarticulate through the far-flung splendor of the ages, became flesh, became articulate in human speech and human accents and human tones, in order that men might hear in their own language the infinite truth concerning God. By way of the incarnation God came into human observation; came into such form and fashion that the men who had ever lived in His presence, whose breath had been in His hand through all their lives, might listen and understand, might see and comprehend. That is the first fact in the ministry of Christ.

The second fact is exactly true to the same underlying principle. I follow Him through all the years of His private life, along the pathway of His public ministry; and as I do so I am coming to the knowledge of God. God is revealing to me His thought for me, His purpose for me, the meaning of the breadth, beauty, and beneficence of His government. I do not wonder, as I ponder the words of Jesus that have been preserved for me by the inspired writers, that men exclaimed, "Never man so spake." Was the message a new message? Was God giving us a new thought? Had God changed His mind? By no means. In Christ He said the thing that He always thought and intended, but He so said it that man might understand it. Through all the ministry of Christ I have the unveiling of the will of God for human life. Observe Him, moreover, in His attitudes toward men. His awful severity against sin, His gracious tenderness toward the sinner, unveil the attitude of

God toward sin, and toward the sinner. The words that passed His lips, that scorch me even until this hour, are the words of God about sin. The words that passed His lips, and which woo and win me toward His heart for rest and healing, are the words of God toward me the sinner.

Now, reverently, one step further. As I stand in the presence of the Cross, I must recognize that the Crucified One is the same Person that I have looked upon in the years of public ministry, the same Person Who is described as the Word made flesh. If "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" when He came into human life, and as He passed along the pathway of human teaching, it is still true that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" in the Cross. In that Cross is unveiled before humanity the grace of God, operating through suffering, toward the restoration of man. The Cross of Jesus Christ, according to the interpretation of the New Testament, was not the place where one Jesus of Nazareth, Who was also God in Christ, wrought out into human visibility the infinite and unfathomable mystery of that passion and pain whereby it is possible for God to take back the sinning man and remake him.

So, finally, when I come to the final fact of the resurrection, it is the revelation of the strength of God accomplishing the utmost purpose of His will. I go back to some of the ancient words concerning Him. Hear this, for instance, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." There are those who believe that from that passage a negation has been omitted and that what was actually written was this, "In all their affliction He was not afflicted." I do not say that is an accurate statement, but admitting it for the moment, see what is said. "In their affliction"—He was in it, He shared it, He passed through it with them—but He was not afflicted, He was not beaten down, overcome, defeated. Even if we take the gracious statement as it stands it has the same significance. "In all their affliction He was afflicted.... He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." I reverently come to the Cross and there I see unveiled the mystery I can never explain. I will not attempt to interpret it by the words of Scripture. The great herald of Jesus Christ said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The apostolic writer said, "His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree." Still believing that this is God in Christ, I am face to face with the tremendous declaration that God is bearing the sin of the race. The resurrection demonstrates the fact that He was equal to the burden; that He carried it; that He dealt with it as He intended to deal with it; and therefore the writers of the New Testament invariably when they speak of the resurrection speak of it as the manifestation of the might of God. The apostle declares to us that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord." The Resurrection is the revelation of the strength of Deity; the revelation of the fact that if He was oppressed, burdened with the passion of human sin, He was not overcome thereby; that in the process of bearing the burden He accomplished His purpose, and came at last to ultimate victory. Peter had the same vision of it when He declared, "It was not possible that He should be holden of it." So that the place of the resurrection in the economy of redemption is that of demonstration of the fact that all God thought for human redemption, all God attempted in the mystery of His own being for human redemption, He accomplished.

In the incarnation the fact of God was manifest. By the pathway of Christ's public ministry the will of God was interpreted. In His crucifixion, the grace of God was unveiled. In the resurrection, the victorious strength of God was manifest. The importance of the resurrection is at once evident. Take the first three facts away from the fourth, and what is the result? He claimed identity with the

Father, "I and the Father are one." He claimed authority from the Father for all He taught, "I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things." He claimed co-operation with the Father in His work, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." I come to His Cross and I see Him die. I watch them as they bear Him tenderly and reverently, and place Him in the rock-hewn tomb, and I stand outside that tomb in the garden, and see the great stone rolled to the entrance and the seal of the Roman government placed upon it. Now, what of His claim to identity with the Father? What of His claim to authority from the Father? What of His claim to co-operation with the Father? "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also in vain." If there was no resurrection all the things declared are discredited. If there was resurrection these things are demonstrated. The whole Christian religion depends upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ. If He never rose, then the story of the incarnation is a myth. If He never rose then I have no demonstration of the authority of His teaching. If He never rose, then His dying was no more than the dying of Thomas Cranmer. If He rose, then by that resurrection His Person is revealed as other than the person of Thomas Cranmer, His life as different from the life of other men, His teaching as having Divine authority, and His Cross as having some infinite value and meaning. Everything depends upon the resurrection.

Paul did not end with a hypothesis. His ultimate word is, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The infinite music of the Gospel singing itself through Paul's heart, he declares the possibility of human redemption, basing his conviction, his testimony, upon the great and gracious fact that Jesus Christ rose from among the dead.

Degrade Christ from the place that He has occupied in evangelical Christianity, from that conception which has made the Church what she has been through the centuries; speak of Him merely as on the level of other men, and you have lost your revelation of God, and your ethical authority, and your salvation by passion and suffering and death; and in order to do this you are compelled to deny the actual historic fact of the resurrection. Let that fact of actual resurrection be admitted, and it interprets all the other facts, and explains the history and mystery of the conquest of Christianity through the centuries. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," revealing His nearness in the fact of incarnation, interpreting His will in the teaching of Jesus, making visible the awful mystery of His passion in the presence of sin, by the Cross; demonstrating the might by which He accomplishes the redemption, in the greatness and glory of resurrection.

Now let me turn to the second line of consideration, which is the personal application of that already taken. What is the value of the resurrection as a basis of faith? In order that we may see that let me ask you to think of Jesus before the resurrection as to the claims He made in the presence of human life, as to the purpose He declared He had in view, and as to the promises He definitely made to men as He taught amongst them.

Of His claims, I will refer to only one. In differing ways He deliberately claimed that He and He alone could lead the soul of man to God. There are many texts. Let me take you to that oldest and most familiar, which we generally begin to recite thus, "Come unto Me." That is not the commencement of the declaration. Jesus did not begin there. He began thus, "All things have

been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." To whom will the Son reveal the Father? In a moment the answer to our inquiry comes, "Come unto Me." By all of which Christ meant to say, first of all, that what humanity needs in its restlessness is to find God. If you would cure the feverishness of life you must lead men to God. Now, mark His claim. "Neither doth any know the Father save the Son." Blasphemous audacity, or Divine Gospel, one of the two! He claimed to be the Revealer of the Father. He declared that His mission was that of leading souls to God.

What did He say concerning His purpose? He declared that He could accomplish His purpose only by dying, and whenever He referred to His dying He referred to His rising again. By many a hint in earlier days of His ministry, by clear and definite declaration in the midst of hostile crowds, by careful and patient instruction to His own disciples, He affirmed the necessity for dying, and declared that if He died He would rise again. I say by many a hint in the earlier days of His ministry. Take two illustrations. When He cleansed the temple and they inquired, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" He answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; referring to His body, as the inspired writer declares later. On the housetops at night, with the wind sighing through the streets of Jerusalem, an inquiring soul said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus said, "Ye must be born anew." This man asked, How can a man blot out the past and begin again? Jesus said in answer, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." Life shall come through death was His answer to the inquiry of Nicodemus. If you question the interpretation of these particular passages then come to the set and definite discourse chronicled in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. There is nothing more wonderful in all the discourses of Jesus than that. He said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep.... I lay down My life, that I may take it again. This commandment received I from My Father." Or if you turn from the public declaration, which perhaps has in it still something of mystery, then follow the last weeks after Cæsarea Philippi, and listen attentively. "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." How often we read that carelessly. If you tell me that was simply the conclusion of a far-seeing soul, if you tell me that Jesus was such as I am, a child of His own age, blundering His way on with great honesty, and seeing that at last these men would kill Him, and that He is now taking His disciples into His confidence and saying, Well, I see how it will all end, they will kill Me. I have been true to My teaching, and when I go to Jerusalem I know they will kill Me—then how do you explain the last thing, "and the third day be raised again"? If you study your New Testament carefully you will discover that He never spoke of His death to His disciples but that He also spoke of His resurrection. I challenge you to find a single exception. In those last weeks, over and over again, He called them to Him and always seems to have been seeking their sympathy, as He told them of the Cross; but He always told them also of the resurrection. Of course, if you question the accuracy of the records, and tear up the New Testament, do not come and hear me preach. I have nothing to preach but this Book. I have no authority other than this. I am not here to defend its authority. That is demonstrated by nineteen centuries of victory in the moral realm.

I come once more to the tomb. He is dead. He is in the tomb. I come as a sinning man. I come as a man who has to say, "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise... to me who would do good, evil is present." I come as a man who would say to all philosophers: do not discuss how the poison came into my blood; it is here, mastering me; I have sinned; I have seen the fair vision of His teaching and I desire it, but I cannot realize it; I am a sinner with guilt and pollution upon me. This Man said He would lay down His life for me, and take it again that I might share it. This Man said I might be born again by the mystery of His dying. He declared emphatically that He must die and be raised again. He is dead. If He do not come out of that tomb I will not say that He was a deceiver, but He was deceived. If He do not come out of that tomb, the thing He thought to do He has been unable to do. I cannot put it less reverently than that, but I must so put it. I stand in the presence of that sealed tomb of Jesus and say, Is He coming back? If He do not come forth, then though He laid down His life, He cannot take it again; the burner has been too much, the desire too mighty, the great dream of redemption of man by the laying down of His life and taking it again that they may share it, a great dream, but nothing more. If that stone remain there, and Jesus is held captive, then there is no pardon for my guilty soul, and no life for my paralyzed humanity. "If Christ hath not been raised... your faith also is vain, void; ye and it is true in my heart and life.

"But how hath Christ been raised from the dead?" In the moment of that resurrection all the claims of His life and teaching are vindicated. When I see Him come back from the grave I know full well that what He said is true. I know He laid down His life and has taken it again. In the mystery of that death, I cannot enter into the awful chambers of its loneliness, I am forevermore excluded. I cannot understand it or explain it, but I know there has been—

One death grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word.

Between the Lord of life, and death, and sin. If He did not rise again, then death won, and sin won. If He hath been raised, then He won and death is vanquished, because sin is spoiled. Then the sinner has found his Redeemer. If He took His life again, to share it, then I know that His dying was victorious dying; and the value of His dying He makes over to me for pardon; and the virtue of His life He makes over to me for power, and the presence of my risen Lord shall forevermore be the method of my victory.

I make the application of the great fact of resurrection in the words of this selfsame apostle in his epistle of salvation. Hear them, "If thou shalt confess with my mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame." Why does the apostle put the resurrection there, why not the Cross? Why did he not say, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that He died for thee, thou shalt be saved? Because that will not satisfy reason, and so creates no basis for faith. Death apart from resurrection makes no appeal to my confidence. Death in the light of the resurrection is that in which I put my trust. I come into the presence of the death of Christ while the light of His resurrection plays upon it, and I say, He loved me and gave Himself for Me; He was wounded for my transgressions, He was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon Him and with His stripes I am healed. It is all night if He rose not. It was a tragic death, awful death, a death of failure, as other

deaths have been. In the light of resurrection I know it was a death triumphant, a death of accomplishment, a death of victory in the process of which He procured for me the pardon that my sinning heart needs, and the power my weakened life demands.

1 Corinthians 16:22. Maran Atha!

1 Corinthians 16:22.

Maran Atha!

If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maran atha.

1 Corinthians 16:22

These words do not constitute a malediction. If you are inclined to question the accuracy of that statement notice what the Apostle himself says about them. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maran atha. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen." They are not a malediction, but part of a salutation.

Yet they are words of astounding severity and scorching heat, and are indeed words intended to make men stop and think, words gaining heat and force from the fact that they are surrounded by loving, tender, gracious words of salutation. They are a statement of a logical and inevitable sequence. If a man do not love this Lord Jesus "let him be anathema. Maran atha."

This is the close of a letter written to a Christian church, a church which had departed from the simplicity of Christ Jesus, a church which had lost its power of testimony in the midst of a great and wealthy city. This letter was written to correct the failure of such a church because its testimony was paralyzed, and it had ceased to be influential on account of its shortcoming and failure. The city of Corinth at this time was the home of learning and of wealth. It was full of a false wisdom or culture. Factions and rivalries existed throughout the city. The school men were quarreling amongst themselves concerning emphases and diversifications of ideas on nonessential things. Intellect was more highly esteemed than morality. Consequently there was abounding looseness of moral standard. Selfishness was dominant. There were a few wealthy people, living in luxury, while beneath them was a great mass of men and women in slavery. There was a popular denial of immortality. In one word, tragic and terrible, Corinth as a city was materialized, and the Church of Jesus Christ had been contaminated by all these things. Instead of fulfilling its mission as salt, and being pungent, antiseptic, it had lost its savor. Instead of being light, shining clearly, rebuking the darkness and guiding stumbling men back into the way of perfection, the light had become darkened. To correct the carnality which lay at the root of the spiritual failure in the church, this letter had been written. In imagination I see the apostle, suffering in all probability from such nearness of sight that he could hardly see what he wrote, taking from the hand of his amanuensis the pen, and writing, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maran atha. The favor of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

So the great letter closes. That is the setting of my text. We must see it there if we would understand its meaning. The Apostle writing to a church of Jesus Christ, to men and women called

saints, says in effect, "The claims of Christ are such that if they be once known and appreciated, and yet the heart does not answer in love, which is for ever more the inspiration of loyalty, then there is nothing for such a heart save that it shall be accursed, anathema." After the statement, to emphasize it, to defend it, to vindicate it, he writes, "Maran atha."

I have already several times recited those two words. Let me now say by way of explanation, before we proceed to a closer examination of them, that the Apostle in their use here defends the thing he has already said. That is their intention. He is not declaring that if men do not love Jesus Christ, when presently the Christ comes they will be accursed. They are already accursed. They are in the place of the curse. They are in the grip of the curse. Therefore, before we can understand the first part of our text we must understand the second part of it. Before we can fully appreciate what the Apostle meant when he wrote, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema," we must inquire what he meant when he wrote, "Maran atha."

Therefore, I ask you, first, to consider with me the great fact: "Maran atha," and, second, the sequence: "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema."

There is great gain in the fact that our revision has written two words and not one, "Maran atha." There are certain things concerning these two words which are indisputable. There are other things which are doubtful, about which no final, dogmatic word can yet be said. There are two interpretations of their meaning. One affirms that they mean, "The Lord cometh." The other affirms that they mean, "The Lord has come." You will see that the difficulty arises concerning the tense of the verb. There is no difficulty concerning the substantive, the subject "Maran," the Lord; but whether the word "atha" means "cometh," or "has come," cannot be dogmatically affirmed. The central principle is not interfered with whichever interpretation be correct. I am not proposing for a single moment to argue as between the two. I will say, in passing, I am personally convinced that the words mean "The Lord has come," and that here the reference is not specifically and immediately to the second Advent but to the first, and yet to the second also. According to all the New Testament writers, the first involved the second. If you believe the words mean "The Lord cometh," then you also hold the fact of the first Advent. "The Lord cometh" for "the Lord has come." If you hold that the words mean "the Lord has come," then you also see that they mean the Lord is yet to come again, for He Who has come "shall appear a second time, apart from sin... unto salvation." The second Advent includes the first. The grace of the first demands the glory of the second. These words constituted a form of Christian salutation in the early days. Whether they meant "The Lord has come" or "the Lord cometh" matters nothing. The early Christians greeted each other in the market place or on the highway, saying, "Maran atha," and the reply would be "Maran atha." Whether the Advent referred to is past, or to come, the truth insisted on is that the true Lord is manifest—has been manifested or is to be manifested. The fact is not one of date, but of the manifestation in human history of the one supreme, lonely, imperial Lord of men, "Maran atha." The Lord has come, is coming: the Lord is coming, has come. The text summons us to the judgment seat of the one perfect Lord of men. When the Apostle with his own hand—stumblingly perchance, and in those large characters to which he referred in another letter—is writing his salutation, he sees his Lord. He has been following Him for years along the perilous and rough pathway. He saw Him first on the way to Damascus and he heard His voice. He has become familiar with Him. He knows Him for what He is. No other teacher divides his attention. No other lord makes demands upon his loyalty. He is the one Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul writes to these

people in Corinth, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema," and then, as though he had said, "He is the Lord, and He is revealed as such," he writes, "Maran atha." So finally he brings the saints of Corinth, and all Corinth, to confront the one Lord, and he says in the presence of that Lord, "Hear this, ye sons of men, if ye love Him not, ye are accursed." Logically, necessarily accursed. Not to love Him is to love the base, the mean, the ignoble. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema. Maran atha." It is the great cry of a loyal soul bowing in adoration in the presence of the supernal royalty of the King.

The central fact suggested therefore is that of the Lordship of Christ.

This Lord Jesus Christ is Lord in a threefold sense. On His head are many diadems, but for us men, for the purposes of our salvation, I propose to speak of three only. He stands absolutely alone as Lord—first, as presenting a perfect pattern of human life; secondly, as paralyzing the paralysis which prevents men realizing the pattern; and, finally, as providing for men the power by which they may become what He reveals to them they ought to be. The territory covered by these three suggestions is small. I turn away from all the glorious diadems which rest upon His brow, and of which I might speak, because I want to speak of His Lordship as it presents itself to the needs of sinning men. I want us to see Him as the one Imperial and only Lord of the man who knows his sin and fain would escape it.

In the first place, I say He is royal in Lordship because He presents to men the perfect pattern of human life. I am not going to defend that statement. All I intend to do is to ask, What is this pattern He presents? What answer has Christ given to the old question of the psalmist, "What is man?" Christ's answer to that question is a threefold one. By His teaching He first of all declares that man is the offspring of God, that man is not of dust but of Deity, that in every man there is that which cannot be slain by the physical hand of his fellow man. "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." According to His teaching, every man—the question of his bruising and battering and spoiling by sin is not now being discussed, in spite of these things—every man is a child of the eternities, offspring of the spiritual, in the deepest essence of his being related to God and eternity. That is Christ's first word about man. Then He has also revealed to us the fact that man is a being who can realize himself only within the realm of one simple and sublime law of conformity to the will of the One Who created him. By all His teaching He arrested the wandering will of man, and attempted to readjust it to the will of God. By all the deeds through which He manifested His thought and purpose for man, He sought to bring him back from the trackless desert of his own self-chosen wandering to the straight and narrow pathway of the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. So that Jesus said, and still says to men, "You can find your rest only in the will of God. You can find the answer to the deep questionings of your own life, you can find satisfaction for the perpetual sign of the deepest in you only as you find your way back again to God, and hand to Him your life, and choose His law as the law of your life.

Finally, Christ taught that man is created for service. He is an instrument for carrying the will of God beyond the circle of his own personality. That indeed is the teaching of the whole Bible. Man was not the final flower of Eden. He was its master. Man was not put into Eden for decorative purposes at the close of the great procedure. He was put in to dress it, to keep it, to govern it in co-operation with God. We have strange notions about the Garden of Eden. There are people who

imagine it was an actual garden such as we see in this country of ours, beautifully laid out with flower beds and paths. Nothing of the kind. It was a rough bit of soil full of potentiality, blossoms in it, fruit in it, magnificence in it, glories in it, but not manifest. What were they waiting for? The touch of God's partner, man. God put man into the garden to dress it and keep it. Christ emphasized that in all His teaching: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

The great ideal of Jesus concerning man is that he is spiritual in essence, perfected within the law of God, and created for co-operation with God. He Who revealed that as the pattern of human life is the Master Teacher of the ages. I defy you to find me any such conception anywhere else. Other men have not dreamed of such things as these. Other teachers have said wonderfully luminous things concerning man, but they were all things of dust compared to these. He came to men, the Man of the home-made garment and little Nazareth, and in simple sentences and childlike speech He uttered great philosophies of human life, which have taken hold of the hearts of men; and we bow before Him as we say "Maran atha," the Lord, for none other has ever spoken of the possibility of human life as He spoke of it.

Had that been all He did, it would have been a great thing, but for me it would have been an awful tragedy. In the discovery of the spirituality of my being I should have found that I was orphaned, the offspring of God, and unable to find my Father. If I had found that my life could be conditioned only by the law of God I should have found that I was absolutely ruined, for I could not discover the law of God for me.

If I had been taught that I was created only for service I should simply have stood gazing out upon a lost dignity, for I had lost the secret of co-operation and fellowship with God, and the very garden of Eden would have answered me, not with flowers, but with the thorns of the wilderness. If this Man be Lord only by revelation of the pattern, He is Lord, I bow to Him, but bowing to Him I am undone.

He therefore presents Himself in a new aspect of His Lordship as the One Who touches with a strange and mysterious power the paralysis of man which prevents him realizing the purpose and ideal, until the paralysis itself is paralyzed, and man is set free. He comes to destroy the destroyer. The conception of man as material is forever more destroyed. From the lawlessness which had become another law working in my members and making it impossible for me to obey the law of God He sets me free. The self-life which had prevented my realization of God's purpose in serving God He crucifies. The process is not easy. But this is how He arrests me. He takes hold of me and reveals to me the pattern until I am ashamed, and just as I am hopeless, He touches me with some new power, and I feel that the forces which prevented my realization are relaxing their hold upon me, and if a man is saved by hope, I begin to hope. If a man is saved by faith, upon the basis of my hope I fling my trust out toward the Lord Who has revealed the pattern and has touched me with power. If a man be saved ultimately by love, I rise from hope through faith to love, and "if any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

Am I a spirit? He brings my spirit back into relation with the one eternal Spirit, and I live. Is it necessary for me to find the law of God. He presents Himself to me and says, "Follow Me. I am the Word, the incarnate revelation of the will of God, the thought of God rendered visible to thine eyes. Thou hast wandered away from the Father's home; follow Me; step by step, line upon line, precept upon precept I will lead thee in the way of His appointment." You can fling away the Ten

Commandments then as an external law which you are attempting to obey: "I will write His law upon thy heart. I will come and dwell with thee. I am with thee all the days. I will lead thee step by step through all the pathway. I will be to thee the law of God which thou hast lost."

Finally, He communicates to me the energy of the Spirit, and out of the mystery of His Passion He gives me power. Out of the darkness of His death He gives me the light of life, and the life of light. So He confronts me not merely as pattern, but as power; not merely as revelation, but as energy. He brings to me in my loneliness and in my wandering all I need.

"Maran atha." The Lord, the only One Who has any right to such a title, the imperial, lonely, splendid, royal Lord, has come, is coming—which you like, both if you please. Between the "has come" and the "is coming," the Lord is here. In the words of the Apostle, in the presence of His royal Lord Jesus the Revealer of the ideal, the Destroyer of the paralysis, the One Who communicates power, in the presence of this Lord who has in His government everything that sinning man needs. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

I return to the statement which constitutes the first part of my text. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." This is wholly in view of the Lordship of Jesus. I can imagine that someone here is at once startled and alarmed by the peculiar term of the Apostle, "If any man loveth not." Some soul trembling upon the very brink of yielding to the Lordship of Jesus may say, 'I do not love Him.' Why did the Apostle use that word? He did use that word, and as a matter of fact, if you would rightly understand this passage, as Mr. Rotherham, in his Emphasized Bible, has beautifully and as I think accurately rendered it, you must read, "If any man dearly loveth not the Lord." It is the thought of supreme affection for the Lord Who lays His claim upon man and demands his allegiance. Yet I recognize the difficulty. Why does the Apostle use this word? Do not forget he is writing to saints, to such as have heard the Word and have yielded obedience thereto, and have already come into some measure of light, and he mentions the ultimate stage in relation to Jesus. What are the matters which precede love? I take you back for a moment to his letter to the Romans. In the course of that letter concerning salvation Paul wrote these words, "Belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." That is how you would state the Gospel to the man who has not yet obeyed it. Take that verse and state it in the other order. "The Word of Christ," that is, the whole Evangel. What then? Hearing it. What then? Faith in it. In the Corinthian letter, writing to saints, he takes all these things for granted, as though he had said, 'You have heard the word of Christ. You have believed the word of Christ. If any man do not love Him, then let that man be accursed.' That is to say, in the thinking of the Apostle, if the Word be presented and if the Word be heard and be obeyed—and of set purpose I substitute the thought of obedience for that of faith, for the only faith that saves is the faith of obedience—then necessarily, always, absolutely without exception, the experience of the obedient soul is the experience of love. This word of the Apostle indicates the final stage in the relation. I do not mean that it is postponed. There is some soul who has come into this house tonight. You hear the Word of Christ, the Word of His Lordship. You hear it, you believe it obediently, submit yourself to it in all honesty, then at once you will begin to love Him. Love comes in the pathway of obedience. You do not love Him, you tell me. Then where have you failed in this order? Have you never heard the Word of Christ? That can hardly be true of anyone here. You have heard it now. The Word heard, what will you do with it? Will you believe it? I do not mean theologically. I do not mean intellectually merely. I do not mean, Do you assent to the fact of His Lordship? I mean that first, for there can be no submission on the part of

any honest man to any but absolute royalty. I cannot be loyal to inferiority, so help me God. My King must be royal. He must appeal to all that lies within me and demand my loyalty by what He is in royalty. Have you seen the Royalty? Do you know that this Christ is the one Lord of men? Will you obey? If you say No, you pass away, it may be in reverent recognition of His imperial majesty but without one pulse of love. Do you say Yes? Then you will begin to love Him tonight. I do not say, "Perhaps," or "Peradventure," or "It is reasonable to suppose." I affirm it dogmatically. No man can see the light and obey it without feeling the love.

Hear me again for a moment. How will that love first manifest itself? Not in your consciousness always as love for Him, but far more commonly in your love for someone else, and your desire to bring that one to Him. The first movement of the love of God in the soul of man, woman, or little child, is a love impulse which drives that one out to bring in someone else. Do you not at once see what that proves? Father, tonight you obey, and immediately you think of your boy, and your heart says "I would fain bring him to Christ." You love your boy, and if you love him you would hardly lead him to any but the One you loved supremely. You demonstrate your love for Christ by the love which drives you to bring someone else to Him.

When obeying, you begin to be anxious about father, mother, wife, husband, child; it demonstrates the fact that although you have hardly dared say it, yet in your heart there has come love for the Christ.

Thus the Apostle is stating the logical sequence. If a man is separated from the Lordship of Christ of his own will and choice, then he has no true vision of his own highest possibilities, he has no understanding of life's truest laws. There is within that man no force making for perfection and permanence. That man is already in the grip of destructive forces. If you turn your back upon Christ when He has shown you the spirituality of your being, what have you done by that action? You have consented to the materialistic conception of your own life which proceeds to corruption. If you turn your back upon Christ when He reveals Himself to you as the revelation of the will of God, then you turn your face toward lawlessness which lies at the root of all evil and calamity; you are already in the grip of disintegration and break-up. If you turn your back upon Christ when He calls you into service and co-operation with God, then your life henceforth must circle around your own selfish desire and motive and lust. The self-centred man has created for himself the grave in which he must lay his own individuality. So that if any man love not the Lord, it needs no Apostle to curse him, but it does need that the Apostle with the pen of inspiration should write that he is already accursed. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema."

As the old year passes away from us and we come again to the turn of the highway and to another mile post, this message is alive and as real in London, in Westminster Chapel, as when the Apostle wrote it upon parchment for the Corinthian Church centuries ago. Here and now and everywhere, "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." He is in the grip of destructive forces; and all the subtlety of his brain, the cleverness of his intellect, and ingenuity of his mind cannot deliver him from dire and irremediable ruin. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema." Hear it, ye sons of the new age. My brothers, sisters, living in the midst of our boasted civilization and progress, "Maran atha." There is but one Lord. There is but one Master of men. There is but one Revealer of the true ideal. There is but one Redeemer of failure. He is here in spiritual power and presence, in our very midst tonight. Do you love Him? Are you loyal to Him?

Have you crowned Him? If from the heart even tremblingly there comes the answer Yes, then the last part of this verse is reversed. 'If any man love the Lord, let him be blessed' and blessed is he! Already in him there burns the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Already in him operate the forces which at last will bind the universe about the feet of God in perfect and eternal harmony. Already in him thrills the love that cometh forth from God and returneth back to Him in the cycle of the centuries. Blessed art thou, brother, sister, mine, in the midst of the burden-bearing and strife and toil, testing and tempting, if thou hast crowned this Christ, all hell cannot destroy thee. All the forces of evil in the universe cannot accomplish thy undoing.

If your answer is No, already the touch of eternal death is upon you. Already the break-up that ends in the eternal and infinite disorder is within your soul. "Maran atha." I bring you this final word. Back again to the Lord, the one and only Lord of men. "The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach." You are familiar with it. Will you obey it? If never before, now answer it obediently.

Oh that all alone, forgetting your past history, and present difficulty, and neighbor and friend whom you have brought with you to the sanctuary, oh that now you would look into the face of the one Lord Jesus Christ and say to Him simply as a child, with all the courage and conviction of your manhood, "I will trust in Thee and follow Thee, Thou Lord and Master of men." Then He will enwrap you with His love, and lead you in His light, and bring you into His life.

2 Corinthians 4:5. Christ Jesus, The Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:5.

Christ Jesus, The Lord.

For we preach... Christ Jesus as Lord....

2 Corinthians 4:5

There is no human interest with which Christianity does not deal. It comes in love with light and life to the whole circumference of things. It speaks with authority concerning all the facts of the material and moral universe.

As to the material, Christianity first halts men on the threshold of investigation and conditions their attitude through all the processes by affirming God in the language in which the Book of the Christian opens, "In the beginning God..."; it also declares that His glory is the consummation of purpose in the material realm.

In the moral realm, Christianity declares the eternal principles which are the standards of creed, and therefore of character, and ultimately therefore of conduct.

These imperial values of Christianity in the abstract are the direct issue of the supernal royalty of Christ. The it in Christianity is the result of the Him. Christianity is Christ crowned.

Christianity is the religion of a Book of which Christ is the one Subject. Christianity is the religion of this world, and because of this world Christ is at once the Source, the Sustainer, and the Goal. Christianity is the realization of truth in the material, moral, and spiritual realms, and Christ Himself is Truth. It follows as a necessary sequence that for the creation of Christian conditions in life, personal, social, national or racial, there must be submission to Christ. Therefore, the message of the Christian pulpit, of the Christian church, is that indicated by the words of my text, "For we preach... Christ Jesus as Lord...."

To that theme I invite your attention, and I shall ask you to follow me along three lines of consideration; first, of the person of this Lord Christ Jesus; second, of His purpose; finally of His power.

What, then, is the Person of the Lord as presented in the New Testament? The apostle speaks of Him here as Jesus. Who is Jesus, according to the gospel narratives? I am not now going to argue for the truth of the things affirmed. I simply desire to state them.

Jesus of Nazareth was directly created by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Just as the first man according to the account of Scripture was created from the material, so was the second Man; only, instead of the dust of the ground, the seed of the woman was made the basis of the Divine creation. He came into human history a Man of humanity and yet distinct from it; not by the will of man nor by the act of man, but by the will and act of God; peculiar, different in that creation,

and yet identified with humanity in all the essentials of human nature. This is the Man to Whom Paul is referring when he says, "... we preach... Christ Jesus as Lord...."

I go back again to the gospel stories, and as I carefully observe Him in the doings and teachings of His human life there are certain things which impress me.

The first is that He was a Man whose life was perfectly adjusted toward God and therefore perfectly adjusted toward His fellow men. He always spoke of God with reverence, and yet with almost amazing familiarity; spoke of Him as His Father, made incidental references to Him which showed that in His conception God was touching all life at every point. Flowers; your Father clothes them. Sparrows; your Father is with them when they die. Children; their angels do always behold the face of the Father in heaven. All through His speech we find Him recognizing God; familiar with God; seeing God everywhere. All these beatitudes of this ethical manifesto may be woven into a perfect chaplet, the first resting place of which is on the brow of the Man Who uttered them. And this is conspicuously true of the one which says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He was a Man always in the presence of God, always conscious of Him, seeing Him everywhere, and that without a trace of fear in His heart.

Therefore He was a Man Whose life was perfectly adjusted toward His fellow men, in righteousness, in truth, in simplicity, in strength, in sympathy.

The Man presented to our vision in the New Testament was also a Man perfectly balanced within Himself, a Man in Whom there was nothing grotesque. Any man who develops one side of his nature at the expense of all the rest is grotesque. In Christ I see Man perfectly balanced with all essential qualities developed. I would like to take time to defend that statement, especially with regard to the physical. I differ entirely from the conceptions of most of the great artists concerning Jesus Christ. Have you ever seen a picture of Christ that satisfied you? I never have. The majority of artists have presented Him as weak, anemic. Hoffmann satisfies me most. Yet I would add to his portrait a physical Christ of greater beauty. It may be objected that the Scriptures say, "... when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." That does not mean that He was devoid of beauty, but rather that men were so blind that they could not see it. Moreover, the thought of the prophet there was surely spiritual rather than material. Still another declares His face was more marred than any other. Yes, but have you never seen a beautiful face marred with lines of sorrow and suffering? I believe that in His physical life, Jesus was a Man of great and perfect dignity of beauty.

Turning to the mental side, we cannot but be astonished by the dignity and grandeur of His mental conceptions. Take an illustration on a low level. Clever men constantly endeavored to entrap Him in His talk. Do we ever find Him entrapped? I am overwhelmed again and again, not by His adroitness as though He were subtle and cunning, but by the transparency of His mental method with men, until at last it is written, "... no man after that durst ask Him any question."

If I turn to the spiritual, no argument is needed. His conceptions of God, of the eternal ages, of man's spiritual nature; His interpretation of all the things of the eternities are final. No man has gone one single inch beyond His thinking about God and eternity.

While He was thus perfect in each side of His manhood, He was most perfectly balanced and perfectly fulfilled the functions of human life. No ascetic was He. The men of His own age said He

was a gluttonous man and a winebibber. So freely did He mix with men in the ordinary affairs of everyday life that the religious teachers of His age imagined that He was an utterly irreligious man. Yet as we look at Him, we see a Man; King of the race, perfect in His Manhood.

Whatever your difficulties may be concerning the doctrines of the Catholic church, I challenge you at this point; find me a man in all history or in imaginative literature who begins to compare with Him. If He never lived, the men who dreamed Him were the greatest dreamers the world has ever seen. They have presented to us One Who in the ideal His life presents, holds enthralled the honest admiration of all men in this and every age.

This, however, is not the final thing the Scriptures say of Him. They declare Him to be the Son of God, not as other men are the sons of God, but in a peculiar and mystic relationship which is revealed to us in the writings of this same man Paul as in none of the other writings of the New Testament. In the Philippian letter when declaring how He came into human observation, Paul says that originally He was in the form of God; that He did not count that high, exalted method of manifestation a prize to be snatched at for self-enrichment, and then that He took the form of a servant. In reading that passage we must keep the mind fixed carefully on the one Person referred to from beginning to end. There is no change of nature suggested in the process described. It is the same Person Who, being in the form of God, came into human observation by taking another form—not another nature but another method of manifestation, a method adapted to human comprehension, and was made in fashion as a man. Therefore, when I look at the Man of Nazareth in the light of New Testament teaching, I see not only perfect humanity, but veiled Deity; the Son of God incorporated in human life as never before; able to act with God for men for specific purpose.

What does the New Testament say concerning the office of this Person? First, that He came for revelation of God through a channel within the possibility of human comprehension. He came in order that men might look upon One of their own kind and so see God Whom they had never seen.

I think it well to make this distinction. By incarnation God did not come nearer to men. He came into observation. God has always been near man.

There are men today who know God. There are also men who do not know God. God is no nearer to the man who knows Him than to the man who knows Him not. It is true of all men and women that in God they live and move and have their being.

Go back to the palace of King Belshazzar, and see him carousing with his lords, violating all the laws of decency. Now watch the mystic handwriting upon the wall, and hear the charge against him, "... the God in whose hand thy breath is,... hast thou not glorified." Belshazzar's breath, foul with obscenity, in the hand of God! No man gets away from God. In God every man lives and moves and has his being, yet men today have no knowledge of Him, no consciousness of Him. In Christ, God came out of His hiding place that men might see Him. In our thinking of God, we may build up our conception upon the basis of that perfect humanity. Throw out the lines into eternity, and they include all the truth about God. The tears of Jesus are the revelations of the agony of God. The tender touch of Jesus is that by which man knows how gentle God can be. The stern severity of the words that scorched like fire as they fell from the lips of Jesus unveil God's holiness and His wrath abiding upon sin. The wooing, winsome words in which He called to weary and

heavy laden men were the very speech of God calling men back to His bosom, back to His heart. He came for revelation.

He came for more. He came according to the teaching of the New Testament for redemption; redemption wrought through His identification with sinning men to the last issue of their sin. I know how incomplete that statement is, yet ponder it well. I listen to that strangest, profoundest word that fell from the lips of Jesus as He was dying on Calvary, "... my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I am always afraid to begin to interpret the meaning of those words. The very question they ask suggests mystery even in the mind of the dying One, and who am I that I should try to unveil the hidden mystery? Yet, listening to the words, they forevermore suggest to me the ultimate issue of sin. It was the language of sin in its last experience. It was the language of sorrow at its profoundest depth. It was a word which expressed the most unutterable experience that ever comes into human life, the experience of an unexplained mystery of silence. He was identified with man in his sin to its last issue. In the transaction of the Cross He so dealt with sin that I come to that Cross, and while men are discussing the atonement, I know that my sins are not merely pardoned, but canceled, made not to be. In the presence of that Cross I find that heart's-ease, notwithstanding sin, which I can find nowhere else.

So that this Man upon Whom we look, perfect in His humanity, mystic in His Deity, flaming in His revelation of God; in deep, dense darkness that I can never fathom, so wrought that this poor, broken heart, buffeted by reason of its sin finds healing and rest.

That is the Person presented in these gospel stories; presented finally in the full dignity of this great and wonderful description, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him the apostle says: "... we preach Christ Jesus as Lord...." Lord by the victory of life and death; Lord by the appointment of God; Lord by the administration of the Holy Spirit.

Let me now pass to a brief word as to the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the teaching of Scripture.

What was the passion of Jesus Christ? I am not now referring to the ultimate mystery of that passion baptism whereby He redeemed men. What was the master-passion or the master-motive of the life of Jesus? That is not an easy question. I sometimes think we find the difficulty of it if we ask it about ourselves. What is our master-motive? There is one in every human life. We give as reasons for the things we do things which are not the reasons for the things we do. We give second or third causes for the things we do as final. They are not. If we could get back to the underlying conception of life that masters us, we should have the true answer.

What was the underlying conception of Jesus, the motive of everything, the master-passion of His life? I answer the inquiry in one brief phrase, the Kingdom of God. To some that may seem a very insufficient answer. The reason is that we have taken the phrase the Kingdom of God and materialized it until we imagine it only refers to the establishment of a beneficent order in the world. The phrase is greater than that. To say the Kingdom of God is to say everything. To say that the master-passion, the motive of the life of Jesus was the Kingdom of God is to touch the deepest, profoundest thing in all His life. We might be inclined to say that the motive of His life is best stated in His own words, "... the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." That, however, was not the deepest thing. He was full of compassion for men, but there is a

profounder depth. The deepest thing in His life was expressed in prophetic language long before He came in flesh, and this is it: "... I am come to do thy will, O God." He emphasized it in the prayer He taught His disciples. He said, "... when ye pray, say Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." He came not so much to save men as for the glory of God. We are all in danger in these days of laying the emphasis elsewhere. No one will imagine I am undervaluing His compassion. But that ministry which culminated in the Cross was for the glory of God and the establishment of His Kingdom; for the vindication of God's character in the world and the universe in answer to the slander which lies at the heart of evil. The Devil came into human life by slander; "... hath God said...?" and there lurked in the question the suggestion that God was withholding something good from humanity. Jesus Christ came to give the lie to that lie; to reconcile to God all things in earth and in heaven. Not merely this little planet of ours, but the whole universe was involved and touched by the ministry and passion of this King of the race.

The master-passion of Christ, then, was that of the Kingdom of God. His motive in all that He does for me is that I should be in that Kingdom, submitted to it, realizing it, manifesting it. That is His passion for the world at large. It is His motive in all His ministry in the wide universe of God. That is a great declaration in the writings of Paul in which He speaks of the day when "... he shall deliver up the kingdom to God." For that day He came, He lived, He toiled, He suffered, He died, He rose, and He waits in patience, and at last He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; not merely when He has redeemed humanity, but when He delivers the Kingdom to His Father. The master-passion of all the life and ministry of Jesus is that of the Kingdom of God.

While that is the ultimate purpose, notice, still within the thought of purpose, His method so far as we are concerned. I do not think that can be better stated than in the line of the hymn:

He is my Prophet, Priest, and King.

Take these three words, and think of all they suggest.

The work of the prophet is that of declaration, proclamation, revelation. So He began proclaiming, declaring, revealing, and He said enough. Obey His words in your life, and your life is in the Kingdom of God. Obey His words in civic and national life, and they alike conform to the Kingdom of God.

Never forget that even in these days when men are denying certain facts concerning Him, denying the supernatural facts which we believe lie at the heart of our religion concerning this Lord Christ, they are still claiming that the Sermon on the Mount is a perfect law of life. It was His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. That marvelous and awe-inspiring ethic was His prophetic forthtelling to the world of the will of God. He was a Prophet proclaiming.

He was also a Priest. If the word "prophet" suggest proclamation, the word "priest" suggests propitiation. Again we have a word which we need to use very reverently. It proclaims His work in redemption. As I affirmed concerning His prophetic work that He said enough, so I affirm concerning His priestly work that He did enough. There is nothing to be done beyond that which He has done. I do not want to argue it. If I did and were to test the declaration by the witnesses, thank God, they are here. I could call witnesses to the truth of it. He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free. The thing that mastered me, gripped me, poisoned me, the thing I

could not escape from, He has overcome, and it is underneath my feet. I have been made master of the very forces which mastered me. He has provided redemption, plenteous redemption. He not only said enough, He did enough.

Finally, He is King. That is administration, realization. Men say He is not crowned. Let there be no sigh when you say it. Hear the ancient prophetic word, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law." "We see not yet all things put under Him.... But we see Jesus...." To see Jesus is to be perfectly sure that His work as King will be brought to ultimate victory because of His work as Prophet and as Priest. What, according to Scripture, is His program? The day of grace, the day of judgment following it, and then the establishment of government and the handing of the Kingdom to His Father. The day of grace is that in which we live. There is a day of judgment coming. I do not mean a day of twenty-four hours, an assize. I mean a method of judgment in the world for the establishment of His Kingdom. We half-quote a great many passages of Scripture. Do you remember when Jesus was reading in the synagogue from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning His own ministry, where He stopped? He read these significant words: "... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...." and He closed the Book. Reverently, let me open the Book again at the verse where He closed it. What do I find? After the words "the acceptable year of the Lord" there is a comma, and then "... the day of vengeance of our God...." As surely as He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, He will come to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. How long the day of judgment will last, none can tell. It will in all probability be brief, for judgment is ever His strange act. But it must come. I have no greater comfort than to believe that. It is for that day of judgment I as often pray as for any tender, merciful deliverance of the saints. What this world supremely needs is the rod of iron, which is not a rod of cruelty but an inflexible rod of strict and absolute justice. He is coming so to reign. I at least cannot lose the vision of the coming reign when I think of this King. It is in His program. It is not the last method. There are other methods, other dispensations stretching away beyond. It is not for us to waste time speculating. Our duty is to fulfil our present responsibility which is that of preaching the gospel of His grace, for the gathering of His own, and for the preparation of the world for that larger establishment of the Kingdom that lies beyond.

Finally, as we have tried to glance at the Person and to consider the purpose, let me in a last word speak of the power of this Lord Christ. What is the nature of the power of the King? First it is spiritual in essence, dealing fundamentally with the deepest facts of the human life, and second, it is regenerative in operation.

Spiritual in essence. They wanted to make Him King while He was upon the earth on the basis of material supply, but He would have none of it. He fed the multitudes, and they desired to take Him by force and make Him King, but He hurried His disciples away across the sea, and Himself climbed the mountain. He will never be made King on that basis. There are men today who would make Him King if He would find them work, and give them food, and supply all their material needs. He will do all that when they come into the Kingdom, but He does not begin there. He begins not with the incidental of the flesh but with the essential of the spirit. He comes to set up God's Kingdom not by force of arms, by policy or cunning, by bribery or corruption, but by dealing with the spiritual center of life, by bringing the being back into right relation with God.

On the basis of the remade, reborn spirit of man, He reconstructs everything else. So He has proceeded through the centuries, and we count His method slow. The slowness of God is due to the long suffering of God. It is also on account of the fact that He must begin with the spiritual fact at the center. So He begins with me. It is sometimes argued as to whether heredity or environment is the stronger force. I am perfectly in sympathy with the view that environment is a far stronger force than heredity, but environment is not enough. Put a man in an environment, and you may lift him just a little higher. It is very valuable, but you cannot remake the man by environment, and unless you begin with something in the man that is essential he will degrade the new environment into which you put him. Jesus Christ is a King Who begins with the essential fact. He is not going to be made your King by bribing you with bread and work. He claims the allegiance of the spiritual essence of your being, and when He gets it, then, according to His own great word, "... seek ye first His kingdom... and all these things shall be added unto you." He has never yet failed in His promise. He begins at the center with the spiritual life. There are men who have lost consciousness of their own spiritual nature, men who have no vision of God, and who say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." He comes to such lives, to such spiritual natures as have lost consciousness of God and of themselves, and what is His first business? To quicken them. "... you hath He quickened,..." That is the first thing. He brings a man to the consciousness of God and of his own spiritual life. In the same moment and upon that basis, He begins the great work of reconstruction. Regeneration means the destruction of the destroying forces and the reconstruction of the essential nature of man. So Christ comes to carry out this work. That is the nature of His work.

Again, what is the extent of His work? It is limitless and it is limited. It is limitless as it proceeds from the spiritual to the material. There is no point that it does not touch. The remade man in his spiritual life is a man who is rendered capable of the reconstruction of his mental life. The remade man in spiritual life is a man capable of reconstruction in his own physical life. He will also go into the wilderness and make it blossom as the rose; He will go into the midst of groaning creation and heal it.

Christ begins in the center, and from that regenerated center, the forces of renewal pass out through all the life. Remade spiritually, renewed mentally, with all the forces of your physical life under the control of the Spirit, your home will become a different home, the neighborhood in which you live will feel the influence of your life. Waves of influence proceeding from reconstructed spirituality will pass out through the whole world.

In what sense is He limited? As to the nature of the effect He produces in the life of men. I do not say He is limited in the production of effect, but that He is limited in the nature of the effect He produces. You cannot come face to face with the Lord Christ and be the same afterward. You can, however, decide what the nature of the effect He produces is going to be upon your life. You come face to face with Christ and with His claim, and then you make your choice, and on that choice depends the nature of the effect He produces. His gospel is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

Even if you have seen nothing in Him save the life of ideal beauty, then what are you going to do with it? To accept it is to follow Him and to be remade by His power. To refuse is to choose the low and to be degraded. Christ is limited by our choice, our decision, our will.

Let my last word be this about His power. His power is inevitable. It is beneficent if we so choose; it is destructive if we so choose. "... we preach... Christ Jesus as Lord...." We preach Him not as One Who lived and died and passed away but as the living One. The mystic touch of His hand is still upon our hearts. We are conscious of our nearness to God, to the great Revealer, the great Redeemer.

Let us crown the Person of the Lord and so know His power working in our lives, and from henceforth share His purpose and by falling into line we march with Him toward the goal of the ages, the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

I pray those of you who have known Him longest join with me and crown Him anew and so anew receive His power and as never before be one with Him in the passion of His heart to see the Kingdom established.

And you who never yet have crowned Him, now, in the silence, without sign or sound or symbol, do this and you shall know His power, and cooperate in His purpose.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 18. Holiness: Its Fruit.

2 Corinthians 5:17, 18.

Holiness: Its Fruit.

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18

The words, "he is" which appear in our Bibles are supplied, and do not exist in the actual text. Our revisers have suggested an alternative reading, "there is a new creation." I venture to adopt that partially, omitting the words "there is," and reading the text thus, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, a new creation, the old things have passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God." The phrase "a new creation" is thus placed in apposition to the phrase "in Christ"; and is an exposition of it. If any man is in Christ, he is therefore a new creation.

What then is the difference between that new man, and the man he was before? It is expressed on the negative side in the words "The old things are passed away." The apostle is careful at this point not to create the possibility of a false impression. "The old things are passed away; behold they," the same things, "are become new." What, then, is the difference on the positive side? "All things are of God." In his letter to the Romans, when dealing with man in his sin, by citation from the Psalms, the apostle describes the attitude of the sinner in the words, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Let us put the final sentences of that description into immediate opposition to my text.

Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

And the ways of peace they have not known;

There is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:15-18).

If any man is in Christ a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

The contrast is graphic. By bringing together these two passages we see exactly what the difference is, or ought to be, between the Christian man and the man who is not yet a Christian.

In this fourth study of our series on the subject of holiness we are to consider its fruit. In his Roman letter Paul charged his readers, "Have your fruit unto sanctification," that is, "Have your fruit unto holiness." What is that fruit? What are the manifestations of holiness of character?

Holiness results in the passing of all the distinctive excellencies of Christianity from the realm of theory into that of experience. The ideal which we have seen and admired will become the real in

actual life, in the measure in which we are holy in character.

I am conscious that such a statement may make it appear as though holiness were the privilege of the few, rather than the possible experience of all who share the life of Christ. There are one or two simple things which therefore need to be clearly stated at this point. First there can be no holiness save by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life. Second, granted the work of the Spirit, the normal Christian life is holy life, and the measure in which we fail of holiness is the measure in which we fail of Christianity. Yet here again extreme care is necessary. I would not have that misinterpreted to the discouragement of any struggling soul. I do not deny your Christianity any more than I deny my own, because neither you nor I have yet realized the character of holiness in all its fulness; yet you will admit, if you think carefully, that the measure in which we lack holiness is the measure in which we lack the true normal Christian character. Holiness is not the preserve of an aristocracy in the family of God, in our ordinary sense of that word "aristocracy." The whole family of God is an aristocracy, or ought to be. Aristocracy, what does it mean? Forgive me if I am elementary enough to remind you that the root significance of the word is best strength. That is what an aristocracy ought to be, and the best strength of the world ought to be the Christian men and women of the world. Holiness as a blessing, second or otherwise, is not the privilege of a select or elect few. It is the normal life of the Christian, according to the purpose and power of God. Holiness is not ultimate perfection. Holiness is the condition which makes it possible for us to "grow up in all things into Him, which is the Head." Holiness is not perfection of consummation. It is simply health in the spiritual life.

Our text indicates a line and suggests a method by which we may understand the fruit of holiness. "If any man is in Christ, a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." He will still live in the same house, in the same city, with the same people; following the same profession, the same business, but everything will be changed. The old things are passed away, because he is himself a new creation. If the old things have been made new because the man in Christ is made new, and his vision is therefore new, what are the new things? The whole change is summarized in the words of the apostle, "All things are of God." Let us now inquire quite simply how that works out.

The first change is one of personal consciousness. In order that we may see the difference, let us consider a man who is not yet a Christian—and I do not propose taking that man on the lowest level, that is, measuring by the ordinary standards of observation; I desire rather to look at the man of the world, the man who is not a Christian, on the highest level attainable by him. What are the dominant notes in the consciousness of such a man? May I rapidly state them and then dwell on each for a moment or two. Love of self, admiration of the world, passion for ownership of goods, great love for kindred and friends, patriotism.

Now, "if any man is in Christ, a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things"—these very things—"are of God."

Love of self. I begin there because that is the root principle of all godless life. If I talk of admiration of the world, passion for the ownership of goods, love for kindred and friends, patriotism, we are all ready to admit that all these things are admirable; but the most selfish man is ever ready to denounce selfishness in other people. I am increasingly impressed with the fact that selfishness is a hateful thing to the mind of humanity, unregenerate or regenerate, and yet it is the master

passion of all life apart from Jesus Christ. It has many means of expression, self-indulgence, self-consideration, self-consciousness, but the man of the world is inevitably self-centered. All the circles are drawn around self; the home, society, the nation, the world.

Admiration of the world. That always means admiration of something in the world that is a little out of reach. The man in the slum gazes occasionally on the man who lives in the West End, and admires—however much he professes not to—his luxury, and would obtain it if he could, notwithstanding all he declares to the contrary. The man who is higher in the social scale looks still a little higher, and admires what he sees. There is an old proverb, which I quote, and leave you to think about when you are alone, "A nod from a lord is breakfast for a fool." There is a great deal of philosophy in it. Men look a little up, and a little further up; and will scheme and plan, and even put their wealth at the disposal of kings in order that it may be said that they are the companions of kings. Kings see the glory of the world and forevermore are seeking for that enlargement of empire that ministers to pride. Come with me back to the desolate wilderness, and look at one lone Man facing the great foe of the race, who showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and offered to give Him all if only He would give him homage. That temptation in the wilderness was the dragging out into clear daylight of the perpetual methods of Satan. Men everywhere are admiring the world.

Passion for the ownership of goods. I need not in this particular age dwell on that. It is the driving force of this feverish age. The mere passion for possession has caused war. That is an ultimate statement, which I do not now stay to deal with more fully. No one denies that a man of the world desires power.

Love of kindred and friends. That is a gracious and beautiful thing, I freely admit; and it exists among men of the world quite apart from Christianity.

Patriotism. That is love of fatherland, love of one's own country, the love which calls forth the long letters about lost ideals and new ideals, and the necessity for teaching our children the fact that they must sacrifice themselves for the making of their country.

Now at once I may be challenged, by those who in astonishment inquire if I intend to affirm that holiness means that these things cease? Let us be perfectly clear about this. I mean only, but I mean certainly exactly, what the apostle says, "If any man is in Christ, a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new; but all things are of God."

To begin at the center. The man in Christ Jesus is no longer self-centered, but God-centered. Let the writer of this letter tell us his own experience in language we have quoted so often, and never perhaps yet perfectly understood, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live." I have not lost my identity, but it is changed. My personality has not ceased to be, but it is remade. "I live" is the declaration of the positive immediately following the affirmation of the negative. Let us still be careful, for the apostle continues, "Yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." That is true of the normal Christian life. That is the central thing in holiness. In order to bring men to that the words of Jesus were perpetually severe. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." We quote that searching word and even sing it, but it does not bite, and burn, and break us as it ought to do. That word ought to put every one of us on the cross. "Let him deny himself." The Christian man is a man who at the center of his own being is no longer

enthroned, having dominion over his own life, but a man who has put Christ on the throne. That is the fundamental difference.

Then as to the world this selfsame writer says, "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Does that for a single moment mean that he had lost interest in the world, and the affairs of the world? Nay verily, for this is the man who interprets for the Christian Church, and for all time, if we will but listen to it, the agony of the world, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." Here, then, is the difference. Holiness of character means, first of all, the circumferencing of the life around the center, Christ, and then that the world is seen as it really is. Tinsel is known as tinsel, and the touch of decay is seen on all the glory that men admire. Nevertheless, behind the false the true glory is discovered. The Christian man is the man who has lost his admiration for the coronet because he is conscious of the aching brow on which it rests. The Christian man has no eyes for the purple, because the eyes of his heart see the broken heart underneath it. It was Henry Ward Beecher who said that Paul had no love for Greek art because he did not describe a Greek temple in any of his epistles. I do not believe that for a moment. I think he was a master of architecture. If you study his description of the building of the Christian Church it is the language of a man who knew a great deal about architecture. When Pausanius came to Athens he described the temples and buildings, and wrote of the culture and poetry; but only one brief, palpitating account is given by Luke of Paul in Athens, and this is it. "His spirit was in a paroxysm as he beheld the city full of idols." The Christian man does not withdraw himself from the world, has not lost his sense of beauty in the world; but he sees the world's agony, and is so busy attempting to deal with it that he has no admiration for the glitter and tinsel of the things wherewith the men of the world, hungry all the time for God, are attempting to satisfy themselves. His admiration for the world is over.

Ownership of goods. The Christian man believes that Christ knew exactly what He was talking about when He said to His disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth"—mark the fine satire of Jesus—"where moth and rust doth consume, and thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The Christian man has lost his passion to own goods for the sake of the power such possession gives him, because the possession of Christ gives him a new and beneficent power. The Christian man will no longer devote himself wholly, absolutely, utterly, to the work of amassing wealth simply to possess it. That does not mean for a single moment that the Christian man will not be a successful man of business; that he is to count himself somehow doing wrong if his enterprises succeed. It does mean that the Christian man will never deviate one hair's breadth from the line of rectitude in order to make wealth; and it does mean that when he has made it he says forevermore, This is the means by which I may lay up treasure in heaven. "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it"—the mammon—"shall fail, they"—the friends you have made—"may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." If you are wealthy men, and Christian men, your wealth is your opportunity to make a fortune, only the dividends are postponed to the other side. What are the dividends? Men and women you have helped. Souls that by the proper use of your wealth you have uplifted. Boys and girls you have delivered from that hell of time and eternity to which they were going but for your help. To put the whole case into a sentence, the man of the world amasses wealth until wealth holds him; the Christian man may be successful in business, but he forevermore holds his wealth in trust for his Lord. That is the difference.

Concerning the love of kindred and friends, many people are troubled by the words of Jesus, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Does this mean that the life of holiness is a life of hardness, a life out of which all human affection passes? To ask the question is at once to have a negative reply. Jesus Himself so loved the will of God that He said, "Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?... Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister and mother." Yet, in His dying agony, with the awful passion of the world's redemption breaking His heart, He thought of His mother, and handed her over to John to love her and take care of her. He Who did that does not mean that we are to cease to love father or mother, wife or children, brothers or sisters. The man of the world for the love of the one whom he loves will in the hour of crisis often do the sinful thing; but the Christian man will not allow love of father or mother, wife or child, to make him disloyal to his Lord and to truth. That is the difference.

What of patriotism? Does the Christian man cease to be patriotic? By no means, but he has a new outlook on national life and national greatness. He insists that "righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." The Christian man forevermore lives there. He does not care at all how big the empire may be, but he does care enormously whether it be pure. I am going a step further than that. The Christian man in the fulness of Christian experience ceases to be particularly anxious about the national greatness of his own people in his passion for the national greatness of all peoples. When leaving His disciples, Jesus Christ said, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations." The Christian man recognizes the right of the other nations as well as that of his own. He cannot have any interest in anything that goes to the making of his own nation if by making that nation great some weaker people is harmed and hurt and downtrodden. "He made of one every nation of men." Jesus Christ today loves as devotedly, as passionately, as perfectly the nation lowest in the scale of civilization as the highest: the German as much as the Englishman, the Boer as much as the Briton. The measure in which we are Christian men is the measure in which we climb this height of the recognition of the oneness of humanity, and entertain a great love for it.

What has all this to do with holiness? Everything, because it has to do with righteousness. There will be no righteousness in our dealing with men unless there be this holiness of character, the tides of the Christ life surging through the life of His child, creating His consciousness in the presence of all these things. The old things are passed away. No longer self-centered but Christ-centered, therefore the master passion of the life not to please self but to please Him. The old things are passed away, therefore no longer admiration of that which is superficial in the glory of the world, but the recognition of the tremendous beauty and glory of the world that God has made, together with recognition of its pain and suffering; and an earnest desire to hold out a helping hand to those who need. No longer a passionate desire to amass a fortune; but diligence in business in order that there may be possession of wealth to use for the glory of God in the good of humanity. No longer that inordinate love of kindred and friends that will permit us to do the wrong thing; but a tender love of kindred and friends, the outcome of devotion to Jesus Christ, so strong that no wrong thing can be done even for father or mother, wife or child. No longer patriotism that sings songs of war and of the greatness of one nation, but the great world-interest that takes all men into its heart and seeks to make great its own nation in order that it may uplift

and ennoble the nations of the world.

As I understand the teaching of the New Testament, this is holiness. It is that inward grace of character which is not weak, soft, anaemic, able only to sing songs of spiritual experience and to see visions of the heaven which is not yet. It is that inner refinement of heart and life and soul which comes from the indwelling Christ, and makes the life strong in its relationship to the world.

That leads me to my final word. Holiness is a life of usefulness. The unalterable and unchanging purpose of God is the accomplishment of His purposes through His people. That is rendered possible through holiness of character. Cleansed vessels are the vessels that Jehovah makes use of. "Be ye clean ye that bear the vessels of the Lord," was the word of the Hebrew prophet. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing," is the word of the Christian apostle. It is through holiness of character that I become a vessel ready to the hand of God for the accomplishment of His will. Surrendered instruments are those which He employs. Not only is it true that clay cannot say to the potter, What formest thou? It is true that the instrument through which he will form and fashion the clay must be plastic in his hand even as the clay is. Believing souls He trusts. The measure of my confidence in Him is the measure of His confidence in me. Let me put that in this form. Are you a man that God can trust? You are if you are a man who can trust God. Trust, again let me remind you, is not merely singing the song that declares your confidence, but it is the life of obedience that relies on God. "He made known His ways unto Moses," gave him the program of events; "His acts unto the children of Israel"; they had to wait and walk step by step. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Has God ever told you a secret, something in your inner life that has become a flaming, fiery passion? You spoke of it and the world crucified you for doing it. The men to whom God has whispered His secrets of ultimate purpose and present plan are men absolutely at His disposal, and they have had to suffer in the world, but by their suffering the Kingdom is coming. If I want to find a highway along which God is moving toward ultimate victory I shall follow the tracks where I discover the blood of martyrs. He can tell me His secret only as I trust Him wholly.

Holiness is the work of the Spirit. When I am willing, He baptizes me into union with the life of Christ. He seals me as the property of God. He anoints me for all service. The ultimate argument for the holy life is not the perfection of life, but the fact that life being rendered perfect, becomes God's instrument in the world. That, I think, is the final appeal. In the light of that appeal my heart says,

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,

I want Thee forever to live in my soul;

Break down every idol, cast out every foe:

Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

That, not merely that I may be whiter than snow, but that through me may flow the river, and from me may flash the light, and by me may be exercised the very power of Christ for the lifting of men and the bringing in of His Kingdom.

2 Corinthians 5:19. God In Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:19.

God In Christ.

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

2 Corinthians 5:19

The hour of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth was that in which the Light that lighteth every man came into the world. To describe the event in terms which suggest its value in the economy of God, I should be inclined to speak of it as the last crisis in the Divine procedure. By last, I do not mean to suggest that there will be no other, but rather that there has been none since.

Every student of the Bible will recognize that God's methods with man have been ever those of process and of crisis. Long periods of preparation have led up to some moment when, by a new and independent activity on His part, a new departure in human history has been made.

Without staying to argue that, at any length we must recognize, if we read the Scriptures carefully, that this has been the method of God in all human history and in all creation. Just as in the poetry and accuracy of the first chapters in our Bible we see some Divine act that we cannot perfectly understand, leading on to processes which we can follow, until we reach another crisis, when there is another act full of mystery followed by succeeding processes, so not only in creation, but also through all God's dealings with men, this process is discoverable. And so far as Scripture has revealed anything of the future, it clearly leads us to expect that the next crisis will be that of the second advent of our Lord. Today, we are living in that period of process which lies between the last crisis, that of the first advent, and the next crisis, that of the second advent.

If I were asked for the briefest declaration of Scripture, setting forth the meaning of the Christian economy, including these advents and all that lies between them, both as to its method and its purpose, I should not hesitate to quote this text: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

While not dealing in detail with the mystery of the method of the first advent, while not describing in detail the processes of the life of Jesus, while not describing in detail the processes of the years multiplying themselves into centuries, and the centuries into millenniums following that advent, and while not dealing in detail with the mystery of the method of the second advent, it gathers the whole fact into one brief and comprehensive declaration, "God was in Christ"—that is the method; "reconciling the world unto Himself"—that is the purpose.

Our purpose in this meditation is to dwell upon the method, referring only to that purpose of reconciliation so far as is necessary for our interpretation and full understanding of the method.

"God was in Christ." That is the initial and supreme wonder of our holy religion. I am anxious, that I may be able by the Spirit of God, to lead you a little beyond the first and simplest things, to the

profounder sublimities of the first advent. We speak of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and that alone is a wonderful story. But I am anxious that we should recognize that in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth there was something far more wonderful than the birth of a man, far more remarkable than the coming into human life of another human being. That assuredly did happen, infinite though the mystery may be, and forevermore transcending our comprehension of how He was human, and yet more. Nevertheless, the fact abides that the birth of Jesus was much more than the birth of a man.

While our eyes are fixed in meditation, and in adoration, upon the Child held in His mother's arms in helplessness, having gold, and frankincense, and myrrh offered to Him by the Persian Magi, which He at the moment, in His simple humanity, did not understand the value of, yet, let us recognize that we are gazing upon One in Whom God is beginning a new movement and a new method. Our eyes are allowed to rest for a moment in imagination upon the Person of a little Child, of Whom the deepest and profoundest truth is declared in the words of my text, "God was in Christ."

Let us first think, in a few brief and quiet moments, of a preliminary matter. What was the position of the world without that Christ? What did men know of God, or what could they know of Him apart from Christ? Secondly, we will turn to the more positive consideration of this declaration, "God was in Christ." Finally, in one word of application, we will consider the declared purpose of the mystery, "reconciling the world unto Himself."

Our first consideration then, which is preliminary, and of the nature of background to the foreground of consideration, is that of human thought about God, apart from Christ. Theologians have told us that man's thoughts of God are necessarily anthropomorphic. May I put that into another sentence? Man's thoughts of God are necessarily the result of man's consciousness of himself. Man does—and now I use the word man in its generic and broadest sense—man does think of God; and, thinking of God, he does so upon the basis of his own personality and consciousness. There can be no escape from this; man can only argue of God from what he is in himself, and every idea of Deity that possesses the mind of men—and will you allow that word possesses now to be a perpetually present tense, having application to past and present conceptions—results from this one line of activity. Man projects into immensity the fact of his own personality, and calls the result God. I do not care for the moment whether you think of the most depraved or degraded form of religion, using the terms of our usual speech, or whether you think of your own religion; the same thing is true.

All our conceptions of God, to go back to the word of the theologians, are anthropomorphic. I am not speaking, of course, of a man as he appears to his brother men. I am not speaking of that which is external, and physical, and material, and unimportant—transient, and therefore not important, and only in that sense unimportant. I am speaking of man in the essential facts of his personality. And man does necessarily take these essential facts, when he thinks of another Being, and project them into immensity. His conception of that other Being, greater than himself, is that, nevertheless, of his own nature, it is created on the pattern of his own personality.

Think of the essentials of human life, and I am going to take the very simplest—the essentials of which every child is conscious. The first word of human consciousness is "I am," and when that word of human consciousness is analyzed, these are the terms of its expression: "I know," that is

mind; "I will," that is choice; "I can," that is force. These are the simplest things of human consciousness. Man takes these ideas of experience, and projects them into immensity, and so constructs his idea of God. Mind, infinite knowledge; will, supreme choice and consequent government; force, absolute ability. These things underlie all streams of religious thinking. Wherever religion has placed at its center, personality as Deity, it has been because man has taken of himself, and has imagined something of the same pattern, the same nature, the same kind, but vaster and greater.

Now mark what man has been doing. In every case, apart from Christ and apart from His ministry, man has projected himself into immensity, and consequently, he has projected into immensity all that is in himself. In every case, therefore, there has been an amplification of failure. Self-centered life flung out into immensity postulates a self-centered God. All the things of human limitation, resulting from human sin, abide in human conceptions of God, apart from that which has come into the world through Christ. An enlarged conception of mind, an enlarged conception of knowledge, based upon man's own consciousness of knowledge, which is limited, creates an imperfect conception of knowledge. Man has never come, apart from Christ, to a consciousness of full and final and perfect knowledge of God and consequently, man persists in his attempts to deceive God. When man attempts to deceive God, he, by that very action, reveals the fact that he does not believe that God knows all and perfectly.

The whole system of sacrificial worship in other religions is that of attempting to persuade God to change His mind, and alter the method of His procedure.

Or, if man thinks of will, his will is capricious and revengeful, and he flings that out into immensity, and his conception of God is upon the pattern of what he is in himself.

Consequently, in all religions other than the Christian, through all the ages, the deities postulated are grotesque representations of humanity. The underlying ideals revealed in the deities referred to in the Old Testament—Moloch, Baal and Mammon—continue this statement; the deification of the emotional in Moloch, of the intellectual in Baal, of force and power in Mammon. In every case, at the back is a human being, and the monster that is worshiped is but the projection into infinity of the failure of the human being.

The gods of ancient Greece and Rome, or the gods men worship today—sensuous gods, vindictive gods, lazy gods, trivial gods—prove the same truth. We only know these things because we see them in another light. We see these gods by comparison with the one God Who has been revealed to us.

But when, apart from revelation, man seeks a deity, he evolves his conception of deity from himself; he must think of that being upon the pattern of what he is in himself. And so, to make the illustration simple, given a man trying to think of God, he thinks of himself, and then of someone as himself, but vaster; but the things he sees in himself, his evil as well as his good, the wrong as well as the right, the meanness as well as the nobility, are all present in his god, and the visions of men apart from the Christian religion are filled with deities, grotesque and enlarged limitations of man in his failure and in his sin.

My youngest friend will allow me a simple illustration, and the older ones will be patient. You have but to think of a magic lantern. Here you have a small picture, and you look at it, and on it is the

figure of a man. You put it in the lens, and away yonder on the sheet is the same man, magnified. But it is the same man, it is the same picture, and if here in the lens the picture be that of a man twisted and distorted and grotesque, the picture there on the sheet is twisted and distorted and grotesque. That is exactly what men have done in their creation of gods. Take all the gods of the heathen world and trace the lines, and you will find they are focused in the men who imagined them.

But, you tell me we have grown away from these ideas; you tell me there are a great many men in the world today who do not claim to be Christian, who yet have a wonderfully true and accurate idea of God, of His uprightness, and beneficence, and tenderness, and holiness; you tell me there are men who will not accept the Christian doctrine of incarnation, who yet have a beautiful ideal of God. I know it, but whence came it? Every advance in man's conceptions of deity is Christian, even though the men who hold the new and higher view do not name themselves Christian.

It is almost a grotesque way to state it, and yet you will catch my meaning, when I say that I am perpetually inclined to say to the men who have these high and noble ideals of Deity, but who deny my Christ, what Samson said to the Philistines: "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, Ye had not found out my riddle."

In the light of these considerations, we turn to the declaration of the text, "God was in Christ." This, then, is the meaning of incarnation. God answers the human necessity; enshrines Himself in humanity; thinks, speaks, chooses, acts through human channels; comes into the very midst of human history, after man had begun to write that history; and thus gave humanity the one and only Man from Whom the lines flung out into immensity include God as He really is.

All that was found in the perfect manhood of Jesus may be projected, and the result will be the truth about God. Fall back if you will upon my simple illustration of the camera. See in this same picture of your New Testament that which you put into the lens, and when the light shining through it projects the figure full of truth and unsullied splendour on the canvas, I see God. Every line is a line of beauty, and every expression of the face is full of beneficence, and yet of righteousness. I come back to this Man of the New Testament, and I follow Him and watch Him, and I take the things I see and fling them out, and I find God. I will take, for illustration, these selfsame things to which I have made reference—the mind, and the will, and the force. Now I must leave you to wander at will, through these gospel stories, and I hope some of you may, and watch the working of the mind of the Master, anywhere and anytime; and when you do so, let the lines pass out until they fill the infinite spaces, and you will have found the working of the mind of God. Observe Him in the hour of His choices, anywhere and anytime, and then fling the lines out into immensity, and you have discovered the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. Mark every effort of Jesus, every putting forth of strength. See it in its purpose, watch it in its method, observe it in its victory, and fling the lines out, and you will find that He is vindicated in what He said. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." There is perfect harmony between the two.

Mark well the mind of Jesus in its essence by observing its activities; it encompassed vast eternities, and compressed him into the simple speech of childhood. I have taken up an old sea-shell, and have put it to my ear, being told when I was a boy that if I would I could hear the ocean. Of course I heard it; the shell was made by the ocean, fashioned by the ocean, was of the ocean, and the ocean of the atmosphere repeated the action of the atmosphere of the ocean, and

I heard the sweep and the music of the sea in the shell. Quite reverently—the figure is an imperfect one, I know—I put my ear and listen when this Man speaks, and He speaks in little words, all human language: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Oh, my masters, put that shell to your ear this morning, and the infinite speech of eternity is singing itself through your soul, and as you obey you find rest.

So there came into human history two thousand years ago, a Man through Whose personality, whether of mind, or of will, or of force, I fling the lines out into immensity, and the result is God. A new revelation of man has resulted in a new revelation of God.

At the back of all the activity of this Man, love was the motive. The expression of His activity was service rendered to others, and all the way I see Him flaming in white hot anger against everything that bruises and hurts; and whether I watch Him taking children in His arms and blessing them, or watch Him when in quiet dignity He pronounces the eight woes upon a guilty city, it is ever the vision of God that is breaking on my life. "God was in Christ," and what is the result? We have found God, and He is a God of joy and a God of sorrow, a God intimately interested in all the details of human life, a God forever active; and all these things I have come to know through the Child, and Boy, and Youth, and Man of Nazareth.

Did I say that God answered man's method, that man's method is that of projecting man into immensity, and God adopted it? And did the way in which I said that make it appear as though God were turning from His own first purpose, and accommodating Himself to human failure? By no means. That is God's return to first purpose. He made man in His own image and after His own likeness. And man, true to himself, might have flung out upon the canvas of eternity his own image, and have found God. The most intimate relationship existed between man and God in the Divine economy. But, when man shut his eyes to the farflung vision, and began to live as though that upon the earth which was material was the whole of himself, then he became distorted, iniquitous—exactly the same meaning is in the two words—sinful, sensual; and then, lifting his eyes to the heavens, were shadows indeed, and all his knowledge of God was based upon the knowledge of his fallen self, and was evil. But in Christ, we have the very effulgence of His brightness, and when all that He is in humanity is seen and enlarged, we have found God.

And one final word as to the purpose, "reconciling the world unto Himself." Man's misconceptions of God have resulted in man's hatred of God. I want you, if you will, to think of that, and think of it carefully. You tell me that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and I agree with you. But I ask you, Why is the carnal mind at enmity against God? And from the very letter of Paul that declares that the carnal mind is enmity against God, I make another quotation. The carnal mind does not know God, nor can it. It is at enmity against God. Yea, verily, I need not argue it; I need not argue it in London. But whence the enmity? The enmity is the outcome of ignorance. You say we are far away from the idolatry of our Hebrew Bible, with its Baal and Moloch and Mammon. I am not sure, but I will not press that. We are far away from the idolatries of ancient Greece and Rome. Again I am not sure, but I will not argue it. But you are not far away, or humanity is not far away from its hatred of God. It does not express itself in brutal and vulgar language always. It expresses itself in the West End in the fact that the name of God is tabooed, and you must not mention Him. Men do not love God. Why not? They do not know Him. The old German sang well and truly, and you

remember Wesley's magnificent translation:—

O God, of good the unfathomed sea,

Who would not give his heart to Thee?

And whenever a man gets that vision of God, he gives his heart and everything else to Him.

But though humanity has had a revelation of God in incarnation, the incarnation as revelation does not reconcile men to God, neither can it. The birth of Jesus was the birth of a Man perfect in Himself, but other men will not be reconciled by that birth. The old prophet saw far beyond his own age, and I quote you his language: "When we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Do you imagine for a single moment that the prophet meant that there would be no beauty in the Servant of God when He came? I do not so read the prophecy. There was no beauty that would appeal to men. Why not? Because they are blind and cannot see. And here is the root of the trouble with the world.

"God was in Christ" is a great word, the meaning of which is not exhausted by the birth and life of Jesus. We must go on, and include the cross. The cradle demands the cross; or else I have seen a Man, strangely other than I am, and I shall hate Him because His purity rebukes my impurity, and His spacious, spiritual and eternal conceptions are a perpetual rebuke to my clinging to the dust of my materialism and the devilish sin that I love. Such hatred was the cause of His crucifixion. That is why they crucified Him.

And then, to face another mystery as infinite as the first, God in man suffered, as man apart from God suffers. And out of that came the fulfilment of all that began on the morning of the birth of Jesus. And when at last, by the infinite mystery of that dying, the life of that selfsame Christ is communicated to men, they see Him as they had never seen Him, and they find God as they had never found Him, and in the vision there is at once illumination and energy.

So that brethren—let us remember this also—while we sing our carols at Christmastide and rejoice in the presence of the Child, not by His coming, not by the beauty of His Babyhood, the strength of His Manhood, the glory of His moral character are we saved, but by that final mystery to which this all led, the mystery of His cross; and by the way of His death I find my way back into His life for illumination and for energy. It is thus that we find God, and not only find Him intelligently, but find Him in victorious relationship and fellowship; and, to use the daring and marvelous and awe-inspiring language of Peter, we are made "partakers of the Divine nature."

And so we have attempted to look a little beneath the surface, and have been compelled ultimately to look at something infinitely beyond the birth and life of Jesus. We know God through Jesus. No other interpretation is correct. How important then that we should know the Christ and know Him intimately. And to do it, brethren, we must begin at His cross. He is known, not by outward contemplation, but by inward revelation; and that inward revelation comes to the men who meet Him at the one trysting-place He has provided—His cross. And so I leave you at the cross, for there we must begin, and by the mystery of its cleansing tide and its regenerating forces we come into sympathy with Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, and find our God, and so our peace.

2 Corinthians 7:1. Holiness: Conditions.

2 Corinthians 7:1.

Holiness: Conditions.

Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

In the first study in this series on Holiness I attempted to answer the inquiry, Is holiness of character possible in the present life? declaring that the New Testament affirms its possibility. We now take one step further, and consider the teaching of the New Testament concerning the conditions on which we may live the life of holiness.

We already have insisted that according to New Testament teaching holiness is a condition of character. It is not necessarily the consummation of character. In other words, holiness is perfect health of soul rather than its ultimate perfection.

Starting with the great declaration made in the prophecy of Zechariah concerning the mission of the coming Messiah, that "He shall deliver us from our enemies, that we may serve Him in holiness and righteousness," we sought to discover both the difference and the relationship between holiness and righteousness. Holiness is rectitude of character. Righteousness is rectitude of conduct. Holiness as rectitude of character is the possible present experience of the children of God because it is the will of their Father that they should be holy; because in order to make them holy Christ came: and because the object of the Spirit's work in them is the realization of that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. At the close of last Sunday morning's service one of my deacons drew my attention to a very remarkable and beautiful definition of holiness from the pen of John Morley. I want to read it to you. It appears in the latest volume of Miscellanies:

It is not the same as duty; still less is it the same as religious belief. It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the unseen Good.

When you have written Good you have written God: when you have written God you have written Good. Mr. Morley writes Good where we would write God. I have no desire to discuss the attitude of Mr. Morley. Such writing as that bids me forevermore suspend my judgment. I do not believe we are so far apart as some imagine. That is the finest brief exposition of what holiness is that I have ever seen. Nevertheless, what is not told me in that exposition is what I supremely Want to know. Is holiness an instinct of the soul in some, and therefore forevermore impossible to others? How can I get into such "living, patient, and confident communion with the unseen Good" as to enable me in the spirit to purify myself of earthly appetites and worldly passions, and so live in the power

of that unseen grace? The description is a beautiful one. It is the description of a man who has seen; but there is no explanation of how a struggling, sin-sick soul like myself can find its way into that experience. I am not criticizing Mr. Morley. He made no attempt to unlock the secret. He described the grace. It is, however, at this point that Christianity delivers its central message, and it is here that I find the supreme and lonely splendor of the Christian religion. It comes to men who are in all respects unlike that description, and declares to them that they also can be made holy, and that not by effort of the will, not by struggling as within themselves. How, then? The answer to that inquiry is the theme of this meditation.

"Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This verse stands as the first of the seventh chapter in our Bible; but it ought not to be the first verse of a new chapter; it is the completion of the previous chapter. Its central injunction is "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit"; the basis of the apostolic appeal is, "Having therefore these promises"; the issue of the cleansing enjoined is, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Let us turn to the basis of appeal. It is that because by it we are driven to inquiry concerning the promises to which the writer makes reference.

"Having therefore these promises." What promises? We turn to the words at the close of the previous chapter. I take out quite bluntly and somewhat awkwardly the actual promises to which the apostle is making reference. "I will dwell in them.... I will walk in them.... I will be their God.... I will receive you... I will be to you a Father.... you shall be to Me sons and daughters." "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves." These promises fall into two series. The first series reveals the secrets of strength. "I will dwell in them"; God's promise to be resident in His people. "I will walk in them"; the symbolic language that tells that the resident God is also active in His people. "I will be their God"; the final word in the first movement in the series of promises indicating that the God resident and active is governing as Sovereign, as absolute Lord. These are the promises. "I will dwell in them... I will walk in them... I will be their God."

Then the second series in the group indicates the method by which we enter into this experience, "I will receive you... I will be to you a Father." Remember that promise of Fatherhood is not a promise of philanthropy in our sense of the word merely. It is not a promise that God will open an orphanage and act as though He were our Father. That promise has in it all the deep, mysterious, fundamental values of evangelical Christianity. The word of the ancient economy was gracious and beautiful, "Like as a Father pitieth." But this is not that. This is more than that, "I will be a Father." I will give you of My very nature. You shall partake of it, be related to Me by that intimate bond which is the result of regeneration. And "you shall be to Me sons and daughters." "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

I am very conscious of how hurried and fragmentary a method that is in dealing with the promises. I have gone back to them only that we may remember them. I may summarize them, and make this declaration. In order to perfect holiness by fulfilling the personal responsibility of putting away all defilement of flesh and spirit, there must first be the immanent and indwelling God. Where that is so human responsibility begins in the matter of holiness. In other words, I have no right to speak to a man whose whole life is being lived away from, apart from, in rebellion against, God, and

charge him to be holy. He has no responsibility concerning holiness. He cannot be holy. To the children of God the appeal may be made. To those who have been received, to those to whom He has become in the new and mystic and gracious and spacious sense of the New Testament a Father, to those who are in very deed His sons and daughters, partakers of His life, sharers of His nature, heirs of all that He is, to those there is responsibility—we must begin there. It seems to me that such a declaration is at once a word full of comfort, and a word that burns and searches and scorches like a fire. Have we struggled along after this ideal of holiness—whether we call it by that name or not matters very little? Have we seen something of the fair vision described in the paragraph I read to you from the pen of a man who honestly, sincerely, is not sure of the things which we do most surely believe? Have we seen the vision, have we struggled after it, but never attained to it? Then let us earnestly inquire whether we have ever begun at the right point by the reception of the life of God. On the other hand, are we indeed struggling after the ideal, knowing that we are children of God? Then let us take heart, "Having therefore these promises." Yet we must not forget that there is the process, "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The first great necessity is personal, actual, definite relationship with God. The indwelling God is the secret of holiness in human character, and consequently also the energy of righteousness in human conduct.

These things being granted, let us now consider this injunction, "let us cleanse ourselves." What are the conditions upon which we may do this. They have often been enumerated. I do not propose to do any other than to take certain old words of which we have all made use for very many years. These are the conditions. Conviction, renunciation, surrender, and faith. The first is the reason of the rest. The last is the power in which the others are carried out.

Let us leave the central two, and take the first and last, conviction and faith. In certain senses they are identical. Still, the two words do indicate two phases of the one tremendous fact. Conviction is the first thing, and conviction is faith. Yet there may be conviction without that activity of faith which brings us into the realization of all that which our heart is seeking. Faith is conviction, but it is conviction active. The faith that saves, faith in the initial stages of the Christian life and all the process of discipline of Christian life is not conviction merely; but yielding to, obedience to, abandonment to conviction. Where conviction is answered by active obedience, there you have faith that brings into living contact with all the resources of power. There are certain things that one is compelled to repeat again and again in very many connections. The faith that saves is not faith about, but faith into. Those familiar with the Greek New Testament will remember how perpetually we have the use of the preposition *eis* with the accusative, which indicates motion into. Belief into is more than belief about. Belief about is conviction. Belief into is conviction compelling activity. Belief about is conviction of the light. Belief into is walking in the light. There must first be conviction if there is to be holiness. There must also be faith, that is, obedience to conviction.

Now the two words, "renunciation" and "surrender," are valuable because they indicate the activity of faith following upon conviction. Conviction is God's gift. It comes like a flash of lightning to the soul of man, unsought, unexpected, uncompelled by mental activity. The great conviction comes in the midst of a service, comes in the silence of our own home, comes when and where we least expect it. I recently had a conversation with one who told me she had been brought up in another faith, in a home that knows nothing of Christ and will not have anything to do with Him. She read, *The Wide, Wide World*, years ago, and there was born in her heart the conviction that it was

desirable to be as good as Ellen. It was forbidden her to read or know anything about Christ, but some years after she read Emerson's essays. Again she saw this selfsame Christ, saw Him portrayed as perfect Man. Then said she, "I will read my New Testament on that basis. I will not think of Him as Christ but as a great man." So she read the New Testament. When she put it down she said, "He is not merely a man, but my Lord and my God." Conviction came when she read *The Wide, Wide World*. It was a strange way. I am not advising anyone to look for conviction in fiction. But God does avail Himself of many ways. Through that book there came the conviction of the beauty of holiness to this girl. That is the first thing. It comes in many ways, but it must come.

It is important that we should know what this conviction really means, and therefore we recall the words of Jesus. Speaking of the Spirit of Truth, He said, "He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold Me no more: of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." Mark in the briefest way the meaning of that great declaration. This is the threefold conviction that always precedes holiness. The conviction of sin is conviction as to what it really is, rejection of God. The conviction of righteousness is conviction of its possibility because the Man Jesus has overcome all enemies, and passed triumphantly to the presence of God. The conviction of judgment is conviction of victory. The prince of this world is judged, and therefore all our enemies are defeated. This is the preliminary conviction. I repeat that we cannot compel it. It comes in the darkness of some lonely night, in the midst of the great multitude, by the silent voice of Nature, in the thunder or in the lightning. Until there is that conviction there can be no holiness. I am bound once again to repeat that we cannot compel it. It is the gift of God. I pause resolutely, carefully at this point, for someone will say, For that conviction I am waiting! Are you quite sure? Will you be perfectly honest? Has it not already come? The moment we recognize that this conviction is the gift of God we are in danger of making that fact the way of escape from responsibility. We are in danger of saying that we cannot be holy because we have never had that conviction.

Let us be honest and sincere. In the hidden secret shrine of our inner spiritual life have we not already seen the sinfulness of sin? Has no profound conviction ever come to us of the exceeding beauty of holiness? It may be that as I read that brief extract from John Morley we said, Yes, in the deepest of our souls. If so, that was the hour of conviction, if it had never come before.

That conviction having come, there must be obedience to it. That is faith. Faith, in the presence of sin, expresses itself in renunciation and by surrender. We have read the great promises.

Side by side with the promises, there are injunctions and conditions. These injunctions and conditions teach what is meant by renunciation:

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore

Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

And touch no unclean thing;

And I will receive you,

And I will be to you a Father,

And ye shall be to me sons and daughters.

This is not my imagination. This is the word of inspiration.

It is an explanation of the meaning of renunciation, and is closely connected with the great promises. It is a call to renunciation of all known wrong. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate," that is, separate from sinning men and women; "touch no unclean thing," that is, renunciation of all known sin. If we would perfect holiness in the fear of God we are called to immediate and irrevocable renunciation of all that we know to be out of harmony with the mind and will of our Lord. Do not let us misplace the emphasis of this word of the apostle, for I think that by so doing we rob it of its strength. He does not say, If you will have no fellowship with evil things you shall become a temple of the living God. His declaration is rather, Have no fellowship with them, because you are the temple of the living God. To me the difference is almost overwhelming in intensity of appeal. If I am told that I am to perfect holiness, that I am to have no fellowship with sin and evil things, in order to become the temple of God, I am filled with fear because I am so weak and frail. That, however, is not the apostolic method. He reminds me, first, of the strength which is mine, and then urges me to Holiness. Because we are temples of God, we are not to desecrate the temple. God is in us. We are not to insult the Indweller by the retention of things that are unlike Him. This is the groundwork of appeal.

Because of these facts we are called on to put away all the things we know to be wrong, in our friendships, in our habits, in our inner thinking. These things must be put away or there can be no perfecting holiness. The threefold definition of sin is very familiar. Sin is transgression of the law. Sin is neglect to do right. The questionable thing is sin whether it have the appearance of good or evil. We are to decide by that threefold definition of sin what things need to be put away. The things we know to be wrong. The things we have neglected to do which are right. The things about which we are doubtful.

Of all these there must be renunciation. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; and touch no unclean thing." There must be no excuse, no compromise, no delay. When we deal with sins God will deal with sin. When we resolutely determine to put away the things we know to be sinful He will purify the center and create in us that grace of holiness which expresses itself in graciousness and rectitude of character.

How are we to know the things that are to be put away? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." This is the testing promise. If we desire to know we must awake from our lethargy, sleep, carelessness; awake from the influence of opiates that have made us lack sensitiveness to the will of our God, awake and put ourselves honestly confronting Christ, and He will shine upon us, and in the shining luster of His glory we shall discover the things that are unlike Him, and those are the things that are to be put away.

No man imagines it is possible to live the holy life if he is resolutely keeping sin in his life, something in his habits, his home, or his business. We know that these things grieve the Lord. We excuse them, and holiness is never perfected, and we lack the grace and loveliness of character

which ought to be the testimony to the power of our Lord because we have not yet begun to be determined to renounce the hidden things of darkness and to put out of our lives the things that are unlike our Master.

Beyond renunciation, there must be surrender. By that I mean the yielding of ourselves up to God. In the first letter to these Corinthian Christians the apostle uses these words, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." In the letter to the Romans he says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." I deliberately adopt the marginal reading there. That is a wonderful verse. Study its psychology. "I beseech you... to present your bodies." Your body is not you. The apostle is not dealing with the body, he is dealing with the essential man. Or in the Corinthian epistle, "your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you... glorify God therefore in your body." You glorify God in it: you are not it: you indwell it. The body is the tabernacle, the tent of the man, not the man. I pray you mark the significance of this, and see the reason for laying emphasis on these two passages. What is surrender? To give myself over to the Lord. That is, all my spiritual life. How am I to do that, or demonstrate that I have done it? By presenting the body in which I dwell. That is spiritual worship. We thought spiritual worship consisted in singing hymns and praying. All these things are spiritual, or should be, but spiritual worship is the body dedicated to the Lord.

Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love;

Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

That is surrender. That is not merely that my hands and feet are at His disposal, but that I am His, and that I indicate to Him and to the world my abandonment by putting the members of my body at His disposal and refusing to allow brain, or heart, or head, or hands, or feet to act save under His command and in His sacred service. The intellect, emotion, will surrendered, and consequently the whole body acting under His direction.

The putting away of the evil thing and surrender to the Lord of the body are the only conditions. Wherever these conditions are fulfilled the promises are fulfilled. "Having therefore these promises"—"I will dwell in them... I will walk in them... I will be their God... I will receive you... I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters." Where the evil thing condemned is put away and the whole life is surrendered, God has His chance. That is what He wants.

Heart of mine, this is the trouble with thee, thou hast not given thy Master His chance. I have locked up some chamber in the temple. I have barred Him from entering into some activity of the mind. I have retained some place in my emotional nature for other than Himself. I have not given Him his chance.

Do we desire the holy life? Here are the conditions. Conviction He gives. That we are to respond to by the faith that renounces evil, puts away sin, abandons the life to Him. Holiness is not realized by my endeavor, but by His working in me, when I have given Him His chance.

May God lead every one of us not merely to conviction, but to the faith that renounces the things He disapproves, and surrenders to Him all that is His by the indwelling of His Spirit.

2 Corinthians 8:7. The Grace Of Giving A Million Shillings!

2 Corinthians 8:7.

The Grace Of Giving A Million Shillings!

See that ye abound in this grace also.

2 Corinthians 8:7

The passages read for our lesson had so evidently a local and immediate application that they seem to have very little value for us. I am glad that the local coloring has faded, because in proportion as that is so the lines which are vital and essential stand out in clearer relief. I need hardly remind you that if a great deal of this is of the nature of faded color, there are things that none of us would care so to describe. For instance, no one would say that the color is faded from this statement, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." Because of that one verse the chapter is worth reading; worth reading if only to see the use the apostle makes of that great truth; for it is a significant fact that the verse with which we are all so familiar, the verse that is enshrined in the very heart of the Christian Church, is one that occurs in the midst of a chapter which we have admitted is full of local coloring. In that fact there is revealed a method of apostolic writing and teaching that I am very anxious we should constantly recognize. These New Testament teachers never dealt with local matters by local methods; they forevermore brought to bear upon the temporal, the eternal. Whenever they touched something that was the subject of a day or of an hour, they did it in the atmosphere and spirit of the eternities. Not merely when they wrote to saints, calling them to the life of full sanctification; not merely when they wrote the great document of human salvation; but when they wrote about the relation between husband and wife, between fathers and children, between masters and servants; and when they had to do with so commonplace a matter as a collection, they adopted the same method. They corrected the wrong things of the passing moment by bringing them to the measurements of the undying ages. All false conduct which they desired to set right, they approached with eternal and abiding principles.

Because I am desirous that we should understand the place of giving in Christian life, I want to speak of the New Testament ideal thereof.

The chapter from which the text is taken clearly sets forth that ideal. The source of Christian giving is suggested in the opening verse, "Brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia." The grace of God bestowed upon His people is the source of all giving. The spirit of giving is also revealed. The Macedonian Christians were eager in their desire for fellowship. They gave beyond the expectation of the apostle, in that they gave themselves to God, and then gave themselves to the Lord's service, and consequently, not merely out of their wealth but out of their poverty, they gave more than they were able. The method of giving is revealed in the same words. They gave themselves, and their gifts followed. Finally, the great arguments for giving are stated. The first is that of the things they possessed, "Ye abound in

everything." Notice that the everything in the apostolic thinking does not take into account what some men may have lacked, material wealth. "Ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us." Upon the basis of that abounding wealth he appealed to the Corinthian Church, "See that ye abound in this grace also." His final argument is that of the verse which we read, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." The word here translated "poor" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is the strongest use of the word that it is possible to make. It indicates absolute pauperism. He became so poor that He had absolutely nothing more to give away. The local coloring has faded, thank God that it has, for the living figures and abiding principles and eternal realities flame upon the page in all the greater brilliance and radiance for the fading of the local colors.

Some five or six years ago, in a Northfield Conference, Mr. John Willis Baer, who was then Secretary for Christian Endeavour for the world, was conducting a question box. He took out of the box the question, "How shall we raise money for Foreign Missions?" His answer was as quick as the crack of a pistol, and as forceful: "Don't raise it, give it." In that answer is the solution of the whole problem which confronts us at the present hour. If funds are lacking to carry on the work of God in the far distant places of the earth, it is because the Church has become so busy raising money that she has ceased to give it.

Every method for raising funds for Missions that is spectacular, worldly, and commercial, I hold to be out of harmony with the will of God, and in the long issues calculated to hinder and not to help. If we can but return to the simple and profound principles of the New Testament in the matter of giving, we shall never have to call a halt, or beckon the workers back, in order that we may close fields into which they have entered because the Church at home is not conscious of an opportunity, or is not ready to sacrifice in order to enter a field.

What is the basic principle of giving? It is declared in one word, which I have already quoted in this chapter. I take it out of its context. It does not belong only to this chapter, for it is stamped upon the pages of the New Testament. It is the word "fellowship." "Beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship." If we may but come to an appreciation of the meaning of that word in all its applications, we shall have touched the profoundest basis. What is fellowship? Those of you who worship here regularly must be patient if I now repeat in this connection what I have said in other connections. The word translated "fellowship" is one of the richest words in the New Testament. So rich in suggestiveness is the Greek word "Koinonia," that not even the revisers found it possible to express it in all connections by one English word. When I take up my New Testament I find the same Greek word is translated "communion, communication, distribution, fellowship." I find, moreover, that its kindred word, "Koinonos," is translated "partaker, partner." Whereas there is something very dull in the repetition of a group of words like that, the very repetition helps us to see the richness of the word. There is one passage in the New Testament which admits us to the heart of its meaning. It occurs in connection with that fascinating picture of the early church, when it is declared that the disciples had "all things in common." The Greek word so translated is the root from which our word fellowship comes. Fellowship with God, therefore, means that God has placed all His resources at our disposal, and that we, dare I say, have placed all our resources at His disposal? I dare not; I dare say only that we ought to place all our resources at His disposal. That is exactly what the apostle meant when he wrote to the

Corinthian Christians, "We make known to you the grace of God... ye abound in everything... see that ye abound in this grace also." The grace of God to you is that He has put all His resources at your disposal. Your grace is to be manifested in that you put all your resources at His disposal. That is perfect fellowship. Tell me, if the whole Christian Church understood, and lived in the power of such fellowship, would there be any need to ask the patronage and help of godless men to carry on godly work? Would there be any need whatever to recall from the field loyal hearts who are suffering and serving, but who must be brought home owing to lack of funds? This is the difficulty. God has put all His resources at our disposal, but we have not put our resources at His disposal. That is the foundation principle that ought to underlie all Christian giving.

Let me break up that foundation principle into two working principles: "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price," and "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If in the consciousness of fellowship with God, if in the activity of placing at His disposal all our resources, we remember that we ourselves are not our own, but His; and if in all the activities of everyday life we make His glory the one supreme, master-passion, then we are applying these working principles, and we shall find that they will produce all that is needed for the doing of God's work in the world.

The principle for practical application is found in the first passage I read. I think it is well that I read the actual words again. "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." To me, to read that, and then to think of the habit of the Church in raising money, is to see how far we have wandered from the apostolic ideal. The only use the churches through this country seem to have today for the preacher is for him to visit them in order that there may be a collection. Out of twenty-five letters I receive asking me to preach, I am safe in saying that twenty of them say, "We are in need of funds, and your visit will enable us to raise them." The apostle says "that no collections be made when I come." In order that it may be so, the true method of giving is stated. The giving of the Christian man is to be personal; let every man. It is to be regular, upon the first day of the week. It is to be perpetually readjusted, according as God has prospered. I hear a great deal about the tithing of incomes. I have no sympathy with the movement at all. A tenth in the case of one man is meanness, and in the case of another man is dishonesty. I know men today who are Christian men in city churches and village chapels, who have no business to give a tenth of their income to the work of God. They cannot afford it. I know other men who are giving one-tenth, and the nine-tenths they keep is doing harm to their souls.

Turning from the principles, I want to say a few words about laws and regulations. We are to arrange our substance as Christian people on the basis of recognition of the fact that all is His. Consequently, it is not that I am to give Him a tenth or a part, and hold the rest to spend according to the dictates of my own desire. The Christian man must recognize that not a tenth, but ten-tenths, belong to God. He has no right to spend anything save in accordance with the Divine will. May I put the case quite simply for the youngest Christian here. Out of my income I am to spend so much on food, clothing, shelter, mental culture, recreation, and all to the glory of God. If the method of my eating is not for the glory of God, then I waste God's money. If the method of my dress is not according to the glory of God, then I violate the principle of Christian life and of Christian giving. I must do all to the glory of God. In order to be giving directly and immediately to the actual work of God, therefore, there must be a recognition of stewardship, and that means

careful disbursement, not only of your hundreds and thousands, or millions, but of your pence and shillings. We have no right to disburse money without investigation. If your conscience is not at rest about a society, you have no right to buy off a collector with a subscription. We need a new sense of stewardship in the heart and conscience of Christian people in all of this matter.

If we lift this whole question on to this level, certain things will happen. First of all, we shall be forever at an end of spasmodic giving in this missionary matter. When once the Church comes to the sense of responsibility on the basis of fellowship, and on the principle of stewardship, we shall never again hear of the annual missionary Sunday. The whole of our churches are under the curse and ban of it, both in regard to information, inspiration, and giving. Systematic and regular giving will cancel all spasmodic giving, which creates crises, and hinders the work of God.

Again, if these principles once be recognized and acted upon, there will be an end forever of that carelessness which never readjusts conditions. There is someone who has been giving to a missionary collector a guinea subscription for the last twenty years. Twenty years ago that man's income was not a fifth of what it is today, yet he is going on in the same way, a guinea a year! To come to the consideration of these things in the light of the New Testament ideal, will mean constant readjustment, sometimes lessening your giving in honesty, or increasing it in response to the increasing prosperity of the days.

If in the Christian Church at this hour, in this country, there could but be the realization of this New Testament ideal and these New Testament principles, the result would be that of making forever unnecessary all questionable methods of raising money. What is the reason that the missionary societies lack funds? Is it that the Church lacks fulness of life? Or is it that the Church has become lamentably ignorant of New Testament teaching? Or is it both? Are not these two things very closely interrelated?

In a word or two let me illustrate the application of these principles. I maintain that every Christian Church should put first things first. I maintain that it is of the very essence of the Church's life that the first of her income should be spent, not on herself but on the work of her Lord, and not on the work of her Lord at her doors, but on the work of her Lord in the far distant places of the earth. It is not for any reason of sentiment or purpose of boastfulness, but because we believe it is the Divine order, that out of all collections taken in this church the first tenth is set aside for missionary work. As I say to my friends in the provinces when they come to Westminster and put a sovereign on the plate, two shillings of it goes to missionary work beyond our own borders.

There is a peril in that which we need to recognize and avoid. The peril is that when this is done the Christian men and women in the church may imagine that their individual responsibility is fulfilled. By no means. I pray you think carefully; if we had not tithed our income for these three years would you have given any less to the collection? I trow not. Your giving has been the giving of your worship, your expression of gratitude to God for the benefits He has conferred upon you. The giving of the tithe is the giving of the corporate church, and not the giving of the individual members. Think of it carefully, and see that your individual responsibility abides. Tithing of collections must not be allowed to weaken personal responsibility.

As in the church life first things should be put first, so also in personal stewardship, first things must be put first. Note that the Corinthians did this. Paul says, "Now concerning the collection."

When? Immediately after the great passage on the resurrection, the chapter of the final issues of Christ and Christianity, the chapter that climbs the heights until the challenge to death is heard; "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord. Now concerning the collection." Put the collection in the full tide of your spiritual life. Put the collection in full relationship to the highest, noblest doctrines of the faith. Hold your offering in the supernal light of the resurrection of the Son of God. Put your giving in relation to the life that was won out of death.

The inspiration of giving must be the grace of God, the love of God. There comes back to me a story, I cannot forbear telling it even though perchance I may have told it before, because it had such an effect upon my own life. Hudson Taylor told me this story the last time I saw him in this world, the story of how, long years ago, there came into his room, on his birthday morning, his own little girl, and she brought in her hand a most mysterious-looking arrangement, so mysterious that Hudson Taylor did not at all know what it was. She said, I have brought you a birthday present. He took it in his hand and looked at it. It was a matchbox, into one end of which she had driven a knitting needle, and into the other end a pin, and had somehow fastened some cotton to the pin and to the top of the knitting needle. Being only a man, and not a mother, he said to his girlie, "Well, darling, what is this?" "Oh, father dear," she said, "I knew it was what you would like. It is a missionary ship."

There is the whole philosophy of Christian giving. The heart of the child knew full well the love of her father's heart, knew that the thing he most longed to possess was a ship, and she made one for him. There is no one in this congregation who will dare to laugh at that missionary ship.

The years passed, and there came a day when the girl had grown to womanhood, and once again she came to her father in China on his birthday, and she said, "Father dear, I have brought you something for your birthday," and he said, "What is it?" She continued, "I want to introduce to you the first Chinese woman that God has used me to lead to Christ." The potentiality of that Chinese convert lay in that matchbox, knitting needle and pin.

There is the plane of Christian giving. What does God want? What is His heart set upon? Before every present you buy which is worth anything, you say: I wonder what he wants. I wonder what would please her. That is the true genius of giving. That is what the child did before she made the ship. Such giving comes out of real love.

If we could but get the Church here! If instead of desiring to keep up an appearance of respectability there were a great, passionate, surging love for God and the things that God loves, all our financial problems would be at an end, and then as young men and maidens come up and ask to be sent out—and they are coming all the time—we would not have to tell them there is no place for them, no method of training them, but out of the fulness of funds we could get them ready, and send them forth to the work of evangelizing the world.

My last word to you is of our own Society in this respect. Doubtless many of you know that the London Missionary Society is asking that before the last day of March there should be given to it from the churches of our order a million shillings. I know perfectly well how easily people say,

Another appeal! and down it goes into the waste-paper basket.

I wish you would think about that appeal. What does it mean? It is an appeal for money to wipe out a deficiency which at the present moment is £37,000, and before the end of the year in all probability will be £50,000. How has this deficiency come about? I reply at once, the deficiency is due to the success of the work. The deficiency is due to the fact that God has answered prayer and blessed the workers. We have sent forth workers into the distant fields. They have succeeded. If they had failed there would be no deficiency. I want you to think carefully of this when you are facing the subject of missionary giving, that planting a missionary, or a mission station, means not merely the amount needed to support him or it for a year, but more the next year, and more the following year if he succeeds. I have in my hand an article which appears in the January number of the London Missionary Society's Chronicle, in connection with this appeal, which I propose quoting to you. It puts the whole case in a nutshell. The writer says:—

The deficits have occurred because the Board has been sanguine enough to "Budget for a Rise" in its income, which "rise" has not been realized, at least to the extent anticipated. But surely, after such experience, twice or thrice repeated, this habit of "Budgeting for a Rise" ought to have been discredited? Well, the Directors have, after all, but afforded another example of the triumph of Hope over Experience. Though having had experience that the income had not risen as expected, they still hoped that it would do so. Who can blame them for persisting, at least for a while, in the belief that the churches would not allow the rose tree to be cut down on the very day when it was blooming?

That is the whole story of the deficiency. Do not blame the Mission House. You business men, if you are at all anxious about the Mission House, investigate its methods and discover that the cost of administration in the London Missionary Society is under two shillings in the pound, which amount includes all secretaries' salaries, the whole administration, and the cost of all the literature issued. It is a smaller amount than is spent by any of the other large Missionary Societies. Do not blame the Mission House. Do not blame the missionaries for succeeding. Blame the Church, that she is out of fellowship with her Lord, that she is not true to the doctrine of fellowship, that while God has placed all His resources at her disposal, she has not placed all her resources at His disposal.

Supposing these million shillings are not forthcoming, what then? The result must be curtailment. There must be the closing of some part of the field that we are at present occupying. It means cutting down the rose tree somewhere in the day of its blossoming! Is that to be our reply to the opening doors of opportunity?

I came, as you know, back to my work this winter from one month spent in going to different places on this great missionary enterprise. When I went out for that month's campaign, I stipulated, as did my brethren, that I was not to talk about money. I did that because I believed, as I still do believe, that the true way of dealing with the financial problem is by deepening the spiritual life of the Christian Church; but when the hour has come that the Board has to consider whether it must cease work begun, and call men and women home, in the name of God, it is time we spoke of finance; and I have tried to put this subject where I think it ought to be put, on the highest level and on the profoundest foundations.

And what does it all come to in the end? What is to be the reply of this congregation to that appeal? In the light of that appeal, as it covers the churches of England and Wales, before the end of March, in addition to the subscriptions of our members, in addition to the tithe, we at Westminster ought to send to the Mission House £200. It could be done, it will be done without any difficulty, if we all will put this matter on the basis of the New Testament ideals. Let no youth or maiden, no man or woman, who can only give out of poverty, withhold the shilling because it is only a shilling, and let those whom God has blessed with more, exercise that same function of stewardship, and give as in the presence of your Lord.

To me it would be almost heartbreaking if we had to close any field, or call back any workers when as never before the Master is opening up the world and bidding us enter in. It would be to the great joy of my heart if this congregation made its response without any organized collecting. I very much shrink from that. I hope it will not be necessary. If we will all send in our penny or sixpence, or shilling, or pounds, or scores or hundreds of pounds, during the next three months it will be easily accomplished.

I do desire that at Westminster, where God has so graciously blessed us, we shall make our response to our Society and help them at this time.

I thank you for the patience with which you have heard me. Believe me, I have spoken out of my heart. I now leave the matter with you.

2 Corinthians 11:5. The Great Apostle.

2 Corinthians 11:5.

The Great Apostle.

I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:5

This claim of Paul occurs in the midst of which he was evidently ashamed, but which was necessary in defense of truth. There is no surer sign of modesty than the absence of mock modesty. When a man is able to boast in vindication of his appointment to service by his Lord he proves his humility.

The greatness of Paul as an apostle is now conceded, yet during his exercise of the apostolic vocation he had perpetually to defend his right to the title. In his letters, sometimes with a touch of satire, he defended his apostleship against the misunderstanding—that is the kindest word to use—of the other apostles. In the Galatian letter he declared that he went up to Jerusalem and gained nothing from them. He referred to those whom he found there as persons "who were reputed to be somewhat," then absolutely denied that they ministered to him in any way, either by original authority, or subsequent counsel. He received his Gospel from his Master. He received his commission from his master. He did his work under his master's immediate direction. He remitted his case and cause to his master's judgment.

In defense of his apostleship he always adopted two lines of argument. First, he insisted upon his Divine appointment. Second, he claimed that the fulfilment in his ministry of the true apostolic function proved that Divine appointment.

Wherein lay the greatness of this apostle? The simplest and most inclusive answer to that inquiry is to be found in a statement of the deepest facts of His life in its relation to Christ. I desire now to make that statement quite briefly and only by way of introduction, for I propose another method of approaching the subject. I cannot, however, entirely pass over these fundamental and inclusive matters.

The greatness of the apostle was created in the first place by the absoluteness of his surrender to Jesus. On the way to Damascus, surprised, startled, and stricken to the earth by the revelation of the living Christ, he in one brief and simple question handed over his whole life to Jesus. "What shall I do, Lord?"

The greatness of Paul as an apostle is further to be accounted for by his attitude, consequent upon that surrender, toward all the things of his former life. "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ."

Finally, his greatness is to be accounted for by the resulting experience which he crystallized into one brief sentence, "To me to live is Christ."

These things being stated and granted, I desire to consider certain attitudes of the mind of this man which reveal the strength which made him the great apostle, the pattern missionary for all time. These attitudes of mind are revealed, not so much by the formal statements of his writings, as by the incidental and almost unconscious utterances thereof. I particularly desire to make clear my own discrimination between these two things. In his letters there are certain paragraphs which are formal statements concerning himself. I do not propose turning to these for this reason—I say this with all respect to Paul, and with recognition of the fact that these are inspired writings—men do not reveal themselves in their formal utterances half so clearly as in their incidental words.

I have recently been going through the writings of Paul, and gathering out some of the incidental things he uttered concerning himself. I propose to take seven of them, without any set sequence or order, hoping the effect may be cumulative, helping to an understanding of the attitudes of mind which made this man a great apostle.

The deepest thing in human personality is not mind, but spirit. The spiritual life of Paul commenced when he said, "What shall I do, Lord?" was continued when he said, "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ"; was perfected as Christ was formed in him and shone out through his life. That is the spiritual fact. I desire now to deal with the mental, that is, with the attitudes of mind which were natural to him, and which were baptized by the Spirit into life and fire and power.

I

In the midst of his classic passage on love, he declared, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things" Comparing love with knowledge, and showing how knowledge passes away, the richer and fuller forevermore making obsolete the smaller and the incomplete, by way of illustration he wrote, "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things," or, more literally, "I have made an end of childish things." In that declaration there is revealed an attitude of mind, consisting of a sense of proportion. It is a recognition of the fact that the ways of a child are right for a child, but that the ways of a child are wrong for a man. There are men who when they become men do not put away childish things. There are people who make advance in certain directions, and carry up with them into the raw region of their life things which ought to have been left behind. Should the butterfly cling to the shell in which it had been but a grub, what disaster! When it became a butterfly, it put away the things of the former life. "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." That is to say, toys gave place to tools. Playtime was succeeded by worldtime. Instruction began to express itself in construction. This is a principle of greatness in all Christian service, and lack of it is inimical to progress. It is a sense of proportion and readiness to answer new conditions whenever they arise.

II

My second illustration is taken from the Galatian letter, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." That is a revelation of the sense of spiritual compulsion. He had already declared that he had received a double unveiling of Jesus Christ. Mark the twofold fact. Christ was unveiled to him, and in him. He had seen a vision of Christ external to himself on the way to Damascus, and he had seen a vision of Christ as part of his inner, deepest and profoundest life. That vision, that unveiling of Jesus Christ, became the master principle of his life. In a moment all the lower motives were

canceled. The spiritual truth breaking in upon his soul by the revealing of Christ to him and the revealing of Christ in him came not only as light but as fire, not only illuminating, but destroying every other motive that existed within.

Now mark the fine scorn of his word, "I conferred not with flesh and blood," that is to say, material motives at their very highest and best were forevermore out of court and out of count. "I conferred not with flesh and blood," quite literally, I did not take advice from flesh and blood, I did not take counsel with flesh and blood, did not seek the guidance of flesh and blood. First, his own flesh and blood. He never took counsel with his material life from the moment when God revealed His Son in him. He took counsel with the revealed Son. He did not take counsel with the apostles of flesh and blood. He took counsel only with the spiritual truth which had broken upon him through the inner and spiritual conception of Christ.

III

Turn to another of these declarations, "I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound." That is a sense of detachment from circumstances. Did ever apostle pass through more varied circumstances than this one? Was ever man less affected by them than he was?

This is not the detachment of absence. That is the ascetic, monastic ideal which is anti-Christian. The man who says, I will escape the possibility of abasement, the possibility of abundance by hiding myself from the commonplace affairs of life, is not realizing the apostolic ideal, which is ability to stay in the midst of circumstances of abasement and to dwell amid abundance.

Neither is it the detachment of indifference. It is not the stoicism of the Greek which steels the heart and says, Abasement shall not affect me, abundance shall not appeal to me. Far from it.

It is rather the detachment of mastery and of use. "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound." I am not afraid of abasement. I will not escape from it. I am not afraid of abundance, I will not avoid it. I do not imagine that in the hour when my Lord gives me abundance there is something wrong in my inner life. "I know also how to abound." I know how to suffer hunger. I know how to suffer need. Abasement without dejection. Abundance without tyranny. That is one of the greatest sentences Paul ever wrote as revealing his absolute triumph in human life. It is the picture of a man so absolutely detached from all the circumstances of his life that he was able to take hold of them and press them into the making of his own character, and, what is more, into the service which his Master's will had appointed. This is one of the statements of Paul of which I hardly dare to speak, so little do I know it personally, so difficult do I find it to be. Where was the secret? How was it this man could say such a thing. Follow right on and he tells you. "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." It is the Christ-centered life. That is the spiritual fact. I refer to it only that we may find the secret of this mental attitude which is so difficult, nay impossible, to cultivate, which can come only as Christ within becomes in very deed the Master of the whole life. Whenever Christ does become the Master of the life you will find a servant who says, I cannot hurry from abasement, "I know how to be abased." I do not fear abundance, "I know also how to abound." You cannot turn my feet out of the way of His commandment by hunger, I know how to suffer hunger. You cannot quench my zeal for His service by giving me fulness. I know how to be filled. I am so detached from circumstances that I can master them.

IV

I come now to the very heart and center of the references which reveal his greatness as an apostle. In that wonderful Roman letter—introducing the subject of the salvation of God—he made three personal references within the compass of a few phrases. "I am debtor... I am ready... I am not ashamed." "I am debtor," the Gospel is a deposit which I hold in trust. "I am ready," the Gospel is an equipment so that I am able to discharge my debt. "I am not ashamed," the Gospel is a glory, so that if I come to imperial Rome, sitting on its seven hills, I shall delight to preach the Gospel there also. In each case the personal emphasis reveals the sense of responsibility. "I am debtor." Here you touch the driving power of the man's life. Here you find out why he could not rest, why the very motto of his missionary movement was "the regions beyond," why he traversed continents, crossed seas, and entered into perils on perils. He felt that while anywhere there was a human being who had not heard the evangel, he was in debt to that human being.

"I am ready." I suppose you have all read what Artemus Ward said about the American War Between the States. He said he had already donated several brothers and cousins to the war, and he was prepared to donate a few more. How many of you have donated other people to missionary enterprise? Paul said, "I am ready." "I am not ashamed." You tell me we must cancel the capital "I." Yes, nail it to the cross and let it emerge in resurrection glory.

V

In the same letter I presently find this man writing another revealing sentence. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." I do not know that there is anything other than silence possible in the presence of that. There have been endless attempts made to account for it, and to explain it, usually to explain it away. It has been said that the Apostle did not really mean that he wished he were accursed from Christ. Then, in the name of God, why did he write it? If language means anything, he meant exactly that. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." How is this to be accounted for? It can be accounted for only by declaring that it is the mental attitude which grows out of the fulness of spiritual life, of which Christ is the fountain. Again, go back in memory over the argument. He had stated the great doctrine of sanctification. He had climbed up out of the unutterable ruin of human sin until he had come to that height at the close of the eighth chapter in which he said that nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Immediately the shout of personal triumph merged into the cry of a great sorrow, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." How are we to account for it? Only thus, he is now speaking with the tongue of Christ, feeling with the heart of Christ. He is a man surcharged with the Christ-life. It thrills and throbs through every fiber of his being. If that be so, I have no further difficulty, for He Who knew no sin was made sin for me. Here is a man in whom His life is dominant, in whom the Christ passion is moving and burning. What is the mental attitude now? Utter and absolute self-abnegation. "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." It is the sense of compassion.

VI

I turn to another passage which stands in almost brutal contrast to the one at which we have just been looking. "I resisted him to the face." Who is this that he resisted to the face? Peter. Why did he resist Peter to the face? Read the story carefully. Not because Peter had been preaching a false doctrine. He had done nothing of the kind. Peter, to whom first had come the commission to

preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, having come down to these Gentile Christians, had sat down at the table with them quite naturally. But there came down certain men from Jerusalem, and when they came Peter declined to sit down with the Gentiles. Paul calls his action by the right word, dissimulation, positive dishonesty. I pray you notice carefully what this means. Paul saw that Peter insulted truth in the commonplaces. He would never have insulted truth in a great crisis. Peter argumentatively and theologically would have defended the liberty of the Gentile quite as eagerly as would have Paul, but under stress of conventionality he conformed to the false thinking of the Judean visitors by refusing to sit down with the Gentiles. Paul's anger here is a finer revelation of loyalty to truth than any lengthy treatise. I will put that in another form. His attitude toward Peter is the supreme vindication of the honesty of the Galatian letter. Had he written his Galatian letter, a powerful treatise in defense of the liberty of the Christian, and yet had lightly passed over Peter's dissimulation, I would have been compelled to doubt his sincerity. Here, again, I remind you of the principle enunciated at the beginning of this study. A man is revealed in the commonplace thing, not in the crisis. Paul, when he saw Peter violating truth in the commonplace, resisted him to the face, because he was to be blamed. An apostle violating truth in the commonplace is not to be excused because he is an apostle. In all probability Peter was one of those to whom Paul referred as those who were "reputed to be somewhat." The "somewhat" that he seemed to be could not save him in the presence of this man in whom the truth reigned supremely, who would not deviate by a hair's breadth from loyalty to it. No man is great who excuses the violation of truth in the commonplaces of life. "I resisted him to the face."

VII

One more illustration, "I must also see Rome." That was not the feverish desire of the tourist. He was himself a Roman citizen, and was conscious of the far-reaching power of the Roman empire. He knew full well how the influence of the capital city spread out over all the known world. He was perfectly well aware that the Roman highways extended in every direction, and Roman rule was everywhere. It was the strategic center of the life of his age. "I must also see Rome." I must go to Rome, and from that great center send forth this selfsame evangel, this Gospel message.

It is exactly this sense of method which the Church has so perpetually been in danger of losing. Take one illustration of what I mean from home missionary work, and another, a living one at this moment, from the foreign field. The home illustration is to be found in the perpetual habit the Church of God has had of abandoning some building at the center of a vast population. When the Church of God abandons some strategic center it is because she has not the apostle's sense, "I must also see Rome," I must be at the heart of the world's movements, I must take this Gospel into the very center where the tides of life are throbbing, and from which the influences which make or mar men are proceeding. Take the other illustration, from the foreign field. If the Church of God did but know its day and opportunity it would fasten its attention at this hour upon Japan. China is waking from her long, long slumber, and the question of the politician is not the question of the Christian. The question of the politician is, "What shall we do with China?" The question of the Christian is, "What will China do with us?" for I believe the Christian man climbs to the highest height and sees things more clearly. That is the question of the future. Remember, finally, China is not going to be influenced by us. If she desires Western civilization she will certainly choose to take it from her neighbor and kin, Japan. If we did but know the hour of our visitation and opportunity, we should evangelize Japan, and especially in the centers of learning, for from them

are going forth the men who will presently effect the molding of China. The Church today ought to be restless through all her missionary societies, and her great cry ought to be, "I must see Japan." It was a great sense of method. It was the word of a man who thought imperially in very deed and truth, and who knew that to be at the center of empire with the message of the Gospel was to affect the uttermost part of the earth.

Let me gather up in brief sentences these sayings and their values. First of all, I find a sense of proportion which made Paul willing to pass on into new light and new conditions and forget absolutely the things of the past. "Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Then I find the sense of spiritual compulsion which made him magnificently, even satirically, independent of the counsel of flesh and blood. "I conferred not with flesh and blood." Then I find that splendid detachment from circumstances which meant mastery of circumstances. "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound." Then I find that sense of personal responsibility which made him say, "I am debtor... I am ready... I am not ashamed." Then I find that overwhelming sense of compassion which made him say, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ." Then I find the sense of stern loyalty to truth which made him resist Peter to the face—"I resisted him to the face." Finally, I find that sense of method which made him put into a sentence the burning desire of his heart when he said, "I must also see Rome."

Truly this was the great apostle, the great pattern for all time of those who would desire to be apostles, messengers, missionaries of the cross of Christ.

Yet I am compelled to return to the fundamental statements with which I began. If these are the mental attitudes, what is the spiritual fact? "To me to live is Christ." So that as I look at Paul, the apostle, the missionary, the last thing I have to say is not of the great apostle, but of the great Christ, the One Who took hold of this man, and revealing Himself within him, unveiling His glory to his inner consciousness, drove him forth, and made him such as he was. Christ diffused through Paul will not help us. It is good to see Paul, to know what Christ can do; but we must indeed get to Christ Himself if we would enter into fellowship even with Paul. If the vision of the great apostle shall drive us to his Lord, then how great and gracious will be the result. If we will but make his surrender, "What shall I do, Lord?": if we will take up this attitude toward the things we have counted best, counting them but loss that we may win Christ: if we will but enter into the experience which he expressed in the words, "To me to live is Christ"—what then? First, He will not make us Pauls, but He will make us His own. Though He may never send us over continents and among such perils, all that matters nothing, for it is local, and incidental merely. He will send us where He would have us go, and He will make us what He would have us be, and through us—oh, matchless wonder of overwhelming grace—the light of His love may shine, and the force of His life may be felt.

We cannot have this Christ-life within us without having clear vision, and without having driving compassion, and without having the dynamic which makes us mighty. We cannot have Christ within us and be parochial. Christ overleaps the boundaries of parish, society, and nation, and His clear vision takes in the whole world. If Christ be verily in us we shall see with His eyes, feel with His heart, be driven with His very compassion.

"If I have eaten my morsel alone!"

The patriarch spoke in scorn;
What would He think of the Church, were He shown
Heathendom, huge, forlorn,
Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,
While the Church's ailment is fulness of bread,
Eating her morsel alone?
"I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek,"
The mighty apostle cried;
Traversing continents, souls to seek,
For the love of the Crucified.
Centuries, centuries since have sped;
Millions are famishing, we have bread,
But we eat our morsel alone.
Ever of them who have largest dower
Shall heaven require the more.
Ours is affluence, knowledge, power,
Ocean from shore to shore;
And East and West in our ears have said,
Give us, give us your living Bread.
Yet we eat our morsel alone.
Freely, as ye have received, so give,
He bade, Who hath given us all.
How shall the soul in us longer live,
Deaf to their starving call,
For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,
And His body broken to give them Bread,
If we eat our morsel alone?

2 Corinthians 12:9. The All-Sufficient Grace.

2 Corinthians 12:9.

The All-Sufficient Grace.

My grace is sufficient for thee.

2 Corinthians 12:9

This phrase forms part of a story in the life of one man. It is, however, a great word, revealing a profound philosophy of life, unfolding the deepest truth concerning God; in the knowledge of which life finds the place of peace and rest; and becomes powerful and influential in service. It is remarkable how these words have taken hold upon the heart of humanity. I think that as a general rule it is not wise to differentiate as to the value of particular portions of God's Word, and yet there are outstanding passages which all men seem to know and love. These passages are those characterized by simplicity of statement and sublimity of meaning. This is one of them. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Upon that great word many a weary head has rested; many wounded hearts have been healed by it; discouraged souls have heard its infinite music and have set their lives to new endeavor until they have become victorious. Yet, in common with other passages of a similar quality, I believe that multitudes have been helped and comforted by this word who never have discovered its deepest meaning; for in proportion as the soul trusts in God, God communicates to that soul strength and comfort, even though His promise be not perfectly apprehended intellectually.

All of us, with perhaps some very rare exceptions, accept the truth of these words. If I thus admit that there may be some who are a little doubtful in the deepest of their heart about the strict accuracy of this declaration, I am perfectly sure that such doubt arises from some present sorrow, some overwhelming pain, some deep and profound consciousness of perplexity. It is especially for such that these words are precious. In order that they may see it and know its truth, let us examine the statement carefully.

May I first of all briefly remind you of what the text does not mean. Perhaps I ought to put that a little more carefully. Allow me to remind you of something which does not exhaust the meaning of the text, though it may be contained therein. This word came to the apostle as a veritable word of God, quieting his life, making all its turmoil pass into peace. It means far more than as though God had said to His child, The circumstances in which you find yourself are very hard and very difficult, and very trying, but I will help you to bear them. It does not for a single moment suggest that the adverse circumstances are outside the Divine government. The meaning of the grace of God here is far profounder, far more startling, and full of comfort. God is not saying to His servant, It is very hard and very difficult, and very trying: if it could have been avoided it would have been better, but seeing that it cannot be avoided, I am with you, I am going to help you, to strengthen you.

Is not that what we have thought this text meant? Even if it meant only that it would be worth while trusting it; but that is not the fulness of it, that is not the simplest of it; therefore it is not the sublimest.

The text means this, if I may put it broadly first and then examine the accuracy of the interpretation afterwards. That stake in the flesh, that messenger of Satan, is in My grace. It is part of My method. The stake in the flesh is sent. The messenger of Satan is My messenger. This is not something that is against you, but for you. This hard and difficult and trying circumstance is not something outside My province, My economy, which you must overcome with My help: it is of My purpose, it is in My plan. I am high enthroned above all the powers of darkness, and to the trusting soul Satan himself is compelled to be a means of My grace. All your suffering is in My economy. I have poised in My own hand the weight of your burden and know it. Everything that is imposed upon you is under My control. "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is enough for you to know that what you are suffering is part of My discipline, evidence of My love.

In order that we may see that this is indeed what Paul meant when he wrote this word as being God's message to him, first notice the context. Concerning the apostle's experiences as here described there are a great many questions which I do not propose to answer. It is always unwise to attempt to understand things which we are told cannot be understood. It is not very long ago that someone asked me, half incredulously, Do you really believe that Paul was caught up into the third heaven? My answer was, Certainly I believe it. Well, but how? You do not expect me to know how, when he did not know himself. He distinctly wrote, "Whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not." The things of which he was perfectly sure were that he was caught up into the third heaven, and that he saw and heard, and that upon his lips the seal of a solemn and necessary silence was set. He did not know how, but he knew the fact.

Again, there has been great curiosity as to what he saw and what he heard, notwithstanding the fact that he tells us he heard things "which it is not lawful for a man to utter." There is a book of the visions of Paul, and we are told that in the house of Saul of Tarsus there was discovered a marble casket in which was a writing declaring the things he saw and heard. I hope and believe we have grown out of all such foolishness as that. They were unutterable things. The value of them was undoubtedly manifest in his after life.

Probably the experience came to him at Lystra, for he was there about fourteen years prior to the writing of this letter. They stoned him with stones and left him for dead, and it may be that when the men had left him for dead, bruised and battered by their dreadful stones, the Master caught him up and gave him visions. I do not know. I dare not say that it was so. It may have been so. But how he went, or what he saw, and what he heard are not revealed things; consequently they are not for us. They are among the secret things that belong to God.

And yet again many people are attempting to discover what this stake in the flesh was, and again I say to you that if we were meant to know, that also would have been told us. His word is that it was a stake for, rather than in, the flesh. The thought is really that of crucifixion, of suffering in the flesh, and actual and positive physical affliction. It was a stake for the flesh, and it was a messenger of Satan to buffet. There you have the two ideas of abiding affliction, the thorn, the stake in the flesh, and the repetition of trial, the messenger of Satan to buffet. Physical and mental affliction. Then we are told by the apostle why this stake in the flesh came to him, why this messenger of Satan came

to buffet him. It was in order that he should not be exalted overmuch by reason of the revelation which had been granted to him in that great hour when he was caught up into the third heaven and saw and heard things which it was impossible for him to utter. There is a specific purpose, and will you notice that when Paul wrote his letter he knew this.

Then he tells us how he "besought the Lord thrice that it might depart" from him. That prayer was finally answered by the voice of God in his soul, speaking the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." When the prayer was answered he wrote, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch."

While the apostle was praying for the stake in the flesh to be removed, and for the messenger of Satan to be withheld, I do not think he could possibly have written, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh." When he wrote these words he had come to understand that the thing he wanted to get rid of was part of the Divine purpose for him. The writing of that sentence, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me," was subsequent to the great answer of the text. The purpose is now clearly revealed, a thorn in the flesh for a specific purpose. His prayer for its removal has issued in his understanding of this fact, that whatever it was, it was sent, given, appointed; that whatever form the buffeting of the angel of Satan took, it was part of God's appointment, something that God Himself had sent to Paul.

But we must get behind to the consciousness of the apostle ere he understood the meaning of the stake in the flesh, ere he understood the meaning of the buffeting of Satan's messenger. There he was, having seen a great vision, yet suddenly depressed by pain and suffering, both physical and mental. Out of the consciousness of his pain, out of the very fierce agony of His suffering, he cried to God and asked that this might be removed from him, that he might be delivered from the stake and from the angel messenger of Satan who buffeted him. To that condition of mind this word of God came, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Now, notice the effect of the word. "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It is so easy to read and so difficult to enter into that spirit. "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may cover me." Heart of mine, attend these words. "Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses." He does not say, I endure them, I bear them, I suffer them, I am resigned. No, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong." This is a change from complaint and petition for the removal of these things to a song of triumph in the midst of them, and over them. I see, first of all, a man pleading with great earnestness and great sincerity that he might be delivered from the pain and burden and unrest. Suddenly, I find a man who no longer asks that these things be taken from him, but says, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses." I take pleasure in these things, not in the fact that power is given to me to bear them but in the things themselves. I take pleasure in my suffering. I rejoice in my weakness. I sing a song of gladness because of the injury. This is something infinitely beyond the experience of the man who is thankful because God helps him to bear the thing which cannot be escaped. This is the expression of a philosophy that is infinitely removed from that which expresses itself in the words, "What cannot be cured must be endured." Somehow, this man has come to say concerning the thing he wanted to be rid of, I ask no longer to be rid of it, I glory in it! The stake in the flesh is no

less painful, but I am glad of the pain. The buffeting of Satan's messenger is no less terrible, but I rejoice in the buffeting. Here is a man who has seen in his pain something of value, who has discovered that the very cross from which he would have escaped is of value, something that he cannot afford to be rid of. "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses." Notice, he begins with "Wherefore," and the "wherefore" drives me back to the preceding word, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses," and that drives me back to my text. It is this vision of the purpose of the stake and of the messenger of Satan as the apostle declares it, the vision resulting from the word spoken in the text, that sends me back to the text itself that I may ask, What does this mean?

What was it that turned this man's dirge into a song? What was it that changed this man from a good man praying to be delivered from pain into a man singing a song of gladness because he suffered pain? Here is the answer. "He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." I submit to you that must mean far more than that God said to him, This thing cannot be avoided, but I will help you to endure it.

Let us take the simple word of the text and look at it. "My grace." What is the meaning of this great word? Who shall answer that question? The word runs through all the New Testament. We see it everywhere, first shining and flaming in revealed glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and then proving to be that root principle out of which the ultimate glory will blossom, the grace of God. Who shall exhaust it? Let us take the word itself. The root idea is that which is pleasing to God. The thought lying at the back of the word is that of the Divine complacency. When grace becomes a river flowing from the throne of God over the life of man it is a beneficent, healing river always, because it is a river which, coming from the throne, accomplishes the will of the throne, and brings into the ordinary life of man the purpose and thought of God which is forevermore a purpose and thought of love. The grace of God. If we accept the old theological definition of the word, that grace is unmerited favor, remember that is only a partial definition. That is the definition of what grace is in activity toward man. Grace exists before it becomes a favor given to anyone. Grace is the fact of the heart of God. You may spell it in the four letters which give you the great word "love." It is essentially the truth concerning God. He is the God of all grace, and we need to remember that as well as to remember that the thing which helps and blesses us is the grace of God. Grace means that which gives pleasure to God, the thing that delights Him, the thing that gives complacency to God Himself. Nothing gives the heart of God pleasure except that which is an activity of love for the blessing of others. God finds His delight forevermore in loving, and in the presence of need, in healing and restoring and blessing, so that the essential grace of God's character becomes a river of healing and of life wherever it flows forth.

"My grace," that which pleases Me, that which comes to you out of My heart, that which reaches you through My love, as a part of its process.

"My grace is sufficient." That is to say the region of the Divine complacency is the region of power forevermore. If a man be where God loves to have Him, he is in the place of power even though at the moment it should be the place of pain.

Let us take two illustrations from the Scripture. I go back to Nehemiah. Ezra had been reading the law of God. Its sense had been given, the interpretation given, the meaning and method explained to the listening people, with what result? The people were filled with sorrow and grief, and the

voice of lamentation was raised, and we hear the voice of a people stricken and afflicted. For that there were two reasons: first, the severity of the law, and, second, their consciousness of sin and failure. These people were listening to the law of God—do not miss this—and as they heard it read and explained, they wept and were sorrowful. "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" (Nehemiah 8:10). Mark the change. The people heard the law and wept; but when Nehemiah said to them, "The joy of the Lord is your strength," they went away full of mirth. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Do not let us spoil a great word by superficial exposition. Nehemiah did not mean to say to them, If you will but be happy, you will be strong. He meant to say, Do not be afraid of this law of God. The thing that gives God satisfaction, the thing that makes His heart glad, is your strength—your strength lies in the keeping of His law, and as you give Him joy, you get His joy and so you will become strong.

Take another illustration from the Old Testament of the same great principle, the strange and somewhat startling statement of Isaiah 53:10. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin. He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." It is a somewhat difficult passage, and one that certainly cannot be interpreted to mean that God took any personal delight in the suffering of Messiah. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" means that it was part of the Divine economy, it was a thing that was necessary, it came into the operations of God, a necessary part of them, that the Son of His love should be bruised, so it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Out of that bruising came the victory of Messiah so that He prolongs His days and sees the pleasure of the Lord prosper in His own hands. To the Messiah—I say it reverently, and yet it is true, for here we touch the profoundest illustration of our text—to the Messiah the joy of the Lord, which was represented to Him by pain which He endured, was His strength through His realization of the fact that in the midst of the tragedy of His pain He was co-operative with God in the victory by which He leads the long procession of trusting souls into liberty and into light. It was not that He was helped in the Cross to endure something which was outside the Divine economy. It was rather that in the mystery of the Cross He was having the most perfect fellowship with God, dwelling in His pleasure, in His love, in His provision.

To go back from that supreme height of illustration to the actual word of the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is enough for you to know that you are in the place that pleases Me, in the place of My joy, in the place of My appointment. Someone says, I cannot understand how God could be pleased in the suffering of His servant, or how God could be pleased or have joy in the thorn in the flesh and the messenger of Satan. He had such pleasure because He knew that through the process of pain there should come the very power for which His servant was seeking. He had His watchful eye fixed upon the ultimate issue, and He delighted in the processes because of that which was to come out of them. It was that in the great word which He spoke to Paul which turned his dirge into song, his complaint into thanksgiving, his restlessness into perfect peace, without the removal of the actual pain. It was the consciousness that this pain also was part of his Father's tender provision for his own making and his own perfecting which created the comfort of

the message, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Let us now turn from the examination of the text in its context to consider what it teaches us. First is this truth, that "God is love." He is a God of grace, therefore His arrangements for my life are all of love and are all of grace. Every pain that comes to me is a part of His economy, and therefore it is precious pain. The apostle says that the stake in the flesh was given him, that the messenger of Satan was sent not of Satan or of human malice, but of his Father. Until he saw that the pain came from his Father he prayed, naturally and rightly and beautifully, that it might be removed; but when God had spoken in his soul, and he came to understand that the pain also was part of the Divine provision, he sang in the midst of it, he triumphed over it, he rejoiced in it. He made the very suffering the reason for song. Therefore the supreme anxiety of every life should be to be in God's grace, that is, in His will, in His law, in the place that pleases Him. The joy of the Lord, the thing that satisfies Him, is for me the place of my strength whether it be pleasant or painful, rough or smooth, dark or light. Whatever His will appoints is manifestation of His grace, and in that will is the realm, the region, of my strength. Consequently, there should be no anxiety in the life of trusting souls other than that of finding out where God would have us be. The grace of God may be for you, for me, who knows, the stake in the flesh. It may not be that. It may be quite other. The grace of God for some of us is not the thorn, the process that is a lingering agony in the life, but the rose blossoming and blushing in beauty. Do not imagine that God's only method of grace is the method of the thorn. I think it is more often the method of the flower. Do not imagine that God's only method is the method of the storm. I think it is more often the method of the sunlight. I think nature, even in our own land, is often a parable to us of God's method. We are always complaining of the rainy days: but count them and you will find that they are fewer than the sunshiny days. I am not saying we are to seek for pain, that we are to inflict pain upon ourselves. That is the devil's method of stirring up a sensual spirit, not of creating a spiritual sense. God's grace may be a thorn. It may not. It may be cloud. It may be sunshine. It may be a rough pathway. It may be a smooth pathway. It may be through a sea tempest tossed, or it may be by the still waters and through green pastures. The thing we are taught by this word is that the fact that it is His grace is sufficient. I am to rest in His provision, to rest in what He appoints for me, to sing my song, not because I am free from pain, but because He wills that I should be free from pain. If I can sing the song of health and strength and freedom from pain and care, then presently, if for some reason other than I know, He sends me the stake in the flesh and weakness, I shall be able to keep on singing. The reason of man's gladness must be that he is where God would have him be. Delight in your circumstances and they will soon change and your delight will vanish. Delight in the will of God and the darkest day cannot shut out the light from your life.

Reverently let me say this. Suppose before the apostle had discovered this word of God to him, suppose his prayer had been answered and the stake had been taken away, and the messenger of Satan had come no more. What then? When the stake in the flesh was removed and the messenger of Satan came no more, the ministers of God's grace would have been absent.

Somewhere in this house there is a broken, bruised soul. Have you, oh, brother, sister mine, been crying out that God would deliver you from this pain? May God help you to learn the deeper lesson. Do not think the preacher is telling you that he has learned it. I do not know that I have, but I am praying God to teach it to me. It may be, dear heart, that in the very pain which is laid upon you is the thing which is making you as nothing else could. Miss Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, in one

of her little poems, reminds us that the gates of heaven are gates of pearl, and she says:

A pearl is found beneath the flowing tide,
And there is held a worse than worthless thing,
Spoiling the shell-built home where it doth cling—
Marring the life near which it must abide.
The everlasting portals are of these,
To teach us that perchance some heavy load—
Some cross 'gainst which so sorely we have striven,
That seems to mar our lives and spoil our ease—
May bring us nearer to the saints' abode,
And prove at last the very "Gate of Heaven."

Do you tell me this morning, dear bruised and broken heart, that your life is spoiled by pain and suffering, physical or mental? God speaks to you and says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God's fires never harm God's saints. They purify the saints. The pain into which he brings me is pain, a stake for the flesh, actual suffering, a messenger of Satan to buffet and bruise; it is real suffering. "My grace is sufficient." What His will appoints is best. There are many instances of people having prayer answered not for their blessing. I read in the Psalms, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." It is possible to have an answer that is not a blessing.

Jesus lay asleep in the hinder part of the vessel. A storm of unusual violence arose. Even the men who were accustomed to storms were afraid, and they wakened Him and rebuked Him, saying, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What did He do? Heard their prayer and answered it. He came to the edge of the boat and looked out over the troubled waters and said, very literally, "Be muzzled." Was not that an excellent thing to do? It was an excellent thing if these men could not climb any higher, but there was something better they might have done. They might have said, Let Him sleep on.

No waters can swallow the ship where lies

The Master of ocean, and earth, and skies.

It is easy to criticize them. Most probably I should have wakened Him, but that does not prove that it would have been right. He rebuked the winds and the waves, and then said to the men, "Why are ye fearful? Have ye not yet faith?" I would rather weather the storm and miss His rebuke. I would rather come through the storm without disturbing Him. I pray Him to teach me the lesson. I want to be able to say, Thy grace is sufficient, and if Thy grace is storm or pain or weakness, then that, and not escape from trouble, is the better way. I would hear His voice saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee," until I can say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses.... I take pleasure in weaknesses."

My last word is not to those who are in sorrow, but to those who are not. It is a word I have already said, and I would repeat it with emphasis. Do not say, I cannot be a saint unless I have a stake in the flesh. The philosophy of this text for you is this, that you are to live in the sunshine and sing among the roses. Rejoice, young man, in thy strength. If it is His will that yours should be a flowery pathway, pluck the flowers and live among their fragrance, and when presently the sun is o'ercast and the last rose of summer fades, if you have learned how to abide in His will in the sunshine you will be triumphant in the shadow.

Galatians 5:7. Holiness: Hindrances.

Galatians 5:7.

Holiness: Hindrances.

Ye were running well; who did binder you that ye should not obey the truth?

Galatians 5:7

This is an outburst of appeal in the midst of an argument, and incidentally reveals a failure which has many other causes and manifestations than those with which this particular letter deals. The causes in this case were Judaizing teachers. The manifestations were that these people were going back into bondage, putting their neck under a yoke from which they had been set free. The actual failure the apostle described in the words: "Ye were running well; who did hinder you?" There had been a slackening of the pace, a relaxing of endeavor. These people were characterized by dimness of vision, weakening of virtue, and absence of victory. Their Christian life was not what it ought to be, and that fact troubled the heart of the apostle. He was never anxious about orthodoxy of intellect, except as it affected orthodoxy of heart and of life. If he was eager that the one and only Gospel should be preached, with an almost fierce invective cursing the men who preached "another Gospel," it was not an intellectual anger growing out of a conviction that he alone was right, but an anger born of his conviction that when men ceased to obey the truth the fine bloom was brushed from their characters, and they themselves suffered deterioration.

In this final study in the subject of holiness, let us give ourselves to personal examination, turning from theory to experience. We have defined holiness as that rectitude of character which issues in rectitude of conduct. We have declared that we believe holiness of character to be possible because it is the will of God for His children, because the work of Christ was in order to produce it, and because the ministry of the Spirit is for the administration of the work of Christ, and so for the realization of it. We have declared that the New Testament teaches that the conditions are those of renunciation of known wrong, the absolute surrender of the life to the Lordship of Jesus, and quiet, restful trust in Him. We have, moreover, considered the character of holiness in contrast to that of the man who lacks it as the selfless life, Christ-centered, and therefore love-centered and light encompassed, the character full of beauty.

Immediately we turn from theory to experience we face the fact of how far we are from realizing the character of holiness. We have seen the vision, but we have not gained the victory, and Paul's inquiry is one that we may pertinently apply to ourselves, "Who did hinder you?" In other words, if holiness be necessary to righteousness, if holiness be possible in the economy of God, if holiness be possible on the fulfilment of conditions, if holiness of character be that fair and gracious attitude of spirit which the New Testament reveals, and we lack it, why do we lack it?

In attempting to answer this inquiry, I propose first to deal with some of the answers commonly given, and, second, to examine the suggestiveness of Paul's inquiry as revealing the true answer.

It is often affirmed that the teaching of Scripture does not warrant the expectation that such character is possible to us here and now.

That statement is already answered by the teaching of the New Testament which we have considered. Nevertheless, the position is maintained on the supposed authority of certain passages of Scripture which do seem to call in question the possibility. I cannot, in the course of one brief study, touch on all of these passages, but there are three principal ones which we may take by way of illustration. There is, first, the passage in the Roman letter at the close of the seventh chapter in which the apostle says: "I am carnal, sold under sin.... To me who would do good, evil is present." All the statements of that closing paragraph are constantly quoted, and are sincerely and honestly adduced as arguments against the possibility of having holiness of character here and now. I hope I am making myself clear that in any attempt to deal with this objection I approach the subject in sympathy with those who feel the difficulty. Some of the sweetest Christian people I have ever known have quoted that paragraph to prove it was impossible to be holy even while they were already holy.

Then there is the autobiographical message, in which Paul distinctly and clearly says: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect... I count not myself yet to have apprehended... but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus," thus disclaiming perfection.

And, finally, there is the passage in which John says: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous One."

How shall we answer the sincere and honest difficulty of such as refer us to these or similar statements? First, by declaring, as a canon of interpretation, that no isolated passage or passages of Scripture can contradict its general teaching. If for a moment we could stand clear of examination of isolated passages, and think of the one message of the Bible to men, what would it be? "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." Or if we could gather up into one brief and comprehensive sentence the whole force of Christ's message to men, to His own disciples, how should we express it? "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." I also have quoted isolated passages, but I have done so because I believe they express the whole burden of the message of the Word to men. Never from beginning to end does it excuse anything sinful in the life. It tells the story—thank God that it does—of men of like passions with myself; and it tells the story of their sin. It is one of the peculiar beauties of the Bible that if it presents a man, it presents him as he is. When an artist painted Cromwell, and painted out all the roughnesses on his face, he daubed the canvas, and said: "Paint me blotches and all, or paint me not at all." In the Bible men are painted blotches and all. But if the experience revealed in the Bible is the experience of men who failed and fell, how do we know that they failed and fell? What do we mean by failing and falling? We see the failure because we also know the ideal which the Bible reveals. All the things which in the lives of these men were wrong we know to be so because the standard set up is that of perfection. Dr. Margoliouth, in his book, *Lines of Defence of the Biblical Revelation*, has a remarkable passage about David, as being a man after God's own heart. Dealing with those who declare that a man who sinned as David sinned with Bathsheba could not

have been a man after God's own heart, he asks if it is conceivable that any other Eastern monarch of that particular age would have taken up the position of penitence and contrition that David did, and declares that the excellence of David is seen in his attitude in the presence of sin.

The application of that illustration in the present argument is that we know the sin of David because we know the purity of the Divine ideal for him. His action is counted sinful by men who accept the Divine standard of holiness. We know the wrong of every man whose life story is told in the Bible, because we know also what God's thought for man is.

The Bible presents one Figure, Whose humanity was according to the Divine purpose and pattern, and I see the failure of all others because they stand in the fierce light of the purity and the holiness of that Life.

While that is the revelation of Scripture, taking it in its entirety, it cannot be that any single passage to be found in all its course can contradict that great ideal, or declare to men that the holiness which the Bible demands is not possible to them.

But there is another way in which this difficulty is answered. If we take each of these passages carefully, we shall see that none of them really contradicts the teaching of the Bible. It is very unfair to read the closing part of the seventh chapter of the letter to the Romans without running right on into that which follows. I read the solemn words: "I am carnal, sold under sin.... That which I do, I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise"; and so on and on, until at last the whole agony of the experience described expresses itself thus: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" But the passage does not end there. The answer is immediately given. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then going back, and summarizing the whole description that has preceded that answer, the apostle writes: "So then I myself with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Yes, but the apostle does not end even there. Read right on: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." We are perfectly well aware of the fact that expositors differ entirely as to whether, in the closing part of the seventh chapter, Paul is describing an experience prior to regeneration, or an experience after regeneration. For a moment I do not care which. I admit the experience at the closing part of the seventh chapter. There is an experience which a man voices thus: "To me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind"; but it is not the ultimate experience of Christianity. The ultimate experience of Christianity is this: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." We have no right to quote as descriptive of the normal Christian life a passage that describes an experience from which the next passage declares deliverance to be possible. The apostle is leading us through the struggle that we all know to the revelation of the victory that we all may know if we will.

Again, in the Philippian passage, whereas it is true that the apostle says, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect... I count not myself yet to have apprehended," he also says: "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal"; and holiness is perfectly described in those words. When he says he has not yet apprehended, what does he mean? Follow his statement to its end, and the answer is given. "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be

conformed to the body of His glory?" That is to say, the work of Jesus Christ in a man will never be ultimately perfected until he sees Christ face to face with no veil between, with all the limitation of the present life forever over. The ultimate in my Christian character lies beyond this life in the spacious and far-reaching mystery of the life to come. Holiness today is not perfection of consummation, but it is perfection of condition. It is the right attitude of a human life. Holiness does not mean that there can be no advancement. Holiness is the condition for advancement, that health of the spiritual life which makes growth possible. And this is what the apostle is teaching in the Philippian letter; he is healthy, but not full-grown; holy, but not glorified.

Or if we turn to the passage in the letter of John, it is quite true John wrote words of comfort, even for sinning believers: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"; but is it fair to make an "if" a permission? What are the words immediately preceding? "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin." I submit to you, and leave my argument at that point, that it is quite unfair to quote the gracious provision made for sinning souls as an argument in favor of the impossibility of holiness. Constantly I have to thank God that it is written, "We have an Advocate with the Father"; but if I make—hear me patiently and carefully—if I make the fact of the advocacy of Jesus an excuse for sin, I am guilty of the most terrible treachery and blasphemy. "These things write I unto you that ye may not sin"; but the "if" which follows is not an argument, declaring that sin is necessary.

It is declared by others that the experience of Christian people does not warrant the expectation.

I speak to my own heart as also to yours when I say, in answer to that declaration, that it is a reflection on those who make it. If we say that we do not believe holiness to be possible because we have never met people who are really holy, in all kindness but in all earnestness I declare that declaration to be a reflection on the company we have been keeping, or a revelation of our own spiritual blindness. I think that is the difficulty very often when a man says he has never known men and women who lived holy lives. There was a day when a prophet, depressed by overwork, said: "I only am left. I am not better than my fathers." And what was the answer? "Yet will I leave me seven thousand... which have not bowed unto Baal." Let us make no mistake. There are multitudes of holy men and women—men and women of beautiful, Christly character, the very salt of the earth, its gracious light. How is it, then, that people say there are no holy men and women? No one will deny that Jesus of Nazareth was holy; yet the men of His own time said of Him: "Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" What was the meaning of such criticism? An ancient prophet of Israel declared, concerning the coming Messiah, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." Do you imagine for a moment that the prophet meant the Messiah would lack beauty? By no means. What then? That men would be so blind that they could not see it. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, declares that the spiritual man is spiritually discerned; and if you have seen a holy man, it was because his holiness was discerned of your own spiritual life. If you fail to discover the beauty of holiness, it is because you are unholy.

I have seen a novice in an art gallery criticizing a picture by a great master, and I have been sure of this, that while he thought he criticized the picture, the picture really criticized him. When I am told that there are no saints, I reply that the saints are close by our side, living in our home, touching us every day; but we are color-blind, and the blue and the scarlet and the purple and the fine-twined linen have no loveliness for us because the dust of death is in our eyes.

But even if it were true that holy men and women are not to be found, then remember this, that prevalent imperfection is no justification of imperfection. Is there no holy man in your circle of acquaintance? Then you be the first. Oh, but it is objected, what other men have not been we cannot be. That we do not believe in any other realm of life. If our argument is that what no man has done, no man can do, then no master picture will ever be painted, no mountain will ever be climbed, no discovery will ever be made! All high things are made possible by the men and women who lead, who make highways, who blaze their way through forests that have never before been traversed. Be a pioneer and leader. Dare to stand alone. All the resources of God are at your disposal. Take hold of them, or, rather, let them take hold of you and be the first.

There are others who say that holiness is not a condition to be professed; that if they had the experience they would not talk about it.

My answer to that is this: Holiness does not need to be talked about; it talks. You remember Emerson's words—I do not quote the ipsissima verba, but the spirit of what he said—"I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are." I repeat, holiness does not need to be talked about; it talks. I quite agree with you that the nearer a man lives to his Lord, the less he announces his nearness in actual words; but the more evident it is in tone and temper, and these are the things of holiness. But I pray you, do not urge the fact that if you possessed it you would not talk about it as an indication of the impossibility of possessing the character of holiness. Holiness is a rare and beautiful spirit which permeates and pervades the whole life, and sheds its fragrance everywhere. I remember twenty years ago, in a home in which I was staying, that in one room I always detected the fragrance of roses, and I said to my host one day, "I wish you would tell me how it is that I never come into this room without seeming to detect the fragrance of roses." He smiled, and said: "Ten years ago I was in the Holy Land, and while there I bought a small phial of otto of roses. It was wrapped in cotton wool, and as I was standing here unpacking it, suddenly I broke the bottle. I took the whole thing up, cotton wool and all, and put it into this vase." There stood a beautiful vase, and he lifted the lid, and the fragrance of the roses filled the room. That fragrance had permeated the clay of the vase, and it was impossible to enter the room without consciousness of it. If Christ be in us, the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon will pervade and permeate our whole life. We need not talk about it; but if there be no fragrance, the reason is not that if there were you would not talk of it.

There are yet others who say that they have no desire for the character described.

That is a most terrible confession. The death of desire is the prelude of death. Let any who lack desire ponder carefully the words of Jesus: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

In conclusion, let us examine the actual wording of Paul's inquiry. Mark well the preliminary affirmation: "Ye were running well." That to me is a most suggestive statement, and it is true of every Christian man and woman. The beginning of Christian life is ever characterized by desire and endeavor after holiness. When we begin to live a Christian life we see the goal, and we take a corresponding attitude. The men and the women who today decide for Christ hand their lives over in order to be what? That they may be holy. There is vast territory to be subdued, enemies to be fought and mastered, much to be done; but they see the vision, and they fall in line.

"Ye were running well." What is the trouble with you? You are a member of a church, you are still a Christian man, I do not question it for a moment, but all the bloom has gone from your character. You have become hard and mechanical and indifferent. There was a time when you sighed over your own shortcoming and failure, but not now. Why not?

"Ye were running well." Every man who first sees the face of Jesus enters into a measure of the experience of holiness. The vision of His face, the glory of His own purity is in itself an inspiration which is of the nature of holiness. Why the failure?

Now, notice the apostle's final admission, "that ye should not obey the truth?" In that phrase you have the revelation of the whole secret of arrested development and failure. If I—who have seen the face of Jesus, and have desired to be like Him, and have set my face in the attitude He demands—am faltering in character, it is because I have refused to fulfil the conditions. There is something in my life that I retain which I know is unlike Him, and contrary to His will. There is some command He has laid on me which I have not obeyed. There broke on my vision some morning a great light on the hills, calling me to climb and leave the valleys, and I lingered in the valleys until the light on the hills had faded. That is the secret. The new-born soul possesses the character of holiness; but let that new-born soul turn the back on light, disobey in any particular the Word of the Lord, turn for a moment the face from the gleaming glory of the ultimate ideal, and the result is a weakening and a relaxing of effort, and the character suffers deterioration. The blame is never on Him; it is always on us.

Thus we end this whole series with the central inquiry of this text. "Who did hinder you?" That is a purely personal inquiry. I can do none other than repeat it in your hearing. You must answer it alone. Perhaps "Who did hinder you?" Perhaps "What did hinder you?" Perhaps "Who?" Some person, some friend, father, mother, wife, child, lover, partner in business? "Who did hinder you?" Or perhaps what? What enticement of the world, the flesh, the devil? Some short cut to a kingdom of power, some deft manipulation of truth that was not all a lie, some lowering of the high standard of the ideal in order to make a momentary gain which was wholly of the dust. What did hinder you?

I repeat, the preacher can only inquire. It is not for me to hear the answer, but the answer must be given in the light and in loneliness. But I pray you remember this, that holiness is not merely a privilege, it is a duty. To fail is to fail of the realization of your own life. I mention that only to dismiss it, for it is the lowest argument of all. The most weighty argument is that to fail of holiness is to defame Christ on the highways and in the city. You name His name, but if your children see in you unloveliness of temper, God help you; you had better quit naming His name, and give your child a chance.

That is the terror of this whole matter. I do not know; sometimes I wonder whether I am quite right about this, but I cannot help it. I must be true to conviction. I am more and more anxious that men should see that the reason of their Christianity is not their salvation, but their influence on other men. You defame Christ if you name His name and sing His song, and do not realize His character. And to fail of holiness is to wrong the world, to dim the only light it has, and make the salt, the aseptic salt that should give goodness its chance, savorless. And mark the infinite satire of Christ. "If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot of man." And that is what happens to Christian men and women who name the name of Christ, and are not salt. They are trodden under foot of men; they are despised by

their day and generation. The world itself holds us in supreme contempt if we profess to be Christian and are not holy.

What, then, ought to be the immediate outcome of this series of studies? That we should answer this question, Who or what hath hindered you? that in some hour of quiet meditation and loneliness we should drag into the light the thing that hinders—friend, habit, or enticement—and that we should put it away. To that exercise may this series of studies lead very many of us for the glory of Christ.

Galatians 5:11. The Stumbling-Block Of The Cross.

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The Authorized Version reads, "the offence of the Cross." The apostle was arguing that if he would but preach circumcision, he would no longer be persecuted; if he would conform to the method of those Judaizing teachers whose influence he was combating, the stumbling-block of the Cross, that in the Cross which offends, would be done away, and consequently persecution of himself would cease.

Perhaps a third translation of the passage may be permitted, "the scandal of the Cross." This would undoubtedly shock our sensibilities, and yet it is really in harmony with the thought of the writer. The Greek word skandalon indicates a stone of stumbling, something over which men fall, something that does not aid progress, but rather prevents it. There can be no doubt from the whole context that the Apostle was referring to a prevalent antipathy to the Cross itself, and especially to the Cross as the center of a religion. The offense of the Cross, the stumbling-block of the Cross was, as I have already said, even more literally and bluntly, the scandal of the Cross. In the early days of Christianity a stigma attached to the followers of the Nazarene, particularly on account of the Cross. It was something so utterly and absolutely unheard of that religion should be centered in a Cross; and whether to the Jew, the Roman, or the Greek, the Cross was a stumbling-block, a scandal, an offense, something utterly and absolutely objectionable. To the Jew the Cross meant disgrace, for it had been associated with the breaking of law, and its penalty: "He that hangeth is accursed of God." To the Roman the Cross was an indication of defeat, and there was no crime in Rome equal to the crime of defeat. To win was everything. To lose was disgrace, and the proud patrician Roman, looking upon Jesus crucified, held Him in supreme contempt because He was beaten. And to the Greek the Cross was the utterest degradation. To the Greek who stood for the perfecting of individualism, for the ideal man, in form and feature and fashion—for every man aimed at perfection—for a man to be nailed to a Cross, and to be mauled in his death, was disgusting. To preach the Cross to the Jew was to preach the instrument with which the lawbreaker was punished. To preach the Cross to the Roman was to preach to a victorious people the instrument of defeat. To preach the Cross to the Greek was to preach to people who were seeking for perfect individual culture, the most disagreeable and disgusting method of death and failure. A stigma was attached to the religion of Jesus because at its very heart and center stood this Cross.

And yet, brethren, all this was superficial and sentimental objection. To understand the real meaning of the offense of the Cross we must inquire why this Man of Nazareth was nailed to it. I propose, then, to speak about this offense of the Cross: first, as to its real meaning in those olden

days; and, second, whether the offense of the Cross has ceased, whether the age has really outgrown its objection thereto.

First, then, let us look back. Standing in imagination on the green hill outside the city wall, and looking upon the Man of Nazareth Who hangs upon that Cross, we ask this one question, Why have they crucified Him? And I think we shall find that the deepest offense of the Cross existed before the Cross, and that the Cross was the outcome of it. That in Jesus against which Hebraism, calling to its aid Roman power, flung itself in fury existed before they erected the Cross, and the Cross was the most logical outcome of the offense.

Let us look carefully. The Cross of Jesus, viewed from the human side, was man's answer to all that He was, and all that He taught. Jesus of Nazareth was the most revolutionary Teacher the world has ever seen, because He was the supreme Voice and Life in the proclamation of the truth of Divine government and Divine order. In His return in life and teaching to the first laws and principles of God's humanity He was a perpetual protest against the then existing order of things; and to the men of His own age there was but one alternative, either to accept His teaching and economy, and reverse theirs, or to murder Him and silence His voice, and be rid of Him. It was the offense which His conception of things gave to their conception of things that erected the Cross.

Did you ever quietly sit down alone to ask yourself the question I have propounded? Why did they crucify Christ? Have you ever considered that it was an infinite puzzle to the Roman procurator? He came to his own conclusion after a while, and he shrewdly approached the truth. He came to the conclusion that for envy they had delivered Him. He did not reach the deepest meaning of their determination to crucify Him when Pilate said that. Their envy grew out of something deeper. In public examination and private interview Pilate attempted to understand the meaning of the malice that was manifesting itself in hounding this Man to death, and he signally failed. In his failure there is cause for our closer investigation. Why did they crucify Him? We must find our answer in His teaching. He spoke out of the sense of eternity to the capacity for eternity in the heart of man. You may characterize the teaching of Jesus by borrowing a great phrase from the Old Testament and applying it in a new connection, "Deep calleth unto deep." When men heard Him they did not understand Him perfectly, but they felt, somehow, that He had spoken to the very depth of their personality. When He came down from the mountain multitudes followed Him, and were astonished at Him, for they said, "He taught them as One having authority, and not as their scribes."

What, then, was the difference between Him and the scribes? He spoke out of the sense of the relation of the infinite and the spiritual to the finite and the material. He set the measurement of eternity upon passing time. Wherever He went He said, "Repent," which meant, Change your mind, your thinking is wrong, your action is wrong, you have departed from the center of things, your measurements are false, your balances are evil, your judgments are perverted! He flung against the materialized age the force of His spiritual conception. He made heaven's light break upon earth's darkness. The voice of God sounded again in the deeps of human nature, and o'er all the region as He passed, men felt the atmosphere of heaven enwrapping them, and they hurried after Him, for never Man spake as He spake. That is the deeper secret in the ministry of Jesus. He was a voice from God, nay, the very Word of God incarnate, speaking in the syllables of human speech, and yet with all the force of infinite truth. What are men to do with that truth? My brethren,

then as today, men standing in the presence of Christ have but one alternative. They must do one of two things. They must either crown Him or crucify Him. There is no middle course. And if you ask me why they crucified Christ, I tell you it was because they declined to submit themselves to the spiritual conceptions which He proclaimed, because they would have none of His views of things, because in their deepest heart, notwithstanding all their religiousness, they were godless. And when they silenced that voice, they silenced the voice of the infinite. When they took that Man to the Cross, they flung out the One Who had offended them by revealing the fact that all their thinking and all their life were false.

And yet again. The Cross of Jesus viewed from the Divine side was the logical issue of His own teaching. He Who might have summoned the legions of heaven to His side submitted to the Cross, and so by a mystery of healing love transformed the world's curse into God's benediction.

The very spear that pierced His side

Drew forth the blood to save.

All this was utterly beyond their comprehension. All this they could not answer, nor did they see the faintest gleam of its light. They were scandalized in Him, and crucified Him; and the Cross became the stumbling-block, the offense, the scandal of the age.

This is a very general statement. Let us try to look at it a little more closely. I must content myself with a mere summary of the cardinal truths that He came to reveal to men in His teaching and life. He came, first, to reveal to men the character of God. He revealed to man the truth that God is love. And, my brethren, let no one misunderstand that statement. May I not take it for granted that there is no need for me to say that when you have said that you have said everything, and having said everything, nothing must be omitted from the thinking? When I say that He came to reveal God as love I do not mean to say He revealed the fact that God is tender, and pitiful, and gracious, and compassionate at the expense of holiness and righteousness and truth. There is no fiercer fire burning in the universe of God than the fire of God's love; and if you could for one moment persuade me that God was merely a God of pity, then you would persuade me that the whole fabric of the universe is unsafe. He came to show men that God is love, and He revealed the love of God not merely in the tender, sweet, and gentle words that perpetually fell from His lips, but in the fiery, white-hot scorn that He poured forth as a lava flood against some, for you never find Jesus angry but that if you track His anger back to its source you will find His anger proceeded from His love. Perhaps the simplest illustration is the best. He was angry—do not forget it, my masters, He was angry when He said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of heaven." We nearly always repeat that word as though it was some soft sweetness falling from His lips. Put the thunder in the next time you repeat it, or you miss something. The disciples were preventing the children. The disciples imagined He could have no time for children, and He was angry when He said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not," and there was thunder in His voice. Why was He angry? Because a little child was to be kept away from Him, and the thunder was as much an expression of His love as the sweet winsomeness of the permission given to the children to come. When I see Him with those bairns in His arms, and His dear hands upon their heads, and His face wreathed in laughter as He looked into their eyes, I see His love no more than when He rebuked the disciples for preventing their approach. Or when He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" I listen and I hear

Him finish His sentence, and I find the reason of the thunder, "Ye shut the Kingdom of heaven against men." At the back of all the anger is love, and He came to reveal God to man as the God of love in all the fulness of the word.

In His teaching moreover, He revealed the fact of God's actual and positive and present interest in all the affairs of human life. Men had relegated God in their thinking to the position of an abstraction that formed the basis of a creed, but He brought Him back into the position of continuous conduct. He said, God clothes lilies, and is with the dying bird; He is everywhere, He knows all you have need of, and He is holding His court of investigation in the deepest thinking of your life. He taught us the immanence of God, and the activity of God, and the government of God in the last detail of human life.

Then He taught men the truth of the supremacy of character. In the great Beatitudes of His great Manifesto He pronounced no single blessing on any man for having anything, or doing anything. All the Beatitudes are chaplets placed upon the brow of character.

Again, He came to reveal to men the true social order. He revealed the whole fact of the social order in half a dozen sentences. I think I may say in one of them, and that will be quite sufficient for our illustration. "Whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." It is well that we should think in the presence of that in order that it may sink into mind and heart. If we would be great we must strip ourselves of our purple, and gird ourselves and serve somebody else. That is radical. It goes to the roots of things, and drags down the man high and lofty in the dignity of position, and makes another man great and mighty because he is serving someone else. Build your social order upon that conception, and you will have found the golden age for which men long have been looking, but which has not yet arrived.

Notice still further how He defended the dignity and the rights of men against all forms of tyranny and oppression. Listen to His Woes. He began His ministry with "Blessed." He ended it with "Woe." Over against the eight Beatitudes are the eight curses. It is an interesting study. But listen to the Woes. They are all hurled against men who tyrannize and oppress; and the whole teaching of Jesus concerning man is that a man has no right to bind himself beneath tyranny and be content. The teaching of Jesus is that there may be a good deal of incipient blasphemy in the popular idea that a man should stay in the position wherein he was born, and be content. The teaching of Jesus is that every man has inherent rights, and any man who comes between the individual and the throne of God is to be dealt with drastically, and the Woe that falls from the lips of incarnate purity is pronounced against him.

These were some of the things that Jesus taught. Now, for a moment look at the time in which He lived. It was a time characterized by the degradation of religion. There was a clouding of the Divine by the false interpretation of the men who professed to understand the Divine. The high priest was a Sadducee. The Sadducee was a rationalist in religion. The Sadducee, to take the Bible definition, was a man who did not believe in resurrection, or in spirit, or in angel. And the high priest was a Sadducee, and the men associated with Him were either Sadducees or Pharisees, men who were professing to interpret God, and all the while were hiding God, until all through that age there was a widespread infidelity, which was the revolt of the heart of man against the blaspheming of God that existed in high places. And into the midst of this age, hiding God by its very religion, Jesus came to unveil Him. Do you wonder that the religious leaders of the movement

crucified Him?

Or move a step forward and see the age in the matter of government. Government was based upon expedience, upon policy. Far and wide, o'er all the earth the iron rule of Rome obtained, and the proud Hebrew was bowing his neck to that rule. Everywhere government was based upon might. Jesus came down into the midst of it all, and revealed the fact that the only government to which man ever ought to submit himself is the government that is based upon right, and that is the one and only government of God. He came and preached, as we have said, the supremacy of character in an age characterized by Pharisaism, which He described as being a whited wall, while within there was corruption and rottenness. In that age He came to preach the new order, the one social order of service, as the way to greatness, when all around vested interests were grinding men, and men were being taught that their only safety lay in their submission to the things that oppressed them. Around Him was an enslaved democracy, wickedly content, easily led. An enslaved people, and Jesus Christ came and exercised His ministry in the midst of it. As you look back at the age, and listen to the teaching, you are driven to the conclusion that the only place for Truth amid such conditions was the scaffold. The very genius of such a condition as existed in those days expressed itself in the Cross of Jesus.

And now I come to my second inquiry. Having seen the reason for the offense of the Cross, then we are inclined to say, Everything is changed now. That is what I want to ask, and my preliminary inquiry respects the Cross itself. Has the Cross altered in its essential meaning? Has truth changed? Has Christ gone back upon any positions of His earthly life and teaching? My brethren, I must apologize for these questions. The very asking of them seems to me to smack of blasphemy. He is, as is God, unchangeable, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Everything that He announced as truth when He was here is truth now. He has no new message to this age. I will not say if Christ came to London He would thus preach. It is a supposition I am always in revolt against. Christ is in London, and He is so speaking. Whether we hear or not may depend upon ourselves, but everything He said in the days of the Judean and Galilean and Perean ministry He is saying here and now.

Then my question must proceed a step further. Has the age altered? I am not proposing to discuss the age in any application other than that important to ourselves. What are the forces in the midst of which we are living today. There is still abroad the spirit of Sacerdotalism, which veils the face of God, and libels Him before humanity. I am not speaking of the Sacerdotalism of any section of the Christian Church, but of that general attempt, that cursed, and damnable attempt that is still prevalent, to stand between the individual soul of man and God. It is not the peculiar property of any one Church. It is to be found almost everywhere. You find it in Romanism. The very genius of Romanism, that with which I quarrel, is its dogmatic avowal that it interprets God to me. Personally I do not quarrel with the Romanist who wants candles and incense, and vestments. My quarrel is with the man who says to me, We represent God, and unless you see God this way, you cannot see Him. My quarrel with him is not merely because he makes such a puerile claim, but because when he tells me he is revealing God he is hiding God.

But there is not merely the Sacerdotalism of Romanism, but of Anglicanism, and also that of what is called Modernism in Biblical interpretation, the new priestism of scholarship, which tells the people that they must accept the views of experts on the meaning of its message, or whether it is

true. All this is resulting in the veiling of the face of God.

And there is yet another form of priestism which I would speak of as Holinessism. Let no one imagine I am saying anything to undervalue holiness; but this movement which consists in a scheme of teaching, and a mechanical arrangement for blessing, interpreted by teachers who interfere in my life, and tell me what I am to do or not to do, is priestism clothed in a new garb. The terrible part of all this is that man is crying for an interpretation of God, and his crying is the result of his sin; and instead of turning to the one Interpreter, and one Priest, he will accept the view of anybody. We are in the midst of an age overshadowed by Sacerdotalism in one aspect or another, and men are not seeing the clear and open vision of God as they ought to see it.

And if you come to the question of human government, how many of us believe in God? There is not a government in the world at this hour that believes in God absolutely and utterly. There is not a government in the world at this hour that will not weaken in loyalty to righteousness at some point of policy. Where is the government that believes in God first and last? Do not let us waste time in discussing governments. How about ourselves? How far do we believe in God? How many business enterprises do we enter upon, purely upon the basis of profit and loss? My brethren, vested interests are still enthroned, and we will have it so. Men are still enslaved, waste and want abound on every hand. I need not stay with its description. What I want to say is this, that everything that Jesus stood for, and everything that the Cross really means as to deep underlying principle, is as unpopular today as when Jesus was crucified. The age is not Christianized. Thank God, there are Christian people in the age, and, thank God, their influence has forced men to certain Christly acts in the age. But the thinking of the age, the planning of the age, the policy of the age are not Christian, and the scandal of the Cross has not ceased. This living Christ of God, dying on the Cross, is as much crucified in our midst today as He was of old. But the working out of a principle into human observation upon the green hill far away did not exhaust the principle, and the principle obtains at this moment.

If we have really any fellowship with Him, we stand where He stood. We stand for the things that He stood for. Identification with Jesus in the Cross does not mean that from the Cross I merely obtain the benefit which is to be an assurance against hell and insurance of heaven. It means that life is identified with Jesus in the protest against the veiling of the face of God, and in determined and constant unveiling of that face before men. Has He no voice today? Is there no way in which He can make Himself heard? It is His will that His people should speak for Him, and the only way in which they can do so is the way of the Cross. To speak for Jesus out of the midst of His Cross in experimental identification with Him therein will bring men to a Calvary of persecution and ostracism today as ever. But if it bring us there, our chief joy will be that in that ostracism we have touched the inner meaning of fellowship with Jesus Christ. Oh, that we may not only look upon the Cross as something outside ourselves, but that we may press to the heart of it, to be identified with all it stands for, and bear the offense, the shame, the scandal of it.

I take, O Cross, thy shadow,

For my abiding place;

I ask no other sunshine than

The sunshine of His face;

Content to let the world go by,
To know no gain nor loss,—
My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all the Cross.

It is for us to ask ourselves, How far in us are the things for which Jesus stood, and which led Him to that Cross, obtaining and being manifest in the affairs of men? For as the Cross of old set its doom upon selfishness and unveiled the face of God, and, blessed be His name, made it possible for every man to have free access to Him, so the Cross stands for these things today, and while in all the wooing tenderness of the mystery of love as therein revealed we call the wounded and the halt, and the lame and the burdened, and the oppressed to that Cross for healing, by that selfsame Cross we are to be the sworn foes of all the forces that are against God and against humanity.

Galatians 5:22-23. The Fruit Of The Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23.

The Fruit Of The Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

"The fruit of the Spirit is love." While perhaps the sublimest statement the Bible contains concerning God is the brief monosyllabic declaration of the Apostle of love, "God is love," I am inclined to think this is the sublimest statement it makes concerning the issue and finality of Christianity.

It is quite impossible to exhaust so broad and spacious a statement in one meditation. If we take the widest outlook, that of the purpose of God in the race, Christianity will have won its victory finally and perfectly when love becomes the sole law of life and conduct. It is certainly true in the narrower realm of the Church, in which is deposited and through which is communicated the dynamic which moves toward the larger realization, that in proportion as Christ's Church lives in love it is able to fulfill its mission in the world. Again, Christianity wins its final victory in the individual life when that life becomes love-mastered, love-driven. That is the first meaning of the text, although I have set it last in order.

The Apostle here has been describing the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. He gathers up the whole truth into this one brief sentence, which he afterwards explains by the other words which lie within the compass of my text. Everything is written when this is written, "The fruit of the Spirit is love."

Let us examine this statement in three ways, passing very rapidly over the first two and giving the greater part of our time to the last.

The declaration is, first of all, a revelation of the method of Christianity in its use of the word "fruit." "The fruit of the Spirit is love." It is, in the second place, a revelation of the dynamic of Christianity in the use of the word "Spirit." "The fruit of the Spirit is love." And, finally, it is a revelation of the issue of Christianity in its use of the word "love." "The fruit of the Spirit is love."

Our thoughts gather round the three outstanding words, "fruit... Spirit... love," the first indicating the method, the second revealing the power, and the last declaring the issue.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love." The word "fruit" presupposes life. There can be no fruit apart from life. The word "fruit" indicates cultivation. Fruit comes to perfection only in answer to the touch of cultivation. Fruit, finally, suggests sustenance. Fruit is a food. In these simplest thoughts concerning the word we have a revelation of the whole method of Christianity.

Fruit suggests life. The Apostle writes, "the works of the flesh," but "the fruit of the Spirit." As my friend, Samuel Chadwick, of Leeds, once forcefully put it, "The word works suggests the factory: the word fruit suggests the garden."

Works, the works of men, are always operations in the realm of death, and they forevermore contain within themselves the elements of disintegration. Fruit is always an operation in the realm of life, containing within itself the power of propagation.

The finest works which man has ever wrought are all operations in the realm of death. If your quickly moving mind questions me about the flowers and tells me that they are man's work, I reply that it is where man's work ceases and God's begins that life proceeds. Man's work is always an operation in the realm of death. Take the building in which we are gathered. It is useful, necessary, proper, but it could not be erected save as man handled dead materials. The tree in the forest with its rising sap and its budding life was no use to the builder. It must die before man could begin his work. Man's works being operations in the realm of death, they contain within themselves the elements of break-up. While this building was being erected, long ere the builder put on the final stone with rejoicing, old mother nature with mossy fingers had begun to pull it down, and, notwithstanding the fact that we have reconstructed it, she is busy destroying it at this moment. As quickly as man works, his work crumbles and passes. That is the figure the Apostle used when he was speaking of the flesh. The works of the flesh are operations in the realm of death. The finest thing a man can do within his own self-centered life is a thing of decay and break-up, which perishes and passes and cannot abide.

Fruit is an operation in the realm of life, that mystic fact, which we all know by observation and none of us knows by final analysis and explanation. Life is of God as much in the flowering of a daisy as in the blossoming of stars. It owes its origin to God as surely in the sparrow as in the seraph. Fruit is God's work. You may paint fruit, but it fades upon your canvas though you mix your colors with the skill of a Turner. You may make your fruit of wax, but it perishes, notwithstanding the fact that you put it under a glass case. Fruit has in it the properties of perpetual life: "the tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind." There is the potentiality in all fruit of unceasing propagation. It is a thing of life. Christianity is a thing of life. The love which is its final fruitage cannot be manufactured; it must grow, and it must grow out of the principle of life.

Fruit implies cultivation. There can be no perfection of fruit without cultivation. Let the tree in your garden run wild, never use the pruning knife, and all the fine quality of the fruit will pass away from it. The fruit of Christianity, which is love, comes to perfection only by the processes of cultivation, not your cultivation, but Jesus'. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman... ye are the branches." Let me turn aside for one brief, passing message to some heart in trouble. You are passing through the fire, you are overwhelmed with sorrow. You crept up to the assembly of the saints feeling inclined to say, "Has God forgotten me? Why this pruning, this beating, this buffeting?" Hear this: The perfection of Christian character comes only by cultivation. "My Father is the husbandman." He holds in his hand the pruning knife. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward..." God help you to look to the afterward, and to know this, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," and to see that by these processes of cultivation He is perfecting the fruit.

Finally, fruit suggests not merely life and cultivation, it suggests sustenance—sustenance for God. "God is love." God's heart hungers after love. God can be satisfied only with love. Listen to the wailing minor threnody of the old Hebrew prophets. They are from beginning to end the sighing of God after the love of His people. I shall never forget what a revelation of God came into my own life when a few years ago I gave myself to the study of their writings. I had thought of them as men of thunder and found them to be men of tears. I had thought of them as men of wrath, uttering denunciation of sin and proclaiming the terrible judgment of God's holiness. They are all that; but I found that at the back of all the thunder was the infinite disappointment of God because men did not love Him. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" That is the cry of a Being hungry for love. If you go a little further back in your Bible to the old story in Genesis, you find God saying to Adam, "Where art thou?" That is not the arresting voice of a policeman. It is the wailing voice of the Father Who has lost His child. God is hungry for love. Take a figure nearer home. We believe He is here in this house. He has come to His garden. He is among the branches of His own vine. What is He seeking? Love. The proportion in which he finds love in your heart, dominating, flourishing, mastering, is the proportion in which God is satisfied with you. The fruit of the Spirit which is for the sustenance of God's own heart in its hunger is love.

Pass to the second of these thoughts, and I dismiss this even more rapidly. Our text is a revelation of the dynamic of Christianity in the use of the word "Spirit." Let me only take the thought that Christianity is a life. How is life generated in man? By his being born of the Spirit. If that life needs cultivation toward perfection, how is it cultivated? By the ministry of that Spirit Who is grieved when we violate the law of love. If Christianity is indeed the fruit which is sustenance for the very hunger of God's heart, how does it come to its perfect fruitage? Only as my spirit becomes by close identity the very Spirit of Jesus Christ. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But if he have the Spirit of Christ it is the Spirit of love, and God finds the answer to His hunger in me as He finds Christ formed in me by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The fruit comes through the life which the Spirit gives. The fruit is cultivated toward perfection by the Spirit in all His tender, gracious work in the heart. Love is sustenance for God's hunger, and it is His Holy Spirit in perfect co-operation that makes my spirit Christ's Spirit, and the fruit for which God seeks.

Now we come to that which is the plain meaning of the text. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." I can well understand that some of you are saying, "Why do you take this one word 'love'?" Because when this one word is uttered there is no more to say. It is perfectly correct to take all the words which follow. The Apostle wrote them under inspiration and with deep significance. You will see at once there is difficulty in the text. It reads, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance." You feel there is difficulty in saying, "The fruit of the Spirit is," and then reciting nine words. Men have recognized the grammatical difficulty of the "is," and quote the passage, "The fruits of the Spirit are..." That is grammatical. That reads smoothly. Hence the popular supposition that there are nine fruits of the Spirit.

But we have no right to interfere with the text in that way. Our business is to find out what the text really means. The Apostle wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love..." It is one, not nine! It may be objected that the affirmation does not remove the difficulty in the text. The one thing in your Bible which is not inspired is the punctuation. If I were writing this text out for myself I would feel I was perfectly warranted in changing the punctuation, and I would read it like this: "The fruit of the Spirit is love," and then I should indicate a pause by some means other than a comma, say a semicolon

and a dash, and then read on: "joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance." The Apostle reaches his climax, and he writes the full and final fact concerning Christian experience in the words, "The fruit of the spirit is love." Then there breaks upon his consciousness the meaning of love, and in order that we may not treat the word as a small word, that we may not pass it over and imagine there is nothing very much in it, that it is merely a sentimental word, he gives us the qualities and quantities and flavors of the fruit by breaking it up into its component parts. To change the figure, the Apostle writes the word "love," and there surges through his soul all the harmonies of the Christian life. It is a great orchestra—love—and he listens and picks out one by one the different qualities of the music, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.

If you have love you have all these things. If you lack love you lack them all. If that can be proved, then I think it is proved that love is the all-inclusive word, and the words which follow break it up and explain its meaning.

"Joy." This is a commonplace word. It does not signify an ecstasy which occurs once, and passing leaves the soul on a deader level than it occupied before it came. It does not indicate one of those red days in one's life aflame with high passion. These are not to be undervalued; but this word does not indicate any such experience. "Joy" is a simple word which means cheerfulness, gladness, common delight, that peculiar and wonderful quality which, present in the life, transmutes everything into light and peace and happiness; that consciousness in the life which sings through all the livelong day; that happy cheerfulness, alas! too sadly absent from our life today, which sings in the midst of a November fog just as much as on a glorious June day. What is equal to keeping a man cheerful in all circumstances? Nothing other than love. I make no apology for taking my illustration from that wonderful realm—the newborn love of youth and maiden, of Christ and the Church, of the bridegroom and the bride. It is God's own illustration. I read in the old prophets, "I will betroth thee unto Me forever." Let such love take possession of the heart of youth and maiden, and they are perpetually cheerful. You button your coat around you and say, "It is a drab day." They say, "No, it is saffron." If you say the sky is gray they say it is purple. They are cheerful from morning to night with the cheerfulness which comes with love's first young dream. If you would be cheerful through all vicissitudes of life you must have love in your heart. Love is a singer that never tires. Love is a nightingale which sings while the sun flames, and keeps singing when the rains descend. Joy is love's consciousness.

"Peace" This word indicates not stagnation, but the peace which follows battle—the harmony of opposing forces. What is equal to making peace after battle? Nothing other than love. Two nations are at war. The stronger defeats the other by force, and I take up my newspaper and read that peace has been declared. Is it peace? For all national and political purposes, yes; but in the deepest fact of things it is not peace. If—and it is a great if—the stronger nation can so deal with the conquered nation as to make that conquered nation feel that the conqueror loves it, then you will have peace. Two people are at strife in the Church. Forgive the illustration, but these things do exist. They come to me as their pastor and say, "We have settled this business." "How have you settled it?" I ask. "We have agreed that it cannot be settled, so we have decided to bury it and never talk of it again." Then, in God's name, dig it up. That is not peace. The buried hatchet can always be unearthed. Learn to love, and you will have peace. Peace is love's confidence.

"Long-suffering." May I put that in another form and say long-temperedness. I very seldom find people who easily understand that word. Let me suggest another, "short-temperedness." I find most people understand that. Long-temperedness is the exact opposite of short-temperedness. Long-temperedness is the great and marvelous quality which endures. You heard the great love poem which I read to you from the Corinthian letter, "Love suffereth long." That is the same word. Love is long-tempered. That is not all Paul said. "Love suffereth long and is kind." That is the marvel of it. You have suffered long, the sense of your own dignity has made you silent; but there comes a day when you say, "I have suffered this long enough, and now..." We all know what you mean. That is not love. "Love suffereth long and is kind." Love is the overplus of patience. Can you think of anything else that would make you long-suffering? I suppose you will agree with me that the most long-suffering people in the world are mothers. Why? I can give you the answer in a word. Because they love. There are all sorts of foolish proverbs abroad. Men tell me that love is blind. Nothing of the kind. Love sees most keenly and acutely and correctly. You tell me I am wrong, and say, "Look at that woman. Her son is going wrong. We have seen it for a long time. She is blind. She does not see it." Let me tell you she saw it long before you did. Then you say, "Why does she not heed us when we try to tell her?" Because "love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." That is the story of a mother's love. That is long-temperedness. Long-temperedness is love's habit.

"Kindness." The Greek word here is one which refers not to sentiment, but to service. Kindness is usefulness in a good sense, and always in small things. The word "kindness" refers to that attitude of life which makes men see the little thing which, being done, will minister to some other soul. I submit to you, is there anything equal to maintaining you in the kindness of doing little things except love? I am afraid it must be granted that there may be motives for great philanthropies other than that of love. Amos was a wonderful prophet, and he, when he was dealing with the men of his day, said, "They proclaim freewill offerings and publish them." Love is not necessarily behind the published gift. It is told of Sir Moses Montefiore that after he had passed away there was found a little book in which were entered gifts which far surpassed those which had been publicly acknowledged during his lifetime. On the front page of this book these words were written, "The gifts which men acknowledge do not count in the ledgers of heaven." That was Hebrew, but it was coming very near to the heart of Christianity. Here is a young man who, if he were talking to me, would tell me he loves his mother. He would even tell me that he was willing to die for her. Nonsense! Stay at home tomorrow night and read to her for half an hour. Kindness is the willingness to do simple things to help other people. When Jesus approaches a subject He says the last thing. According to Him, the cup of cold water, which costs nothing but the trouble of seeing that it is wanted and the giving, counts in heaven. What will make a man keen-eyed enough to see the thousand and one little needs of life and meet them? Nothing but love. Kindness is love's activity.

"Goodness." Goodness is—just goodness. I wish we used that word more than we do. We have been talking much about holiness—not too much—but we have been talking a great deal too little about righteousness. What is holiness? Rectitude of character. What is righteousness? Rectitude of conduct. What is goodness? Both. Goodness is the greatest of all the words. That is one reason why I love the hymn:

There is a green hill far away,

Outside a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.
He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good.
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.
There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven and let us in.

What is the inspiration of goodness? Goodness is a word which we have relegated to the nursery. We still tell the children to be good. What, then, is the inspiration of goodness in a child? Love. You may keep your boy good in the externalities by being a moral policeman. If you want to bind him to goodness through the coming years you must make of him such a boy that when he comes up to the city and sin confronts him he will say, "No, I cannot do it. It would whiten father's hair and break mother's heart!" Love is the only sufficient inspiration of goodness. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." That is the whole philosophy of goodness, and you will never be good while you are aiming to be good because you may lose your respectability by badness. When love is in your heart, and you can say, "I cannot grieve my Father," that is the true inspiration of goodness. Goodness is love's quality.

"Faithfulness," which may with perfect accuracy be translated "fidelity," is the good old-fashioned virtue of being true to your compact and your duty. What is equal to keeping a man true in the sense of being faithful to his compact? Nothing but love. You talk to me about infidelity—of infidelity in the marriage relationship, or in business. What is its reason? There is no love. Love makes such infidelity impossible. Where love is sentinel I shall always be at the post of duty. Where love is the inspiration, I shall never fail in faithfulness to my compact with friend, or lover, or acquaintance. I shall never fail in my business integrity if love stands sentinel over all my actions. Faithfulness is love's quantity.

"Meekness." What is meekness? Active humility. Unconscious humility. Believe me, it is good sometimes to use that word "unconscious" before humility to see what humility really is. Humility is always unconscious, and that is meekness. There is a so-called humility which parades itself. It is not humility. There are people who are always willing to take the lowest room at the feast, provided they come late enough for everyone to see them do it! There are people who say to me sometimes when they are talking about their work for God, "Well, yes, we are doing what we can in our humble way." And I always know they are the most conceited people for five miles round. The man who is humble does not know he is humble. Meekness is the ability to stay doing the

commonplace drudgery of the carpenter's shop for eighteen years. Meekness is the ability to leave the carpenter's shop and face the crowds and deliver God's message when He so wills. Meekness is the unconsciousness of self that bears to Calvary the rugged cross in the sight of all the world. The Master said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." What was the inspiration of His toiling in the carpenter's shop, the driving power in His preaching, the reason of the cross? There is only one answer. Love. It was love that made Him true in the commonplace of the carpenter's shop, that made Him true to the prophetic message, that made Him true to God's purpose even in the mystery of His Passion. Meekness is love's tone.

"Temperance." What is temperance? Not merely the thing with which we so often associate the word today. Teetotalism may be intemperate. Temperance is a greater word —no one need be anxious, I am a total abstainer—it is self-control. Tell me, what is the power of self-control? What alone is sufficient to induce anyone to attempt self-control? I think you will find by long testing of my question that it is nothing but love. A man comes to me and says, "You should not indulge in any excesses, you will injure yourself, you will spoil your chances in life." All very right and proper, but it is not a final argument. I am inclined to say to the man, "Mind your own business and leave me alone." But if a man should come to me and say, "Sir, walk carefully. You have four boys who are coming after you, and what they see you do they will do." That is my motive for self-control. Self-control is the victory of love, and the victory of love is the issue of the work of the Spirit. Do not be misled into imagining that you can control yourself in any way other than by the Spirit's interpretation of love to you and the Spirit's realization of love in your heart. That is the secret of self-control. Temperance is love's victory.

That analysis is rapid. I have attempted it only that I may bring you face to face with the real meaning of the statement, "The fruit of the spirit is love." If you have love you have all these things. Joy is its consciousness. Peace is its confidence. Long-suffering is its habit. Kindness is its activity. Goodness is its quality. Faithfulness is its quantity. Meekness is its tone. Self-control is its victory.

How shall I love? I take you back to my first word. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." I cannot love so as to have this joy, this peace, this long-suffering, this kindness, this goodness, this faithfulness, this meekness, this self-control by any way other than by handing my whole life over to that Spirit Who comes to communicate the very life of Jesus that there may spring up within me the first moving of love. Someone says, "I am far away from all that." Let me ask such a one: Do you know this first movement within? Have you felt the first thrill of love? Have you felt a tenderness born within you? Then remember God's order, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." This fruit of the Spirit can be perfected only through cultivation. Thank God if the first movement is in your heart. If at the back of all your thinking and planning and doing lies selfishness, then yield yourself tonight to Him Who alone is able to give you the victory over self by the inflow of God's own love.

Galatians 6:9. The Well-Doing That Brings Harvest.

Galatians 6:9.

The Well-Doing That Brings Harvest.

Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Galatians 6:9

This apostolic injunction has a much wider application than its context. There the reference is to the fellowship which they that are taught in the Word have with their teachers. The apostle, writing to these Galatian Christians, charged them that they were to communicate unto their teachers in all good things—which, I may say in passing, means much more than that they were to pay their teachers' salary. The phrase, "good things," includes sympathy, prayer, cooperation, as well as the very necessary supply of material necessities. The injunction in itself may, and indeed must, be applied to the whole area of life and service.

The figure in the mind of the apostle throughout the paragraph was clearly agriculture. Having said, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teach-eth in all good things," he immediately adopted this figure: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Again he wrote: "He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." In our text the word "reap" shows that the same figure was in the apostle's mind. Thus the thought of the text is that the harvest is the issue of welldoing. Therefore, welldoing must be interpreted in the light of that figure. It is the activity which leads to harvest. This central idea of the text is introduced and followed by words that reveal the special perils which threaten such welldoing: weariness and fainting. The whole text is an injunction to guard against these perils. Let this, then, be the line of our thought: first, the harvest; second, the welldoing that ensures it; and, third, the perils that threaten welldoing.

First, the harvest. Here, as so often, we are in danger of taking a great word and interpreting it very narrowly, and perhaps very selfishly. It has been altogether too much the habit of our thinking to interpret the big things in the New Testament in the narrow circle of our own personality. What is the harvest? To what was Paul looking forward when he said we shall reap? I do not for a moment believe that uppermost in his mind was the conception that presently we shall reach heaven. I do not think the idea was a personal one at all. I believe, rather, that in harmony with all his writings, with all New Testament revelation, with all the unveiling of what Christianity is in the supreme and central Person of Christ—that when Paul wrote, "We shall reap," he was thinking of something much larger than his own winning of heaven. No one will suppose for a moment that I am undervaluing that grand hope. I think we are sometimes in danger of failing to do what Rutherford charged us to do—climb to the City of God, and walk its streets, and gaze on its beauties, and talk with its inhabitants, and so prepare ourselves for the day of our arrival. Yet this is not the biggest outlook. What, then, is harvest?

I turn from Paul's writings for a moment to borrow some words of another New Testament writer in which the same general idea was in mind. I refer to James. He wrote:

Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts.

James was using the same figure. The picture he suggests is the husbandman waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. It is a common, everyday picture, but one that perfectly reveals God's attitude toward the whole earth. God is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently waiting for it. James was urging men to come into fellowship with God's patience.

In that phrase, "the precious fruit of the earth," there is a rich and wonderful suggestiveness. It describes the very harvest for which God is waiting, the very harvest to bring in which there must be the welldoing referred to in the text, the very harvest to reap which we must fight against weariness and fainting. The words, "the precious fruit of the earth," might with equal accuracy be rendered, "the costly and valuable harvest of the earth." That is what God is waiting for. This is the reaping for which we are looking. Here emerges a vital principle of Christian experience. Our real hope, our true hope, is not a selfish hope. The real inspiration of the Christian, that which buoys him up, and prevents weariness and fainting, is not the idea that some day he will gain something. When the Christian soul is most truly in fellowship with Jesus Christ he is prepared to lose everything, even his own soul: "I could wish that I were accursed from Christ for my brethren." Do not let any expositor or preacher persuade us that Paul did not mean that. He meant exactly that, and never was he nearer to the heart of his Lord than when he penned those words. I go further and declare that his passion was not so much for saving his brethren as for the glory of God and the realization of the Divine purpose, for the healing of the wound in the Divine heart, and the satisfaction of the infinite and immeasurable and unfathomable love of God. True Christian hope is not selfish. The harvest we look for is not gaining things that we shall enjoy in our own personal life, but God's victory, God's triumph. This was the meaning of what Paul wrote in his Roman letter when he charged the saints to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not for a single moment does it mean that we are to rejoice that one day we shall reach the glory land, but rather that we are to rejoice in the assurance that one day God will win this earth, and the prayer that Jesus taught us will be answered, His Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. The harvest will be the golden era when God's victory is won. This is the reaping for which we are to look.

Let us return to the phrase of James, "the precious fruit of the earth," the costly and valuable harvest of the earth. The idea of that phrase is that the harvest will be the realization of the Divine purpose and the victory of the Divine travail. The harvest toward which we are looking is that time when the whole meaning of the earth will be realized and manifested. In God's temple they perpetually sing of His glory, and the whole burden of their singing is that the whole earth is full of His glory. This earth of ours is surcharged with the potentialities of the Divine glory. When, at last, all that is realized, when those hidden things have been finally led out to manifestation, when out of the old there shall come the new, the new being the full realization of the first Divine intention, the precious fruit of the earth—that will be harvest. That includes, and is dependent on, bringing man to his true end, the realization of what was in the heart of God when, according to the poetic and accurate account of Genesis, He said, "Let us make man." That harvest will come when man,

who is the offspring of God, shall be the offspring of God, understanding God, co-operating with God, revealing God. This "far-off Divine event toward which the whole creation moves"—this is the harvest, this is the reaping.

All that will be the realization of the Divine purpose, but it will be the victory of the Divine travail. Harvest will be that hour in which He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, that hour in which the ransom and renewal of man and the earth shall be perfected, completed. That will be the hour in which the Divine grace, as it was involved in creation but now shown therein, shall have its perfect and final outshining in the whole universe. I still think of this little earth of ours as central to the universe in some senses. Its material smallness matters nothing. I honestly believe that here on this earth of ours God is working out the infinite plans and purposes of a revelation and unveiling which are not for this earth alone, but for all the vast and splendid majesty of the universe of which we know so little. The morning stars sang together over creation; but the singing of the morning stars over creation was not so wonderful, nor could be, as shall be the singing in the universe of God of a people who were not a people, of a people who had not obtained mercy, but who have obtained mercy, and who, to borrow Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's wonderful phrase, shall sing "their passion song of blood." I do not know, I dare not say, that therein is the solution of the mystery of evil. Yet sometimes I dream my dreams, and think and wonder whether, at last, the vast problem of evil may not prove to have some value, in that through its long processes to the ultimate harvest God's heart by breaking has been revealed.

In the light of all that, I look again at this little paragraph in Galatians, and I see in it an illustration of the fact that in Christianity, as interpreted by these apostolic writings, every little thing becomes vast. People who have been taught in the Word are to communicate to the men who teach them in all good things. The really arresting phrase in that instruction is the phrase, "the word." We do not capitalize it in our printing, and we are in danger of thinking of what is preached, and of the people who listen, as being very small. As a matter of fact, the whole thing is big with the bigness of the Logos. The Word preached is the creative Word, the redemptive Word. The teacher of the Word, and those who are taught, are those who are brought into fellowship with God's vastest enterprise. When the teacher is doing his work, and when men and women are being taught, what is happening? Something is being done toward the day when God shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

And then we go on with the paragraph, and we read, "He that soweth to his own flesh." The man who does that is the man who takes the good things, whatsoever they may be, and makes them minister to his own selfish desires and appetites. Of the flesh such a man will reap corruption. On the other hand, he that of these good things, whatsoever they may be, soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life, the ultimate age-abiding life, God's great victory, the harvest, and the full harvest. So the apparently little things are found to be big indeed when they are set in relation to the harvest, wherein the old creation delivered from its bondage of corruption and death will rise into the new life, and God will be satisfied in His creation, in His redemption, in the gathering of the precious fruit of the earth.

It immediately becomes manifest that the word "well-doing" describes and covers the activities apart from which this harvest cannot be. The husbandman's expectations are always based on his work. The husbandman has not patience for the precious fruit of the earth unless he has put into

the earth his toil. God's expectations in creation are based on the work of the six days that preceded the rest of the seventh, and God's expectations in redemption are based on the travail that abandoned rest. When men charged His Son with making a man break the Sabbath, the son answered in those exquisite and wonderful words: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God cannot rest while man is restless and wounded. God cannot rest while a man lies in the grip of an infirmity thirty and eight years, and there is none to help and deliver. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God's expectation of the ultimate realization of His own purpose is based on the infinite mystery of His travail! The measure of our right to expect the issue of harvest is our participation in the labor. The activities which demand patience are the activities of putting toil and seed into the earth in dull days, with no immediate sign of result. There I think is the point at which this figure proves itself to be of such value. Think of the autumnal days, and the days of winter—cold, bleak, dark days, often with no sun, when everything seems to be dead. Those are the days in which the welldoing is practiced that prepares for the harvest. Broadly and simply, then, welldoing is putting things into life when everything is dark, and apparently dead. It is the persistent going on, doing the thing on the day when there seems to be no use in doing it. That is welldoing. This is the whole story of our Lord's earthly ministry. If you and I had been called on to fix the date of the Advent we would not have fixed it when it was fixed. There was never a more hopeless hour than that in the history of the world. The hour in which we are living today is not half so deadly and dark and desolate as the hour in which Jesus was born into the world. There were no signs of life! Then God sent His Son. That was welldoing. Follow Him through the days of His public ministry: all His great ideals were implanted in human thinking in the day of philosophic decadence and deadness. There had been a great period in philosophy before Christ came, those first three centuries of philosophy, but He came when it was dead, He came when men were amusing themselves, and thought they were learned when they were discussing the difference between words and views. It was a barren hour. Jesus came, and taught, using words, parables, pictures. His words were so few that if you gather up them all they will not fill a penny exercise book, yet they are so wonderful that when he had done, the writer of the last Gospel said that if all the truth about Jesus should be written the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. Sometimes, after reading that, we close our New Testament and say, That is a very beautiful, a wonderful piece of hyperbole! It is nothing of the kind. John was right. If all the meaning of all Jesus said and did were written, the world could not contain the books, for the universe would be included. Yet all was of the nature of welldoing; it was patient continuance in doing things that brought forth no immediate result. The immediate result of our Lord's teaching, what was it? Not one single human soul to stand by Him in the hour of His catastrophe; they all forsook Him and fled!

What, then, is welldoing for us? Preaching when there seems to be no result, and yet continuing to preach. Teaching in the Sunday school, keeping on when it seems as though nothing were being done. Living by truth, living by grace, when a lie is on the throne and hate is the master movement of an age. Making the whole life the simple doing, putting toil and seed into the soil that seems to be barren, in a day when there is no light anywhere, and the birds have ceased their singing. That is welldoing.

Now, what are the perils that threaten us? We have seen them as we have tried to speak of welldoing. What are they? Weariness and faintness. What is weariness? Not tiredness. That is not

the meaning of the word. We cannot do these things without getting tired. Tiredness is a sacrament that compels rest and prepares for new endeavor. Jesus was tired again and again. "And being thus tired, He sat by the well." What, then, is weariness? It is losing heart. It is losing interest. It is the sense of dullness that comes when the keen edge has gone off, when the thing does not seem to be worth doing. Weariness! We might translate the words thus: Let us not be worthless in well-doing. This word is the revelation of a subtle peril. It is the word of an inevitable danger which may be—I think it ought to be—overcome. We cannot, however, escape from the peril of it. It is the natural result of doing things that do not immediately realize themselves. It gets us before we know it. Its symptom is the sigh that escapes us when the thing has to be done. The preacher says, This is Monday morning! I must get ready for next Sunday. And he says it with a sigh. That is it. The teacher says, It is Wednesday. There is that Normal Class I have to go to again! And she says it with a sigh. That is it. We must guard against it. That dulling of the edge is weariness.

Fainting? What is that? That is quite another word, a stronger word. It is the issue of weariness. If weariness is losing heart, losing interest, fainting is that loosening carried to its ultimate, until there is dissolution. Fainting is failure of co-ordination, so that the thing we attempt is not done because we have lost the power to do it. Fainting is the outcome of weariness, the last issue.

How are we to escape these things? You say to me, You have admitted that these things get us before we know. It certainly is so, and perhaps the sermon is born of the fact that I am at the end of three months' preaching here, very probably so. How are we to escape it, how are we to miss it, how are we to be delivered from it? This vision of the harvest must never be lost. I pray you make a careful note of that. This is nothing new to say. It has been said again and again, but it needs to be said. I need to say it to my own soul. Man, lift thine eyes from the dull earth where no blade of grass is springing and look to the golden harvest. But that vision of harvest can be maintained only by maintaining fellowship with God. I shall doubt the harvest altogether if I look simply on things as they are. Does it seem as if God's great harvest can ever be gathered in Europe? What the answer will be depends on where you live and where I live. It is only as we live in the realization of fellowship with God, pressing ever farther into the secret place, beholding His face, listening for His voice, that we shall see the harvest and see it perpetually.

Yet once more. The relation of sowing and reaping must always be remembered. That dull piece of earth and those leaden clouds with no song bird or sign of life! Yes, but these make the harvest, and there is no harvest without them. There never will be the fruitage of autumn and the golden sheaves unless there has been first the cold of the previous autumn merging into the snows and the desolation of winter. Through these things harvest comes to us. When we next face the well-doing, which is doing a thing that seems as though nothing were being done, let us say, Everything is now being done. It is by this travail that the triumph comes. By this sweat and labor and agony and continuity the great glad day shall come.

There is one other thing I would like to suggest to my own soul and to others. If we are to escape these perils it will be more than ever necessary as the days run on to exclude from our lives all things that deflect strength into false channels. In proportion as we can find the one thing God wants us to do and do it, and refuse to do anything else, in the very concentration of our attention on the well-doing that seems to be monotonous, that very thing will be transmuted, and there will

be light and glory in it, and we shall begin to feel the throb of the life that triumphantly moves through the tyranny of death toward the final harvest of the world. These are days surely when we supremely need to hear these apostolic words, "Be not weary in well doing." The strain of darkness and death is on us, the terrible temptation to relax is powerful! Therefore these are the days when we need as never before to practice our fellowship with God, that we may see the harvest through the light of that communion, and that the doing of the apparently small things may be transfigured by the self-same light. So we shall not be weary in well doing, nor shall we faint.

Ephesians 1:1; 5:3 Saints.

Ephesians 1:1; 5:3

Saints.

To the saints.... As becometh saints.

Ephesians 1:1; Ephesians 5:3

It would appear as though this were an unwarrantable wresting of texts from their context, yet it is not really so. I grant at once that nothing of the teaching of this letter can be gained from these isolated quotations; but if I may take it for granted that we are familiar with the whole letter as to its contention and intention, then I say that these phrases indicate its practical values.

In this epistle Paul reaches the climax of his great system of teaching. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that in this epistle, taken together with the Colossian epistle, he reaches that climax. In Colossians he deals with the glories of Christ as at the disposal of the Church, so that the supreme sentences are, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness," and "In Him ye are made full." In this letter he deals with the glories of the Church as realized through her relationship to Christ Who is the Head. In some senses it is one of the simplest, while in others it is one of the sublimest, of the apostolic writings. It is simple in its method. Paul first describes the Church as to its nature, as to its calling: in three chapters, as we have divided the epistle, dealing with predestination, edification, vocation. Then he turns to the application of this great calling of the Church to her present life with the words, "I therefore... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called"; and in the second three chapters he shows the walk that is worthy, as to the Church itself, as to individual and social conduct, and as to united conflict. There is no letter more sublime in its teaching. In its earlier chapters the apostle reveals—not in detail, but with sufficient clearness to leave an impression forever upon the mind of the student—that the ultimate vocation of the Church belongs to the ages to come. In the second part of the letter he shows what that means for the present life, how it is to affect all relationships; personal character and conduct; home relationships, husbands and wives, children and parents; household responsibilities, masters and servants. In brief, he first floods the soul with the vision of the heavenly calling, and then flashes that selfsame light upon personal conduct.

From this epistle, then, believing that the general conception of it is upon the mind of the Bible student, I take these two phrases. He is writing "to the saints"; and the great burden of his letter as to present, personal, and practical application is that they should live "as becometh saints."

Our theme, then, is saintship. Let us say at once that we are still suffering from mistaken ideas of what saintship really is. We are by no means free from the false interpretations of what we now sometimes speak of as the dark ages. We are still held in bondage to a far greater extent than we recognize by mediæval thinking concerning saintship. This you will discover, not so much by the art, or poetry, or Christian literature of the present day, as by the common converse of Christian

people whenever they approach the subject of saintship. In the past saintship was misinterpreted in art, in poetry, in Christian literature of all kinds. The conception of a saint was that of a person separated from the ordinary and everyday life of his own age by some geographical, external, material separation. The idea of saintship was that of a vocation granted to a few rather than that of the calling of all who indeed belong to Jesus Christ. Of course, the simplest way to illustrate this is to ask you to think of the art of the past, and you will find in all the representations of saintship indications of this false conception. The saints that we see in pictures of the great masters are men separated from their fellow men by the very garments they wore. Raphael paints Galilean fishermen in ecclesiastical robes such as they never wore: and the great artists all suggested a holy sanctity by things added to the personality that are by no means connected with human nature. The monastic idea was false. It was based upon an excellent intention born of the passion of man for fellowship with God in seclusion and quiet, born of a strong desire to enter a life of separation; but it is utterly false in its philosophy. In the moment when you separate a man from the actual and everyday affairs of this life, you cut the nerve of his praying, and remove all the friction which is necessary to the perfecting of his saintship. Christianity is not an exotic, it is a hardy perennial. The symbolic language of Canticles, whatever it may have meant in its first intention, teaches this exquisitely: "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." The lily of the Lord prospers in the soil which produces thorns. It is a hardy plant, not an exotic. You do not make a saint of a man the moment you take him away from the friction of the world; you put him in awful peril of losing the last trace of sanctity. The moment you take a man or a woman away from close contact with the sorrow and agony of human life you cut the nerve of prayer. If I am to pray for the world I must live in it and know it. If I am to be one of the saints of God, I must be a saint in the midst of all the ordinary and everyday life of the age. Sometimes we make use of the phrase "counsel of perfection." I wonder how many people know the history of that phrase. We say of something that is proposed to be done: it is an admirable proposition, but it is not practicable; it is a "counsel of perfection." That phrase has come to us from the Roman Church, in which "counsels of perfection" are instructions for such as devote themselves to the holy and saintly life. "Counsels of perfection," according to that Church, are rules which cannot be obeyed by those who remain in the ordinary life of the world, but only by those who come into holiness by separation from such life. All this is contrary to the New Testament ideal of saintship. Let me put that again in a simple way. If you cannot be a saint in the house of business where you are, you will never be a saint when you enter the Salvation Army. If you cannot be a saint in your own home, you cannot be a saint in this pulpit.

That we are still suffering from these ideas of saintship is evidenced by the converse of saints today concerning saintship. A Christian man says: "I do not profess to be a saint," yet he is a church member, a church officer, sometimes a minister. What does he mean? If not a saint, then not a Christian. If a Christian, then a saint. The fact is that in his mind there still exists a false conception of what saintship really is. Sometimes, moreover, in saying this there is an indication of a contempt for the saint. It is not merely that the speaker does not consider himself a saint; there is a quiet undercurrent of satisfaction in his heart that he is not one. That also is born of this false conception of saintship.

Because the conception is false, the protest is a healthy one. If saintship consists in absolute abstention from the ordinary affairs of everyday life, then it becomes unmanly and anemic, thin,

mean, and there is no robust man or woman in the world who ought not to hold it in superlative contempt.

That, however, is not the saintship of the New Testament.

Let me ask you first, then, to remember, gathering up the teaching of the New Testament, that a saint is one who is united with the life of Christ. In the first chapter of this letter, following the words, "To the saints," is a qualifying, illuminative phrase, "the faithful in Christ Jesus." That does not mean such as are faithful, in the sense of fidelity, but those who live upon the principle of faith. These are saints. Every Christian is a saint. The moment in which a man, or woman, or little child hands over the life to Christ is the moment in which saintship begins. I am not denying for a single moment that there may be very great distance between the fact of saintship and the realization of its ultimate perfection of experience; that there may be, as some of our fathers would have put it, a distinction between our standing and our state, between what we are in the economy of God, by the provision of His grace as to resource, and what we are in the actual experience of our lives. This is taught with equal clearness in the New Testament. That is the burden of this letter. It is as though the apostle had said, I am writing to saints, to those men and women in Ephesus, or other churches, who belong to Christ. What have I to say to them? Realize your resources. You are Christians; be Christians. You are saints; live "as becometh saints." That is the burden of the letter.

Let us inquire a little more in detail what this letter teaches concerning the nature of saintship. I am not going to stay to read these three first chapters to you, though that would be a profitable exercise; neither am I going to stay now to turn to them; but I am proposing to remind you that Paul teaches us in the course of these first three chapters three great things concerning our relationship to God. They are illustrations of one great truth, and when we understand them we shall know what saintship really is; and we shall be able to understand the meaning of the Apostle's charge that we live "as becometh saints."

In the first chapter he prays for these Ephesian Christians that they may know what is "God's inheritance in the saints." A little further on, in the second chapter, he declares to them that they are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Yet a little further on in the same chapter he declares that the saints are being built together for a "habitation of God in the Spirit." Take from these quotations the descriptive phrases and leave all the setting: Inheritance of God, Workmanship of God, Habitation of God.

In these three phrases we have the revelation of the Apostle's conception of the position of every Christian man and woman.

First, the saint is the inheritance of God, His property. Second, the saint is the workmanship of God, one upon whom He is working toward an end. Finally, the saint is the habitation of God, His home. This is not a low ideal of saintship; that would be impossible in the light of New Testament teaching.

It would be well for us if, instead of listening to another voice, we would utter to ourselves in quietness these truths, making them our own, declaring them, affirming them. If I do that, I do it that you may follow and do it for yourselves. Forgive me, therefore, if I use the first person. I am God's property. I am God's workmanship. I am God's home.

I am God's property, absolutely His. I am that by creation. I had lost the sense of that relationship, but now I am His by redemption, by all His infinite work in me, whereby sin is put away as to its guilt, is being dealt with as to its power, and ultimately will be put away as to its presence. Whatever that personal pronoun stands for, all that is indicated by that simple yet terrible formula, "I," belongs to Him. I am not my own, I am His. Speak, if you will, of spirit, of soul, of body; of the essential spirit, of the body through which the spirit acts, of the mind which is consciousness, either spiritual or fleshly, according to the yielding of my will—I am His. I belong to Him. Speak, if you will, in the terms of that analysis of personality, emotion, intellect, will, all belongs to Him. For the moment I am not discussing the question whether God has possession or not. I am discussing the question of His absolute proprietorship. As a saint I belong to Him. I may be using these hands contrary to His will; I may be using these feet to take me some journey which is out of the way of His appointment; I may be robbing Him, but I belong to Him. The sin of the prodigal son in the far country was that he wasted his father's substance in riotous living. I belong to God. That is the first fact of saintship. I would to God I might almost cease speaking, and that that first fact might take possession of the heart of every professing Christian. I am His, not my own, but His.

I take a step further. I am His workmanship. If I simply speak of the fact that the saint is the property of God I recognize the imperfection of God's property. The saint is not an absolutely perfect being who can make no advance. The saint as the property of God may be most imperfect, but, being His, I am His workmanship, and that means that He will take the imperfect thing and make it perfect. Not in a moment, not by some mechanical readjustment of things, so that the imperfect is immediately made perfect, but by processes; by teaching, pain, discipline, affliction, baptisms, fire; by crushing, breaking, making, God will perfect. The first thing is that I am His. The second thing is that I am His workmanship. I never can read that word "workmanship" myself, and I daresay it is so with many of you, without the Greek word of which it is a translation singing itself into my heart, poema, which does not mean rhyming merely, but a thing of beauty, the thought of God revealed in concrete form that others may see it. I never can read the word "workmanship" without the familiar figure of the Old and New Testaments coming to mind, that of the potter and the clay. There is no finer figure to teach the meaning of this truth than that. We are always in danger of spoiling the figure by looking too long at the clay, and at the wheel, and not sufficiently at the potter; yet we must see the clay and the wheel. The clay is the potter's property, that is our first point. It is that when it is still an inert mass, without fashion, or form of beauty; nothing in it attractive. That is the first fact of saintship: without form or comeliness, without beauty, I am His.

Now watch the potter. He takes the clay and puts it on the wheel. The process is very old, but watch it. What is the potter doing? His own foot is turning the wheel. His own hands are upon the clay. What is happening? In the mind of the potter there is a vision of a vessel for use and for beauty. I cannot see what is in the mind of the potter. I do not know the thing he is thinking. I am not familiar with it. Watch, his hands are upon the clay. It is plastic to his touch, and as the wheel revolves the thought that is in the mind of the potter is being revealed in the clay. He is translating his thought of beauty into an appearance of loveliness. "We are His workmanship." As clay in the hands of the Potter, so am I. Unlovely and useless is the clay until the Potter lay His hands upon it, yet what marvelous material it is for the Potter to use. God's hand is upon the saint, molding, making, perfecting something of beauty for all the coming ages. I am His workmanship as well as His property.

I go one step further, to this last thing the apostle says. The saint is the habitation of God. The figure changes, yet becomes more full of beauty, more full of life. The habitation of God, the home of God. There is a great difference between home and any other dwelling-place. Someone says, the heart has many a dwelling-place, but only once a home. I think there is truth in it. Most of you have a home. Some of you are not at home just now. You are in hotels. No one will ever hear you speak of the hotel as home. What is the difference? Who can answer? No man yet has ever spelled "home." No man yet has ever sung "home." Home is a sigh, a sob, laughter and rapture. Home cannot be defined, but I will tell you what it is. It is the place where you are "at home." I do not mind your smile. I can do no better than that. I know what it means and you know what it means. It is the place where you never need to keep up appearances—unless you have visitors. It is the place where you are supremely conscious that you have right of way, not the right of dogmatic authority, but the right of love. Every door swings open to you. Every picture indicates your welcome. The flowers that are placed by your side breathe an atmosphere of love that makes home. You are the home of God, the place into which He comes and rests, the place where there is no chamber locked against Him. You are the home of God.

That is saintship. His property, poor, worthless, lacking in beauty, but His. And the comfort of it, "His workmanship," feeling the pressure of His hand until I am in agony sometimes, yet knowing the Potter. It is not the principle that helps me. It is the Potter Who helps me. If you emphasize only the principle I am afraid. If you tell me only of the sovereignty of God, I am overwhelmed, but when I know the Potter I know that His crushing hand is crushing only to create. I love that one touch in the old prophetic story about the potter. If he break the vessel he will make it again. If the vessel be marred the potter will make it again. I am His workmanship. That is the second fact. Finally, I am His habitation. He has purchased me for a residence.

It seems to me that I might read the second phrase now almost without a word. "As becometh saints." The only interpretation of its meaning that is sufficient is that of going over these facts again in order to make the simplest application of them.

I am His property. How shall I live as becomes that fact? By seeing to it that all this is His, that of what belongs to Him I am not robbing Him. God may be robbed in many ways. I am not going to deal with the more objectionable and flagrant ways of doing so. The awful possibility of prostituting some power of the life which belongs to God to base uses is admitted. There are other and subtler methods. Some trembling soul who wants to live as becomes a saint may, by taking some weakness in the life and endeavoring to make it strong without His strength, rob Him. You say, I am not worthy to offer myself to Him. But you are His already. But there is this weakness, you say, this infirmity! Do not forget that a great many of the hymns we are singing in evangelistic meetings are for the saint as well as for the sinner:—

Just as I am—though tossed about

With many a conflict, many a doubt,

Fightings and fears within, without,

O Lamb of God, I come.

He wants you as you are. That is the glory of saintship as revealed here. Counsels of perfection, not in order that you may become a saint, but perfect counsels because you are a saint. To walk as becomes a saint is to recognize that every fiber of the physical life, every movement of the mental life, every power of complex personality is His, and to hand over to Him His property. That is the first law of walking as becomes a saint. The application is more personal and pertinent as we get further on.

Let us take the next. "We are His workmanship." We may learn as much by the disparity as by the similarity in the use of all figures. We speak of the potter and the clay, of the fact that the clay has to be plastic in the hand of the potter; but there is the disparity, and it is at the point of the disparity that our difficulty exists. The clay has no will or wish or desire of its own, but we have will and wish and desire. That disparity reveals the very crux of the condition of saintship. The true attitude is that of yielding the will, the wish, the desire, to the mastery and compulsion of God's will, God's wish, God's desire. To me the profoundest thing in life is submission to the will of God. It is the last thing. It is the rock foundation. It will be the final thing, the capstone with glory gleaming on it. To be in His will, willingly in His will, "as becometh saints." A man ought to speak in the presence of that thought with great tenderness and great delicacy. I do not know that I have learned it. I want to learn it, always to recognize the truth so sublimely sung by Tennyson. How glibly we sing it and recite it, yet what an infinitely beautiful unfolding of the Christian philosophy there is in it:

Our wills are ours, we know not how:

Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

That is the highest function of will, to will to do His will, God's will, so that I am to say, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on": so that I am to say, Where He wills, what He wills, how He wills, when He wills; whether London, America, China, India, or Heaven, does not matter; whether to preach or be silent, to do more or to do less, does not matter; what He wills! Oh, soul of mine, see the vision and pray for strength to answer it. There is no man or woman of us here, comrades in the Christian life, who does not know that that is life, the clay willingly answering the pressure of the Potter. Be in His will. At the front? Yes, if He puts you there, with no mock modesty. At the back? Yes, surely, if He puts you there, with no repining. In His will. "As becometh saints."

Finally, the home of God. Have I any chamber in this habitation locked against Him. You and I must answer that alone. I hate confessions in crowds. I am not going to make any. Is there some compartment, some chamber in your life to which you never admit God? You have given Him right of way over three-quarters of the home, but there is a part locked away from Him. You do not want Him there. You are glad to be here this morning, for you are laying open to Him the sides of your nature where He is welcome, but there is half an hour tomorrow when you would rather not have Him with you or in you. That is not walking as becomes saintship. Have you ever noticed how many days it took them to carry out the things that defiled it when they were cleansing the temple in the olden days of Hezekiah? Make application of the spiritual meaning to yourselves. How many things there are in His temples that dishonor Him. How many rooms of these homes we will not have Him in because we are ashamed. Shall we not open all the doors this morning? Hand over the keys to Him? Yes, if He comes in He will change the setting of things in that room! But He will add to the beauty! He will sweep the pictures from the walls. But He will hang finer ones there. He

will burn those books upon the shelves. But He will give you other literature and better! Give Him right of way—forgive the familiarity of it. Make God at home in your life! This is what He seeks.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." It is a great prophetic word. The principle applies to this moment. London is groaning. New York is groaning. Paris is groaning. Centers of light and fashion and beauty, all are groaning, believe me, this morning. All the things we can hear, and the things that defy our hearing but which are there, the sob, and sigh, and wail of oppressed humanity. What are they waiting for? For you to be a saint and to live as becomes a saint. For me to have done with small thinking about saintship. For us, the property of God, to be at the disposal of God, the workmanship of God to be yielded wholly to God, the home of God to allow Him to possess every chamber.

When He so possesses His own there will be the salt that is aseptic, purifying all the life of the city and the nation; there will be light set upon a hill, illuminating vast expanses, and making all the details of domestic life beautiful, as a lampstand in the home. The world is waiting to see the saints of God, and God is waiting for His own. May God help us His saints, to live "as becometh saints."

Ephesians 1:7. Pardon By The Cross.

Ephesians 1:7.

Pardon By The Cross.

Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Ephesians 1:7

Everything a sinning man needs he finds at the Cross. Apart from the fact of human sin, the Cross is indeed foolishness, a veritable stumbling-block. To the Greek, seeking for the culture of uncultured man, "foolishness," something without meaning, a story that can have no moral effect. To the Hebrew, that is the degraded Hebrew, whose ideals are materialized, a stumbling-block, a skandalon, something that interferes with progress rather than helps it. And both are right, unless we see the background of sin that makes the Cross necessary, and the foreground of redemption that comes by the way of the Cross.

Unless there is some profounder meaning in the death of Jesus of Nazareth than the end of His life, then the Cross brings me into the realm of the greatest mystery, the deepest darkness, the most unfathomable wonder I have ever known. I will put this as superlatively as I feel, and as carefully as I may; unless there be some meaning in that Cross for others than the One dying on it, then the Cross makes me an unbeliever in the government of God. I cannot believe in the beneficence and goodness and righteousness of God if the Cross is nothing more than the ending of the life of Jesus. We speak of the problem of evil; it confronts us everywhere, but that Cross is the crux of it. If Incarnate Purity must be mauled to death by vile impurity, and God never interfere; if a life absolutely impelled by love must be brutally murdered by devilish hatred, and God say nothing; and if that is all, then I decline to believe in the goodness of God. There must be some other explanation of the Cross if I am to be saved from infidelity. If in the life of Jesus the Cross was an accident, then the world is handed over to chaos, there is no throne, there is no government, and we are but puppets, and none knows the issue.

But to see the Cross in its relation to the fact of human sin, intelligently to appreciate what the New Testament teaches us concerning it, to see how the experience of nineteen hundred years verifies the doctrines of the New Testament in the lives of countless multitudes of men and women, is at the Cross to become, not an infidel, but a believer. Then at the Cross I see, not chaos, but the dawn of cosmos, not a darkness and an anarchy that appall me and fill me with despair, but a light and a government that make my heart sing amid the processes of a new creation, for I know by that sign amid the world's darkness that God is on the throne, and that at last He must win.

I want to speak of some of the blessings, the advantages, the values that have come to men, and still are at the disposal of men by the way of the Cross. I propose to begin with the very simplest, to begin in the line of experience, with Pardon. That is only the first thing. It is not the last thing, it is not the deepest thing, it is not that after which some of our hearts are supremely hungry. In my

next sermon I shall speak of another value of the Cross. Purity. Then I will speak of Peace by the way of the Cross, and after that of Power by the way of the Cross, and, finally, of Promise by the way of the Cross. In all this series of studies I shall do no more than touch the fringe. Every day I need the Cross more, and can talk of it less glibly. Every day I live this Christian life I am more and more conscious that I cannot understand the mystery of all Jesus did; yet more and more conscious that by the way of that Cross, and that Cross alone, my wounded heart is healed, my withered soul is renewed, my deformed spirit is built up, my broken manhood is remade; and every day I live I sing in my heart with new meaning,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

Let the water and the blood

From Thy riven side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure,

Save from guilt and make me pure.

The first thing that a sinning man needs is pardon. The note of preaching may differ in the West from that of the East, but whether in West or East, North or South, amid high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, the first fact that attracts men to Christianity is the fact that it proclaims pardon for sin; and as a man begins to weigh his life by the infinite balances, and to measure it by the undying standards, the first consciousness that breaks in upon his spiritual conception is that he needs forgiveness.

In speaking of the work of Jesus, Paul declares that we have "our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." "Our redemption," "our trespasses." The former is the foreground, and the latter, background of the Cross. We will begin with the background, "our trespasses."

The particular word here translated "sins" or "trespasses" is a word that signifies actual wrongdoing, and we are restricted this evening, not by my own choice, but by the very terms of the text, to that idea of sin, actual wrongdoing, wrong knowingly, wilfully, done. Sin as a principle we shall consider in a subsequent sermon.

The apostolic word in the epistle to the Romans, which is the foundation epistle of the gospel of the grace of God, declares that all have sinned. The Apostle does not say all are sinners. That is true. He will say that again, and in other ways; but he says "all have sinned." I need take no time to discuss the question of how it comes that all have sinned. I am not speaking of the fall of man, of the fall of the race. I will not now discuss the sins of such men as have never walked in the light of revelation. I speak of the actual sins of men who have broken law definitely, positively, wilfully. That is the aspect of sin with which my text deals. And before we can understand this subject we must go back to first principles. We do not begin to know what sin is until there is a recognition of the government and claim of God in every human life. Exile God from the moral government of His universe, and we shall no longer make our confession of sin or sins. Exile God from relationship to the moral, and then sin will be continuous abnormality, a perpetual infirmity, but it will never be

trespass. We must first recognize the throne of God, and the government of God. If you question that honestly and sincerely, then you will not follow my text. We must first take for granted that every man and woman, each one of us, is an individual creation of God, and that for every human life there is a Divine plan, a Divine purpose, and a Divine place. We must come to understand that the purpose of God in every human life is the purpose of perfect love, not merely for the race as a whole, but for every individual constituting a part of the race. Therefore in the economy of God the race is imperfect in the imperfection of any individual, perfected only as every man, every individual, finds his or her place in the great whole, and contributes his or her share to the commonwealth of which God Himself is King. The race is suffering from break-up, and division, and spoliation. But why? Always because the units have broken law, fallen out of harmony, created the chaos. As a whole, the race has no great and immediate responsibility to God. Individual souls have, and so we come down from the race idea, and think of this fact, that if I would contribute my quota to the well-being of all, if I would fill my niche in the infinite purpose of the infinite Creator, the unifying Originator, and the ever-present Governor, I must find what is His will for me and obey it. That is the prime necessity in every human life. Human life is created by God and for God, and the first question of every human life ought to be, What is God's will for me? It is always a larger question than it seems. Find God's will for you, and you have helped to bring in God's will for the world. Walk in the way God has appointed for you, and keep His commandments, and you have made your contribution by so doing to His ultimate realization of the largest purpose of His infinite heart. I sin not only against myself when I break law, not only against God, but against the race. I postpone the golden age. I hinder the incoming of all for which my heart sighs in its holiest moments whenever I sin, for by the breaking of law on the part of the individual there is the postponement of the realization of the purposes of God for the race. Actual sin on my part therefore is not merely something that wrongs me and insults heaven. It is something that harms and injures and blights the race.

If this, indeed, be a fact, that the whole race is under the government of God, but is dependent for realization of His purpose on the obedience of the individual, then we have made one step toward understanding sin. Every human life, every individual life, is conditioned within law, and that law is simply the Divine revelation of the pathway along which the individual may move to fulfilment of personality, and so contribute to the realization of the largest purpose of God in the race.

Do we know anything of these things? We all do. You may never have phrased the thing as I have phrased it. You may have looked at it from the personal position, and never realized your relation to the whole race. But everyone is conscious of having met God, heard His voice, and disobeyed. And here is where some of you will challenge me. You will say, No, I have never met God. I have heard the voice of the preacher, I have read the statements of the Scriptures of the Christian, I have been made familiar with the ethic of Christianity, but I have never met God. Then let me state the case differently. Would you feel perfectly prepared to stand where I stand, and in face of this congregation of men and women, of like passions with yourself—would you be prepared to say, "I have never deliberately done wrong"? Has there never been a moment when you stood face to face with right and wrong, and chose wrong? There is not a man or woman that is honest but will admit the fact of personal wrongdoing. You say, "I was driven by the force of passion I have inherited." I have nothing to do with that now. You say, "The temptation was so subtle and strong I could not help it." I have nothing to do with that. I am asking you one question: Is there a trespass

chargeable against you in the light of the infinite Order? For one single moment I will cease to speak of your relation to God, and ask you to speak of humanity as a whole. Have you sinned against your race? Has there not been one moment in your life when you knew truth, and lied; when you knew purity and descended to impurity; straightness and consented to crookedness? I need not labor the inquiry, for I take it I am speaking to those who are perfectly prepared, alone and in silence before God, to be honest; and if you are, though there is no terror in it to you yet, though you do not realize the tremendous meaning of what you have confessed, there is not one that will not have to say, "I also have sinned; I also have committed a trespass."

One step further. If you have submitted to this inquiry in simplicity, you have had to say more than once, "I have sinned." You have been compelled to say, "My sins as mountains rise." They may not have been the sins that society labels vulgar. The policeman's hand has never rested on you. You have not yet lost your character in the eyes of men. But you have descended to the low when the high flamed before you. You have chosen a pathway because it was easy, though you knew it was dishonorable, when the rough, rugged, heroic pathway was in front of you. We all have sinned.

Now I charge this home upon you—and not on you alone, beloved, but on my own heart, as we stand in the presence of this great fact. The moment I say I have sinned, in that very moment, solemn and awful as it is, in that very moment I have confessed that I have been guilty of something that I cannot undo, that I have put myself into relation with disorder, instead of order, that I have contributed to all over which I mourn as I look out abroad in the world today. In brief, I have said that I have done something that I cannot undo, and that I cannot forgive myself for doing, unless, perchance, by some mystery that is beyond me, it can be canceled, undone, made not to be.

Sin is not a small act. Sin is something which, once committed, cannot be undone. The broken law means a marring of the ultimate purpose. That is punishment beginning here, but not ending here, unless, by infinite grace, the sin is ended here. I am sometimes told that hell is here and now, and so it is. I am sometimes told that heaven is here and now, and so it is. Both are here and now; but when I am told that hell is here and now, if the deduction I am asked to make is that it is only here and now, by the same reasoning I must decide that heaven is only here and now. If heaven be a condition into which a man enters now, and more largely in the afterlife, hell is a condition into which man enters now, and more largely in the afterlife.

Hell, according to Scripture is failure, with all that it means in the consciousness and experience of man. Literal fire? No, a thousand times no, nothing so small; but the actual positive consciousness that I have failed, and have contributed to the failure of others. The fire is never quenched, and the worm never dies. The fire is no more physical than is the worm; but they are infinitely worse; they are spiritual, they are the natural outworking of sin. God's plan for man is the ultimate realization of high purpose in the spiritual places. I would not have it. I chose the wrong. I sinned. In that moment, by the irrevocable decree of my own will, I set my face toward the darkling void where God is alienated, toward the awful spaces in which there is neither fellowship nor light, but in which I, with an ever-burning capacity for the high, am doomed to the low I have chosen. That is the outworking of sin. That is the meaning of hell. And I sit, and glibly, quietly, say, Oh, yes, I sinned, I lied, I committed a theft, I dishonored some other human being. I sinned, but it is all right.

Man, it is all wrong! And, having once done the sin, it is not thy tears of repentance or prayer can atone. You cannot undo it. There it is in the past. Ten years ago, twenty—more for some of you—but you cannot undo it. Disorder in the universe, and you created it. No, no, not twenty years, not ten, but yesterday, today—with God's golden sunlight bathing all this Babel, prophetic of a great resurrection, you sinned under God's sunlight today. You cannot undo it. You cannot overtake it. You have started discord, and the infinite spaces are catching it up and multiplying it.

Sin is never little. Never talk of peccadilloes—hellish word for the excuse of the thing that aims at the dethronement of God and the spoilation of all His infinite plan. Oh, man, man! if you could but see your trespass, your little sin, in all its magnified meaning, you would cry out tonight, "What must I do to be saved?" "Our trespasses"—and sometimes one wishes only that one could persuade people to put into their prayer the tragedy that ought to be in it. In great congregations we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," and there is the rustle of soft music about it. Oh, there is tragedy in it, there is ruin in it, there is hell in it. If you and I prayed that prayer as it ought to be prayed, it would escape us with a sob, and a wail, and a cry.

But, thank God, there is the foreground of my text! What is this thing that Paul writes? "Our redemption through His blood." Now again we must get down to the simple things if we would understand the larger things. "Through His blood." Whose? And it is the old, old story. I have no new Saviour to bring you—"Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you:... Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay." So said Peter in his first Pentecostal sermon. "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God," the perfect One, the sinless One, the One Who never deviated from truth, or touched impurity, or committed theft, or chose the low, or consented to the dishonorable—the One Who never trespassed, Jesus, the perfect Man; and, if I am tempted to debate it, or discuss it, or defend it, I will resist the temptation. After all kinds of criticism, the ages have set their seal on the testimony of His own age, the testimony of a man in His own age: "I find no fault in Him"; the testimony of a devil in His own age: "I know Thee Who Thou art, the holy One of God"; the testimony of God in His own age: "Thou art My Son: in Thee I am well pleased." Every rolling century has made deeper the imprint of that great truth, that Jesus was the perfect Man.

But I am not redeemed by His perfection. His perfection may lure me to something higher. As I talked of trespasses—and I talked of mine as well as yours—suddenly there came passing in front of my vision the radiant Person of Jesus, so pure, so tender, so perfect, that neither man, nor devil, nor God could find fault with Him. I look at Him and I say: Oh, if I could be such as He! Oh, if from this hour, in this church, I could take this life of mine and live it like He lived His! I will follow Him; I will try; and back out of the years there come to me my trespasses, and suddenly my heart says, It cannot be. His life was perfect from cradle to Cross—no flaw, no deviation, no deflection; and if even from now I could live all the rest of my life perfectly, what am I to do with the scars and the spoiling of the past?

No, Jesus cannot save me by His perfection. Our redemption through His perfection? No. What, then? "Through His blood."

That phrase is not pleasant. It offends our sensibilities, Redemption through blood, and you shrink, you do not like it. You agree with the man who says that this is a religion of the shambles, and you

object to it. God never meant that you should be pleased with that word, "blood." God reckoned blood so sacred as to say, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." It is not refined; it is vulgar, this shedding of blood! It shocks you, startles you, appalls you. God meant it should, and especially when you see Whose blood it is. Redeemed not with the blood of bulls and of goats—oh, soul of mine, how canst thou utter it?—but with the precious blood of the Son of God, the dying of the pure and spotless. What happened in that dying I cannot tell. I do not know the mystery. I cannot go into that darkness. Alone He trod the winepress. Alone He bore the pain. You and I must stand outside. Oh, behold Him, the Perfect dying, the Sinless suffering! God in Christ bent to bruising! And as I see the mystery of the human blood I say: What means it, for there is no place for such dying in such pure life?

And now the answer comes, and I dare not give it you in my own language. I will give it you in the language of Holy Scripture: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "Who, His own self, bare our sins in His body upon the tree." "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Oh, God, give us a vision of it! A small thing? Unutterably great! One lonely soul in the centuries! Are you puzzled and say, How can that be for the race? Behold Him! See Who that is! Put thy measurement, if thou canst, on the infinite value of His purity; plumb the depth of His holiness, climb the steep ascent of all that wondrous life, and know that this is God incarnate, and when the vision of it breaks upon you, and the stupendous wonder of it overwhelms you, then listen: "Our redemption through His blood"; and if you dare to take that blood away, you must forgive me if I am angry with you. You knock from underneath my feet the one rock foundation of my faith, you take from my bruised and broken heart its only solace. I come to the infinite mystery, and there, by that scene, by that token, by that unveiling of the Infinite passion and compassion, I know that the trespass I could not overtake is forgiven.

The joyful news of sins forgiven,

Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.

You say, But you have not explained it. Again I say, I cannot, but I know it. I want to say one little word to you, dear man, honestly groping after some solution of this great mystery. If, somehow, you could persuade me that God could forgive my trespass, which was the breaking up of the order of the universe, simply out of pity, well, my heart could not rest in it. I could not forgive myself that way. I should always realize that the thing was there, that its issue could not be overtaken. How can I utter it, how can I tell it, when I see God in Christ stooping and catching that sin into His own heart, and bearing its pain, and exhausting its powers? Then, while the Cross shall ever fill me with grief on account of my sin, it fills me with joy that Christ has triumphed, and that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." The forgiveness of our trespasses can come to us only through His blood.

But, then, there are unforgiven men and women, and to such my final word shall be spoken. How may we obtain the forgiveness provided by the mystery of the Cross? First, I think there must be a sense of need:

All the fitness He requireth

Is to feel your need of Him.

And now there are those who feel their need. You say, Of course, I need it; I need forgiveness, I also am a sinner, I also have sinned. That is the first step toward obtaining. And what next? There must be a recognition on your part of the supremacy and sovereignty of God, and that I think is included in your confession of a sense of need. What next? Now there must be on your part repentance, the renunciation of the wrong, the spirit willing, if only the power be given you, to turn from the sin.

Dr. Pierson once gave me a great illustration on this subject. He told me of how in one of the Southern States a man lay condemned to die for having murdered another man; and a brother of the condemned murderer, who himself was a pure, strong man, and had laid the State under obligation to him, went and pleaded the cause of his condemned brother with the authorities, and though the case was one of clear murder, though there was no question about this, for the sake of the brother who had saved lives they consented to pardon the brother who had taken life. Then he went with the pardon of his condemned brother in his possession. He did not tell him immediately, but presently in talking to him he said to him, "If you had your pardon, supposing you had it now, and you were to go out free, what would you do?" And with a gleam of malice and hatred in his eye the murderer said, "I would find the principal witness and I would kill him, and I would kill the judge." And that brother said nothing of the pardon, but leaving the cell he tore it to pieces and destroyed it, and you know that he did right.

Pardon for a man who is persisting in sin is impossible. It would continue the disorder, and make it infinitely worse. God will pardon you even though you cannot undo your past, pardon you without any merit on your part; but if in your heart you still cling to sin, He cannot, dare not, pardon you. And that is why the condition of receiving remission is repentance toward God. And repentance does not mean that a man quits sinning, it means that he is willing to quit if but the power be given him to do it. And that is the condition. You have committed sin. Are you willing to cease, if only the past may be dealt with, and power given to you by which you shall sin no more? That is repentance.

Yes, willing, more than willing, says some tired heart. Then what next shall I say to you? "Behold the Lamb of God." God will give you perfect and full pardon now if you will trust Him, if you will take it of His grace, if instead of attempting to win it, if instead of attempting to merit it you will just come as a poor, guilty, ruined soul—for such you are—and, kneeling at the foot of that Cross, will take God's pardon through Jesus Christ, that is all.

When may I have it? Now. All your sin may be blotted out now. Your neighbor will not know. God will know. But now, trust Him, sinning heart, not on the basis of pity, but on the basis of infinite righteousness wrought out in love, and rendered dynamic in the mystery of His Cross. "We have our redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins."

Ephesians 2:10. His Workmanship.

Ephesians 2:10.

His Workmanship.

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

This verse contains a remarkable statement as to the Christian life. All other conceptions of life at its very best are idealistic, but the Christian conception is also dynamic. "We are His workmanship," not merely men and women seeing an ideal which we are attempting to realize. That is not the deepest fact of Christian life, though that also is true. The word "workmanship" in this connection immediately attracts our attention. If we very literally translate here, we shall not, I am perfectly well aware, get the truest sense of the Apostle, and yet I think we should gain some light upon that sense, for the word here rendered "workmanship" might read "poems." I do not mean to suggest that the Greek word poema means exactly what our word "poems" means, but there is a quality in the word which we must not lose sight of when we read the word "workmanship." It is the quality of perfection, and the thought which the word suggests is not only that of a piece of work, but of a piece of work which is perfect. The thought, therefore, is that of poetry in its deepest, broadest and truest sense. It is the thought of rhythm, of orderliness and of beauty. We are God's workmanship. All that would be said if we simply laid the emphasis upon the fact that we are God's workmanship. Everything He does is full of beauty. Everything He does is characterized by order. Disorder is not of God. Ugliness in any sense of the word is not of God.

The method of Christianity is thus revealed. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." This phrase includes the whole mission of Christ in its application to trusting souls. It is in Christ that God is making us what He would have us to be. The sphere in which God operates to the creation of our lives and the perfecting of His thought in and through us is Christ. By the way of His incarnation man came into conscious nearness to God. By the way of His life there was unveiled before the eyes of men what was in the heart of God when He said, "Let us make man." In the death of Christ there was revealed that mystery of atonement whereby man's sin is dealt with, canceled, made not to be, that man may find his new opportunity. By the way of the resurrection of Jesus Christ power was placed at the disposal of man so that he not only finds himself in Christ Jesus a pardoned soul, but a being equipped with all resources for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. By the way of the reign of Christ over the individual life through the Spirit there is the administration of the will of God and perpetual communication of both pattern and power.

Yet, again, the purpose of this new creation and of this new method is manifested in the text, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." "For good works" is not a narrow phrase referring merely to specific acts of so-called Christian service; it refers to the whole life. We are prepared for good works. The Apostle is contrasting the present with the past condition of

these Ephesian Christians. He says to them, "Among whom"—that is the sons of disobedience—"we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind." That description of the past covers the whole fact of life, the daily task and toil, specific acts of worship under the old idolatrous conditions, amusements, recreations, everything. All life proceeded in answer to fleshly passion and desire. Everything is changed when we are in Christ Jesus, so that all our life is to proceed, not in answer to fleshly passion and desire, but in answer to the highest motive and the highest reason, in brief, in answer to the perpetual inspiration of the Christ life which has now become our life. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

I want to consider the practical application of this truth to our everyday life. We shall therefore proceed to consider the orderliness of the life of the Christian in the will and economy of God, and we shall attempt to apply the teaching of the text, asking what our responsibility as Christian people is in the presence of its great and gracious declaration.

There are two subordinate statements made in this text in explanation of the one all-inclusive declaration with which it commences, "We are His workmanship." They are, first, that we are created for good works; and, secondly, that good works are created for us. That is not the exact phrasing of my text, but I think that is its exact intention.

We are created in Christ Jesus for good works. That is one statement. Omit for a moment the sphere—in Christ Jesus—and take the clear, simple statement which remains. "We are His workmanship, created... for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." We are created for good works: good works are afore prepared for us. Thus in this verse there is a wonderfully gracious and tender unveiling of the fact that all the life of the trusting soul lies within the plan of God. Such a one is perfectly equipped for all God's will appoints, and all appointments within the will of God are prepared in view of the equipment which He has bestowed. If I can once accept this teaching and rest upon it I shall take my way into every new circumstance knowing these two things absolutely: first, God has prepared me in Christ Jesus for whatever the day has in store for me, and, secondly, all that to which I come, step by step as the veil recedes or the mists melt, though unknown to me, is not unknown to Him. Good works are afore prepared, afore ordained for us that we should walk in them.

For purposes of examination let us reverse the order of these statements, beginning with the last and returning to the first. Take the statement that good works are afore prepared for us that we should walk in them. What is meant by "good works"? Let me answer that question generally. I believe that the phrase refers to every crisis and commonplace of life, that the whole fact of life is included in the term "good works." In writing to Titus, the Apostle, speaking of the epiphany or the outshining of the grace of God, says, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." I read the whole passage in order that we might set the final reference to "good works" in its proper relation to all that has gone before. It is one of the most glorious passages in the Bible concerning the manifestation of God's grace. It is one of the most wonderful

passages unfolding before our minds the intent of the coming of Christ. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." That is the ultimate issue. Whatever the phrase "good works" may mean, it is here set in relation to the majesty and mercy of the manifestation of grace and glory by the work of Jesus Christ.

Then, again, when the Apostle is drawing his letter to conclusion, he writes, "And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." You will notice that the marginal reading of the Revised Version suggests as an alternative rendering, "And let our people also profess honest occupations, that they be not unfruitful." One application of that term "good works" is honest occupations, daily callings, the profession a man follows, the business which occupies his time and attention, the everyday matters of the week days of life. "Honest occupations" is a perfectly fair translation of "good works" in Titus. When I get back to the Ephesian letter, I find that the word "works" is the same but that the word "good" is different. In Titus the word "good" refers to utility, or, as it is put there, "to maintain good works for necessary uses." I find the word "good" in Ephesians means that which is intrinsically good. What, then, is the meaning of the word "works"? It is a word which is applied to all kinds of effort. Work is an effort made. I care not whether it be for pleasure or profit, for the hope of gain, or for pure love of an object served, whether it be selfish or not. Work is an effort made. This word, which is applied to the highest and the lowest, the broadest and the narrowest, the most sublime and the most simple alike, is the word of my test. It includes all the activities of life, all the effort a man makes, not on Sunday only, but on every day of the week; not here in the sanctuary, in the pulpit, or in the Sabbath School, or in the Mission Hall, only, but in the countinghouse, the school, the office, or any professional employment. It is the effort of your life, whether, I repeat, for pleasure or profit. Whether you count it high or low, mean or noble, matters nothing. I go back to the Ephesian Epistle, upon which I never can look without seeing something of the glory of the ages yet unborn, the Epistle in which the Apostle has reached the topstone and is describing the glory of the Church; I find that he sets my life with all its works, its efforts put forth every day in every place, for pleasure or profit—he sets the works of my life in relationship to the infinite and eternal glory, in relationship to the great work of God in my character, in relationship to the fact that God is the Master Workman, making me through all these processes what He would have me be. This is a message of comfort if we will have it so. He has foreordained the works of the man He is making. He has been ahead of me preparing the place to which I am coming, manipulating all the resources of the universe in order that the work I do may be a part of His whole great and gracious work. God has foreordained good works. He has prearranged the forces of nature and the facts of life so that when I rise in the morning and begin to make my effort, it may be an effort in harmony with His character, a good work, whether I preach or play, whether I labor for pleasure or profit.

In the discovery of this fact lies the conviction which makes a man ready to submit wholly to the will of God. Joseph said to his brethren in the midst of their sorrow for the wrong they had previously done him, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." In that moment—perchance previously he had seen it—in that moment he confessed the fact that the pit, the brutality, the exile, the imprisonment, and the long waiting were all foreordained of God. They were all part of the "good works" which God had prepared for him. Or, if I may most reverently quote the supreme instance of this thing, and bring you to that moment when Jesus of Nazareth stood confronting the

power of the world in the person of Pilate, I hear Him saying, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." The latter words I am not careful to deal with now, but I ask you to notice Christ's great conception that there was purpose in His life, arrangement made beforehand. There is another word which He said to Pilate, "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above." There He stood amid all the darkness and brutality, and travail and pain, and agony of an hour of overwhelming defeat, conscious that God had foreordained the works of all the days. He came to tragedy and to suffering and pain, regnant, mighty, sublime, because He knew that all were part of the "good works, which God afore prepared that He should walk in them."

Do not let these illustrations rob us of the one thing I supremely desire to say to my own heart and to yours. If we would say that as it ought to be said, I think we must come down from the larger outlook and take the more partial one. It is by seeing the partial thing sometimes that we gain understanding of the whole. Tomorrow is an absolutely unknown quantity for you and for me. I do not know what waits for me tomorrow of joy or of sorrow, of difficulty or of overcoming, of testing or of triumph. Is not that enough to affright me? Not at all. I know that God foreordains the pathway. I go back to the swan song of Moses, in Deuteronomy. He is singing to his people, the people he loves, and reminds them of many things in the Government of God. Among all the things he says to them there is nothing more gracious than this—he tells them that God led them through the "great and terrible wilderness." If that were all he had said it would have produced nothing other than a shudder of memory, but that is not all. He also said that God "went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in." That lights the wilderness. That makes the desert blossom as the rose. That creates the anthem in the hour when a man cannot see one yard in front of him. The thought of God moving in front of His hosts, choosing them places in which to pitch their tents is sublime. We often sing,

We nightly pitch our moving tent

A day's march nearer home.

The teaching of my text is that that tent is never pitched at haphazard. I talk about tomorrow. I do not know about what remains of today. I am not sure about the next half hour. Yet I am absolutely sure that God is ahead of me preparing the works in which He would have me walk, planning the little things of my life, arranging the infinite mosaic, putting simple words into such harmony that if I will but obey and follow Him His poem shall be heard in all this life of mine. God is moving ahead and He foreordains all the crises and commonplaces of life. He is always in front of us preparing the works in which He would have us walk.

Now return to the first statement. If it be true that God has prepared works for us it is also true that He has prepared us for the works. "Created in Christ Jesus for good works." We are prepared for the works as the works are being prepared for us. Therefore, we are perfectly equipped for whatever the day may bring. "Then let the unknown morrow bring with it what it may, it can bring with it nothing but He will bear us through."

We do not know what tomorrow is bringing, but we know that God is preparing tomorrow, and not only that, but that He has laid up for us in Christ Jesus resources equal to whatever He brings us to. Who was it said something about tempering the wind to the shorn lamb? It is not true. God

never tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. God has provided the lamb with fleece. The shearing of the lamb is a human invention. It may be right, or wrong—I am not discussing that. If you shear the lamb and put it out on the mountains you must take the responsibility. The wind will not be any warmer for the lamb. It is a wrong idea that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. What, then, is true? He tempers the lamb to the wind. He gives the lamb its fleece, and if I interfere with that rule I am responsible. He will not temper the wind to me. He will temper me to the wind. Is there not a phrase about finely tempered steel? You do not temper the things you want the steel to cut so that the steel shall be able to cut it. You temper the steel so that it may cut. So with me. I am tempered to the wind. Is there much of battle ahead of me? Then in Christ Jesus I have all the strength to enable me to overcome. Is there ahead of me some sorrow? Let me speak carefully, is there ahead of you, dear heart, some sorrow? God is getting you ready for that sorrow in a thousand ways you know not of, and He will never let you feel the burden of any sorrow until He has prepared you for it in Christ Jesus. That is His method. He said to Jeremiah when Jeremiah shrank back from the pathway of service, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And though in a land of peace thou art secure, yet how wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan." There was no reference to death in either case, but to difficult service. God says to him, "You are shrinking here in a comparatively easy pathway, but presently you have to contend with horses." Yes, but with all reverence I say in the presence of God's own word, "Yes, Jehovah, great Master of us all, but Thou dost never ask a man to contend with horses until Thou hast practiced him with footmen." Think of God's method in the case of children. He does not let little children feel the amount of grief you are able to bear. Some years ago there was a railway collision in Wales. When they were rescuing the people out of the midst of the debris they found a mother, dead; but clasped in her arms was a little two-year-old child. When they extricated the child from its mother, it looked up with a smiling face and then they found it had clasped in its little hands a packet of chocolate. They unclasped the little hands and the child cried, cried over the loss of the chocolate, but not over the loss of its mother. Thirty years afterwards it would have forgotten its chocolate and cried for its mother. What does the story teach? That God does not allow a little child to feel all the force of sorrow until it has been prepared. The sorrow was there. The wind was not tempered. The agony was there. The mother was taken, but the little one was not ready for that sorrow yet. God was teaching it to bear the pain of its loss by letting it grieve over the loss of chocolate. That is God's method. He is always preparing and equipping me for the things which come by the processes through which He leads me. In Christ Jesus I am equipped for everything. I know He will not permit that to come to me for which I am not prepared. We are His workmanship. He is equipping us in Christ for all His will appoints. He is appointing in His will things for which we are created in Christ.

What effect ought this view of life to produce upon us? It seems to me that the first fact is that it brings to us the conviction of grave responsibility. Perhaps you hardly expected I would say that first. I might have spoken of the safety and peace, but I choose to name those last. I say that this conception creates grave responsibility.

The responsibility is a twofold one. First, that I should find the place His will appoints, and, secondly, that I should use the resources His grace provides.

First, that I should find the place His will appoints. What is the tragedy of my life, of yours, if there has been tragedy in either? The tragedy has been that while He has foreordained good works for

me I have not discovered them and have gone my own way, and my works have been as were the works of the idolaters of old—answers to fleshly desire. That is the tragedy of life. The first thing, therefore, is that I should find, as each day breaks upon me, God's place for me in that day, as every new crisis confronts me; and as I look out toward the coming years I should find God's place for me. You say, "That is exactly what I want to do. How shall I do it?" The first thing that you and I have to do if we would find God's place for us is to destroy our own programs and give up forevermore the perilous business of imitating anyone else. I said something like this once in the United States at a convention, and a lady came to me afterwards and said, "Do you not keep a diary? Do you not enter any engagements?" "Oh, yes," I replied. "Then how do you follow your own advice to destroy your own program?" I am old-fashioned enough to write, and to mean, "God willing," over every engagement made. I am very tired of hearing men account for certain of their actions by saying, "The Lord led me to do it," when I am perfectly sure He never did lead them to do anything of the kind. That is not what I am asking for. In the deepest of you, and of me, in that inner shrine of the personality where the will reigns supreme, the program is to be always, "God willing"; the arrangement is to be of such a nature that it can be abandoned if He change the purpose. The symbols of Abraham's life were the tent and the altar. The altar was the symbol of God's grace, and of worship. The tent was the symbol of pilgrimage, something which could easily be struck and removed. It marked a man ready to be disturbed if God saw fit to disturb Him. That is the attitude of faith. When a man settles down at any point and says, "Here am I for ever," he is in great danger of missing the Divine guidance. When a man says about his work, his business, anything in his life, that it is the final thing, he is in peril. You and I have to say, "This is His will for me. What is next I know not. I watch only for His will."

There must be not only this abandonment of the final program in the thinking and will of the life; there must also be the abandonment of the attempt to imitate someone else and walk as someone else is walking. We must understand if we are to live this life that God deals with us as though there was no one else, and we must seek from Him direct and immediate guidance as though there were no others. It is the life devoted to God, waiting for His voice to obey its call, which find the good works which He has foreordained. I am to ask Him what His will is and I am to wait until He manifests it, and I am to use for the discovery of His will not merely my faith but my reason. When Jesus Christ said in His manifesto, "Behold the fowls of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" He did not mean that the disciples were not to gather into barns. What He meant was, "If God feeds these fowls to whom He has given no forethought and prearrangement, how much more will He feed you to whom He has given forethought and reason!" When Jesus said that the lilies of the field were clothed in majestic beauty even though they could not weave and spin, He did not mean that men were not to weave or spin. If the lilies of the field are clothed in splendor by God, how much more will He clothe you to whom He has given the ability to weave and spin! We are not to sit down in the morning and open our mouths and say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and expect manna. We are to use our reason on the basis of faith. In proportion as we do this we shall find His way for us. We shall find His works afore prepared.

Then we are to use the provision, the resources which He has set at our disposal. Everything I need is in Christ. I need not ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" as though He were not here

and I wanted to speculate as to what He would do if He were here. What will Jesus do now? For He is here and all I have to do is to follow Him.

Remember these two things are absolutely interdependent, obedience and progress. If I have missed my way what is the best thing to do? The only thing to do is to get back to the point where I lost my way and start again. It is a long tramp for some of us. How many years is it since you got out of the will of God? You must get back to that point and obey, and from that point you may start again and find the way of His appointing.

If that be the fact as to responsibility think of all it means. It means perfect safety for the man God-led and God-governed. There are no risks. Never again use the word "happen" in the infidel sense. Things do not happen in that way. There is no failure. "Oh," you say, "you must not tell us that. We have known men of faith fail." Never. To sit on a throne or to sweep a crossing may alike be fine in the thinking of God. It depends upon where He puts you. If God wants you in the carpenter's shop and you leave it to go into the House of Commons you will be a dead failure there. Or if God wants you in the front of the battle, and you are hiding in a business house, you will fail. You have to get where God wants you to be if you are to succeed. As it has been beautifully said, if God sent two angels to this world, one to rule an empire and the other to sweep a crossing, they would never think of arguing on the way as to which was the more important work. Each is equally important, because He appoints it. May we learn this lesson! The ultimate test is not notoriety, but fidelity. On that basis all rewards will be made in the light of the coming Kingdom. What follows? Safety, peace. Peace in misunderstanding, in defeat, and in triumph. In the majestic words of the New Testament, peace from God, peace with God, the peace of God.

Let us be very careful lest we mar the Divine poems. We are His poems. He wants to sing a song to the world through our life. He cannot lose His thought. If He cannot sing it through us He will sing it through someone else.

There is only one question which we need to ask in the presence of every new day:

Only to know that the path I tread

Is the path marked out for me;

That the way, tho' thorny, rough and steep,

Will lead me nearer to Thee.

Only to know when the day is passed,

And the evening shadows come,

That its trials and cares have proved indeed

A "day's march nearer home."

Ephesians 4:9, 10. The Ascension.

Ephesians 4:9, 10.

The Ascension.

Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

Ephesians 4:9-10

These words are placed within brackets both in the Authorized and Revised Versions, and rightly so, for they constitute a distinct parenthesis in the apostolic argument. We can omit them, and the main teaching is not interfered "with in the slightest way, but it is made more radiant by reason of the light within them. The passage helps us to come to a clear apprehension of the supreme importance of the Ascension, which was at once the culmination of our Lord's earthly ministry and the initiation of His heavenly service. It consists of a question and of a statement: "Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?" and "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things."

The question emphasizes a fact and is a question that does not require an answer. The fact, which is not in dispute, is that the Ascension of our Lord involved descension. Now that assumption arrests attention. One is inclined to challenge it. Does ascension necessarily involve descension? It certainly is not so in the case of any other human being of whom we have any knowledge, either personally, or in these Sacred Writings. We think of the blessed dead as ascended and properly so. Of course, the words "ascension" and "descension" are figurative terms enabling us to think intelligently of facts in a realm where dimensions are more than we are familiar with. I say then that we may properly speak of men of the past as having ascended, but their ascension does not involve their descension. If the first man had never fallen, all we know of humanity would lead us to believe that he would have ascended. After the period of earthly, probationary life, the school time of the soul, man would have passed to the higher and the larger life for which this life is forever a preparation. But this ascension would not involve descension. If the first man after having fallen, by reason of his confidence in God, ascended, it does not at all involve the idea of his descent. We think of Moses passing to the Mount and dying, as one has said, of the kisses of the lips of God, he himself ascended; but that ascent does not involve descent. The fiery prophet of Israel was caught away in a chariot of fire, a fitting vehicle for the conveyance of his spirit to the realms of light, and thus he ascended, but that does not involve descent. Enoch, the quiet man who walked with God, and was not, for God took him, ascended; but descent was not involved. These men began their being here in the world. Human life begins here, serves it probation here, and if it fulfils the ideal, it ascends, but that does not involve descent. Why then does the apostle say, in interrogative form, what he conceives will be at once admitted: "This, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth"?

If ascension involves descension, it involves much more. If the Ascension of our Lord must include the fact that before His Ascension there was a descent, something far more is included. If ascension involves descension, it is patent that ascension is a return to a place originally occupied. Therefore, involved in this declaration is the central truth concerning the Person of our Lord. Whereas the Ascension lays emphasis upon the Resurrection and the passing into heaven of a man of our humanity, this statement warns us against thinking of Him merely in the terms of our own humanity. "He that descended is the same also that ascended..." is another way of saying that in the Ascension He passed back to the place from which He came. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then came His descent: "... the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." The Ascension was the passing back of this One into the presence of God. In this declaration of the apostle is involved the truth which he declared in another letter in which the descent is described in the most wonderful language. He said of Him, that being in the form of God, He did not count this high dignity a prize to be snatched at and held for His own enrichment but emptied Himself. That is the descent. Continuing, the apostle said that being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted Him. That is the Ascension, but it is the Ascension of One Who descended, and the One Who descended is the One Who in all the mystery of the past ever existed in fellowship and cooperation with God. The whole emphasis of the question is on the descension. All the values of the Ascension—the human values which are ours, the things in which we make our boast and our trust which are of the very anchorage of our hope and faith—resulted from the descent.

"He... descended into the lower parts of the earth. He... ascended far above all the heavens,..." These two statements take us to the uttermost reaches of our thinking with regard to humanity. The first takes us to the uttermost depth. I am aware that there have been differences of opinion as to the real meaning of this phrase: "... the lower parts of the earth." There have been those who have suggested, and not without reason, that it is merely a reference to the earth simply placing it in contrast with the higher places of creation, "... all the heavens,..." which are subsequently referred to. But I do not so read the passage. Here I believe the apostle was referring to the ultimate depths of human experience resulting from sin; the lower parts of the earth, Hades, Sheol, the prison house of spirits. Involved within the phrase, of course, is the Incarnation itself. He descended; He took upon Him the form of a servant; He was made in the likeness of man; He came into all the circumstances and experiences of humanity; He lived His life among sinning men amid all the degradation of humanity which resulted from sin. He passed to the uttermost bound of that degradation in the mystic marvel of His dying. When His body lay in the grave, His Spirit descended into Hades and so He passed into the lower parts of the earth.

It is that to which the apostle draws attention. He declares in effect that the Ascension—while it involves descent and while, therefore, it further involves the prior existence of this Person, the Son of God—gains its values from that descent into the lower parts of the earth.

Now let us pass from this examination of the question, to consider the statement which immediately follows it and which is so closely related to it; "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." As in the question our attention is focused upon the descension, here it is kept focused there, but we are asked to

interpret the Ascension by that descension. The statement first reveals the relation of that descent of our Lord to His Ascension. Apart from that descent and the accomplishment therein of a Divine purpose, there would have been no ascension in spite of the fact that the One Who descended had occupied a place in eternal fellowship with God. Ascent was the return of the One Who had accomplished His mission, and the last glory of the Ascension is that it sets an eternal seal upon the victory won in the mystery and the darkness of the descent. The One Who was from the beginning, the One Who became flesh, the One Who took our humanity and entered into it, entered into it for the purpose of ransom and redemption. That One could have found no way back into the place of power and fellowship with God had He failed to fulfil the Divine purpose. Let us at once admit that we are imagining the impossible. Nevertheless, here is the tremendous fact—which, trying to grasp with our human minds, we have to state it in this way—that God's adventure upon saving men was an adventure upon which He risked everything. The self-emptying of the Son of God was no easy thing even to Him. It was indeed self-emptying, the risking of everything upon the venture of dealing with sin, abolishing death, rescuing and ransoming a race, and bringing it back to the place of Divine intention and desire. This statement reveals to us the issue of that descension. Notice the superlative nature of the terms of which the apostle made use. "... far above all the heavens,..." Above the heavens. That is unthinkable, and because it is unthinkable it is written. In order that our estimation of the place which He now occupies should be superlative, Paul employed the phrase, "... above all the heavens,..." I repeat, we cannot think beyond the heavens. This is a poetic figure and a most daring one. Paul speaks elsewhere about being caught up into the third heaven. In Scripture we are familiar with three heavens. The heaven of the atmosphere; the stellar spaces and the heavens beyond, the dwelling place of angels and of the spirits of the just made perfect. To that third heaven Paul said he was caught up upon one occasion. Now he said that this One ascended above all the heavens. It was a poetic figure intended to emphasize the high place, the final place of authority and dignity and power and glory to which this One passed. It means that He is elevated to a position which is above every form of creation. His Ascension was to the place of supreme and final and eternal authority.

Moreover He ascended above all heavens that He may fill all things. There are two possible meanings of that phrase. It may mean that He might fill all things by His presence, His sovereignty, His activity. Or it may mean that He might fulfill all things, realize the original purpose of God in all His creation. I believe that both ideas are included.

Yet, if we speak of Him as filling all things with His presence, His sovereignty, His activity, we seem to be contradicting the whole doctrine of the Ascension. The doctrine of the Ascension is that a Man of our humanity has passed to this central place of power and glory. But if He be a Man of our humanity, how can He fill all things? The mystery is admitted, but the admission of a mystery does not deny the actuality of the fact which is mysterious. Have we no glimpses of light on the subject in the stories of the days of Jesus between His Resurrection and Ascension? Was He not then preparing our hearts for an understanding of this fact? He appeared again and again to some group of disciples, and He did not come by the usual ways of human coming! The doors were shut for fear of the Jews, and they were not opened, but He was there. He talked with them in human speech and held out human hands and invited them to touch His human hands. Then again, without the shooting of a bolt, or the opening of a door, He was not! Not what? Did you think

I was going to say not there? I was not. He was there, but He was not visible.

Two men were walking to Emmaus, and a third joined them. Their hearts burned within them while the Stranger talked with them. At last they invited Him in and offered Him the hospitality of their home for the night. He went in to abide and sat at the table with them. He was a Man of their own humanity, the very Man they had seen and beheld and handled, to use John's words. Suddenly, as He broke bread, they discovered Who He was, and then, with equal suddenness, He was not visible, but He was there! Let there be no Sadduceeism in our thinking. He can most certainly, suddenly, gloriously appear upon the field of battle to a dying soul. I believe with all my heart and all my soul that some of our boys have seen Jesus actually.

And yet, He filleth all things. This is not new in the history of Jesus. It was true of Him when He was here in the world. He spoke of Himself once in language that is very suggestive, as being in the bosom of the Father even while He was still here. For the three and thirty years that the Son of God walked the ways of earth, heaven lost its manifestation of Deity. It did not lose the presence of God, but it lacked His manifestation. While He was here, walking our ways, the roads of Judaea and Galilee, He was still in high heaven. When upon the green hill outside the city wall, He hung upon the brutal Roman gibbet, dying to save men, the chief pain and agony was felt in heaven in the heart of God.

That which is new is the assurance that comes to us as we remember that in that descent He won His victory, accomplished His purpose, carried out the great Divine campaign to finality and so went back again to heaven to be forever the medium through which God is to be known. Not yet do we see the glory of the victory, not yet do we see all things put under Him, but we see Jesus, the Man of our humanity, exalted thus to the right hand of God.

Now let us turn from textual examination to the theme itself. Let us think of the glory of the Ascension. The simple fact is that above all heavens is the One Who was forever there, but now He is there as Man, as well as God. That is new in heaven. When Jesus of Nazareth passed to the supernal heights, heaven entered upon a new phase and a new experience. Heaven then regained the One through Whom alone God manifests Himself to creation, but He was changed. The manifestation of light and love and life and of the glory and the beauty of Deity was the same, but there were new unveilings. At the center of the universe is a Man and withal a Man bearing in His body wound prints. The seer of Patmos, amid all the flaming and the flashing of the glorious revelations that came to him then, saw the throne, the light-girdled throne of the Ancient of days, and was ever more wonderful thing said concerning that throne: "I beheld in the midst of the throne... a Lamb as it had been slain,..." There at the heart of the universe is a Man of our humanity Who is a Redeemer.

By that Ascension, humanity is explained, and by that Ascension the place of man is secured in spite of his failure. By that Ascension, I say, humanity is explained. It is when we see Him ascended, that we know what was in the heart of Deity when God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." What dreams we dreamed as we read the Genesis story. How we have tried to think out the meaning and the purpose of God in the creation of a being so wonderful. When God created humanity, He created it capable of close and intimate fellowship with Himself. Now all this is made plain by the fact that at the center of the universe God Himself remains incarnate, manifesting Himself to all creation through humanity.

But the Man there bears wound prints. Therefore, by the Ascension we know that the place of man is secured in spite of his failure. Our human need is joined forevermore with the grace of Deity. These then are the things that are verified to us by the Ascension of the Man of Nazareth.

But let this be interpreted by the context. This parenthesis, this excursus was called forth by the fact that Paul had just quoted from a Psalm. The quotation is not exact. It is marked by a verbal alteration which gives a new turn to the thought. The Psalm reads:

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive...." So far Paul's quotation does not vary. The picture suggested by the Hebrew poetry is that of a king returning, bringing with him a band of captives. "... Thou hast led captivity...." Thy captives, Thou hast led them captive.

Then the Psalm says: "Thou hast received gifts among men, Yea among the rebellious also,..." We get nearer to the heart of the statement if we read it thus: He received gifts consisting of men, yea, consisting of the rebellious also. The King as he returns carries with him a band of captives. These are his gifts, not gifts he bestows, but gifts bestowed upon him. This idea Paul changes. With a fine daring, by a verbal change, he gives a new view of the situation. He says: "He led a band of captives captive; He gave gifts unto men." This verbal departure of the apostle is not a contradiction, but a fuller interpretation. The captives He led captive were His possession, according to the Messianic Psalm. "He led them captive, who were His possession, in order that He might bestow gifts upon them," is in effect the apostolic statement. They were given to Him by the right of His conquest, and He took them, not to put them into the galleys, not to oppress them, but to give them gifts, to crown them. Paul is not denying the teaching of the prophetic Psalm. That is all included in his sentence: He led His captivity captive. Paul says yes, but He did this in order to bestow gifts upon them.

This then is the contextual exposition. When He ascended, He ascended leading with Him a band of captives that were now His rightful possession. In His own words in that great intercessory prayer He called them: "... the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world:..." He received gifts from among men. They were of the rebellious, they were of the stubborn; those who by their own sin had violated the order of His universe, had introduced deformity and ugliness, and were against God. But this One had by His descent won them, captured them, made them His captives, and when He ascended, He ascended representing them, carrying them with Him to the same supernal height, leading His band of captives captive, and that in order that He might bestow gifts upon them.

The first gift He bestowed upon His band of captives was the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. Then He gave helps and healings and all the varied gifts that His captives need to lift them out of the degradation of their captivity and prepare them to reign with Him in life and glory and beauty forever and forever. In that Ascension of our Lord we also ascended. If indeed we are among the number of His captives, we are already in the purpose and plan of God, seated with Him in the heavens. Our life is hid with Christ in God even now. The life we live here in the flesh is the life risen, ascended, exalted of the sovereign Lord of life and glory. If for a little while we remain where the storms are sweeping and the long and dark and difficult journeys have to be undertaken, where the furnace is heated seven times, we are not alone; for while we are seated with Him in the heavens He is walking in us and with us, the way of sorrows.

From the heights, the mysterious heights of eternal oneness with God and fellowship with Him, He descended to the lower parts of the earth to be numbered with transgressors. He passed down into death in fellowship with humanity. He descended into the prison house of souls. Thence He ascended, and the glory that comes to Him is that of those men whom He receives as His gifts. Who are they? The rebellious!

See how the plated gates unfold,
How swing the creaking doors of brass!
With drums and gleaming arms, behold
Christ's kingly cohorts pass.
Shall Christ not have His chosen men,
Nor lead His crested knights so tall,
Superb upon their horses, when
The world's last cities fall?
Ah, no! these few, the maimed, the dumb.
The saints of every lazar's den,
The earth's off-scourings—they come
From desert and from fen.
To break the terror of the night,
Black dreams and dreadful mysteries,
And proud, lost empires in their might,
And chains and tyrannies.
There ride no gold encinctured knights
Against the potentates of earth;
God chooses all the weakest things
And gives Himself in birth.
With beaten slaves to draw His breath,
And sleeps with foxes on the moor,
With malefactors shares His death,
Tattered and worn and poor.
See how the palace gates unfold,

How swing the creaking doors of brass!

Victorious in defeat—behold,

Christ and His cohorts pass.

Ephesians 5:16. The Opportunity Of Calamity.

Ephesians 5:16.

The Opportunity Of Calamity.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:16

In these words we have a remarkable revelation of Christian privilege and responsibility in days of calamity. In the text are outstanding words which arrest our attention: first, the opening word, "Redeeming"; then the word almost immediately succeeding, "time"; and, finally, the word used to describe the days, "evil." The word here rendered "redeeming" literally means to buy out or to buy. The base of the word is the market place. The word itself suggests keen business acumen, the ability to know exactly what to buy, and when to buy. It is a strictly commercial term.

The second word, "time," has a particular significance. It indicates a special occasion, and therefore a special opportunity.

The third word, "evil," refers to evil in the effect it produces: evil is that which is hurtful, harmful, calamitous.

From this examination of words we immediately discover that in the thought of the apostle evil days constitute special occasions or opportunities for the prosecution of the commerce of the Kingdom of God, that such evil days can be bought out, bought up, turned to account; and, finally, that if they are to be rescued from their evil nature or from that which is calamitous, if they are to be turned to account in the interest of beneficence and goodness, they must be bought up, they must be purchased. The element of sacrifice is involved, the giving up of something, in order that the opportunity may be seized. Of course, involved in that is the larger thought that all such giving results in getting. As in the market place in the olden days, as in the market place today, the man, keen and shrewd and honest and upright and true, is ever prepared to give, but he expects also to gain.

The whole conception of the apostle, then, is that to certain people days of calamity offer special opportunities for the prosecution of great enterprises of the Kingdom of God.

Let us first notice the thought of the apostle concerning the days, "evil days." It was a revolutionary idea. If we had found our way into Ephesus, one of the cities certainly to which this letter was sent, and had talked to the men of Ephesus, the men in authority, if we had told them that someone had said that these were evil days, they would have laughed at us. They were very prosperous days in Ephesus, the days of her wealth, the days when the Temple of Artemis was also the banking house of the merchants, the days of that strange relationship between commerce and religion that made Ephesus materially great. We shall understand the apostle only as we remember the people to whom he was writing. When I glance at the opening of the letter I find this description of them:

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints which are in Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus."

He was writing, then, to those whom he described as saints, those set apart to God in Christ, separated to God for the specific purpose, not of saving their own souls, but of carrying out God's enterprises. When Paul described them as "the faithful in Christ Jesus," the word does not suggest they were always faithful in the sense of fidelity, but that they lived on the principle of faith. These people to whom the apostle wrote then judged things not by the seen but by the unseen; these were people who saw not merely the things that were seen, but all those vast things of the spiritual world and of eternal measurements in which all near things were conditioned; they were people who lived on the principle of faith. Writing to such Paul said, the days are calamitous.

In the chapter from which this text is taken we have a yet further description of these people: "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love." In that injunction we have a revelation, not merely of what these people were in themselves, but of their supreme responsibility. They were to imitate God; they were to behave as God would behave in Ephesus; they were to live according to the standard of Divine love in Ephesus. Love was to be the master passion of all their thinking, all their speaking, and all their doing. It must be the love of God, not a mere weak, sentimental anemic emotion, evanescent and passing, but love, that high outgoing of the soul that acts as surely in judgment as in mercy, that is based forevermore on truth and is always suffused with light.

To such people these days in Ephesus were evil days, and wherever that ideal of life Paul gives the Ephesians is accepted and followed the days are evil days. This world is not a friend of Jesus Christ. It may speak respectfully of Him, it may even patronize some of His teaching, but it is not a friend of Jesus Christ. In proportion as men are truly trying to live and love like God, on the principle of faith, the days are always evil days. Take any ordinary day. I do not mean the days of the moment in which we are living, but those days before we were plunged into the catastrophe of the hour. The ideal of life among the mass of men in the city or in the country is godless. Men are living without relationship to the claims of God—rather, I should say, without recognition of that relationship. The bulk of human activity is material, even our own activity. It is so of necessity. I am not saying this is wrong. The majority of our hours are necessarily given to things that are material, transient, perishing, the things that presently we shall drop and leave. The rush and speed of life today are against man's development and the character of love. The hurry and the jostle and the crush of life do not help the development of Christian character. There is a sense, I say, in which all the days in which we are called on to live are evil days if the ideal of life be that described by the apostle, and if its master passion be that of living as God would live, and walking forevermore in love. To the majority of saints the general atmosphere of the ordinary days is against Christian character, and not helpful. When that is declared on a Sabbath morning in the sanctuary by a preacher of the truth men are almost surprised to hear it. Yet it is the thing they are constantly saying in the subconsciousness of their inner life.

I think that we shall all agree that these are evil days, days of calamity. The things that hurt and harm and spoil and destroy seem rampant everywhere. The Christian man must be conscious that this whole war is in itself evil, that it is calamitous. Christian men cannot rejoice in war for war's sake. We may be divided in our opinion on this particular war, on the relationship of our own nation

to it; but as Christians we must agree that war itself is calamitous. It can be none other than a calamity. This ghastly destruction of human life is dire calamity. And Dr. Saleeby is perfectly right, even though some people label him today as fanatical, when he persistently reminds us that we must think of the long cost of the war. That is not the cost of money but of men, and not of men alone, but of the impoverishment of the generations ahead. Surely there is no man in this country who can rejoice in war for the sake of war. They are evil days for the world.

I go further now, and here is the great burden on my heart, inspiring the message I would deliver. At the present moment the days seem to be almost more evil to us as a nation and people than any that have preceded in the war. Let me hasten to explain that, so as to leave no misunderstanding of what I am thinking. We are all conscious that there is abroad just now a spirit, shall I say, of pessimism. I confess I have been burdened and oppressed during the last week with reading papers, religious and secular. I also confess that there is some ground for the present attitude, that this particular hour is a very serious one, from the beginning of August last until now. I do not propose for a single moment to speak as one having any knowledge which is not available to the everyday reader, but as one who has been attempting to follow the whole movement, reading the writings of such men as Mr. Hilaire Belloc, Mr. Garvin, Mr. Spender, and Sir William Robertson Nicol, and I declare that I do not consider the hour at which we have now arrived is any darker than any hour through which we have passed since August 4 last. That is a personal opinion, which you may dismiss. What I do think is happening—and I think it is a great gain—is that we are beginning to understand how serious and terrific is the task before us. What I am trying to do now is to face the fact that the days are evil days. What then? What, then, is to be the attitude of the man of faith? How are we to look on these days? And what is our duty in this particular hour?

Now, for the moment leaving all this reference to the present situation, I go back to the text. Having then in mind the apostolic description of those days and those saints at Ephesus, I ask you to notice that the whole meaning of this text is that evil days constitute peculiar opportunities for the prosecution of the enterprises of the Kingdom of God. Let me touch on the things I used a moment ago as illustrations. Every godless man is an opportunity for godly men. Godless men come into contact with godly men in the economy of grace in order that they may pass under the influence of their godliness. Immediately there breaks on us the conviction of the wrong we have done if in the company of godless men we have consented to lower the standard of our own godliness in thought and speech.

I am not suggesting that a man of business is to ask every man who comes into his office if he is a Christian. That is not my suggestion. I am not suggesting that a man on his professional duties shall offer tracts to men. That is not my suggestion. If I were a business man and you talked to me about my soul when I am doing business with you, I should show you the door immediately. A tract enclosed with an invoice is an insult to religion. When a godly man does business with a godless man he must see to it that his business is done in a godly fashion. The godly fashion is not merely the fashion of the man who is strictly just; it is also the fashion of the man who is walking in love. The godly fashion of doing business is not merely the fashion of the man who will refuse to misrepresent his goods. The godly fashion is the fashion of the man who will not allow the other man to sell him something for less than its value in order that he may get the advantage. Oh! you say, I had a great bargain this week. Did you? What was it? I bought a picture and the man did not

know its value, but I did. That is not godliness; it is godlessness. Godliness in business means more than integrity and uprightness of purpose. The actually godly man will see that the other man is not wronged or harmed. Every godless man is an opportunity for our godliness to shine forth. All material things—I have said that the majority of days are filled with material activities—all material things are a basis for our spirituality to shine on, the carbon on which the electric current of our relationship with God must flash out. The very things that make it hard to be a Christian are the things which enable us to shine, are opportunities to display the meaning of Christianity and the value of our relationship to God. It is a day of rush and jostle and hurry, when it is hard to be quiet, and calm, and tender, and merciful. The rush today is our chance to reveal the quietness of God.

I go back again to the thing that is on all our hearts. These are dark days, serious days. May I remind you, then, children of God, sons of the Most High, faithful in Christ Jesus, those who are called to be imitators of God and to walk in love, that panic today is the result of the overwhelming sense of the might of brute force. Courage demonstrates confidence in God. Courage is never foolhardiness. Courage will take every precaution. But courage will never sit down and utter its dirge in the hour of darkness. I find men today looking out over the present situation, and suggesting that the ultimate issue of the struggle, however long and however ghastly, may be the defeat of righteousness and truth and justice and honor and compassion. The men who make such a suggestion must, for the moment, be overwhelmed with the force of brutality, and have lost their vision of God. I declare here publicly this morning, with great solemnity, that if the forces that trample order under foot, and violate the common things of humanity should triumph, then in the day of their triumph my preaching would cease in despairing silence, for my faith in God would be utterly broken. The thing is impossible. The thing can never be. We must take the large outlook. We must remember that even in this hour we also are suffering by reason of our sins. These things of suffering are disciplinary. I look toward the issue, and I cannot bate one jot of heart or hope. I must move right forward and believe that God Who acts in truth and love and mercy must prevail. The true attitude for the man of faith today is that attitude of courage which demonstrates confidence in God.

It may be said that perhaps these things need saying to those who are writing in the papers, but not to Christian men and women. I do not agree. The thing of importance is how Christian men and women talk after they have read. By ordinary conversation, in homes, and stores, and clubs throughout the length and breadth of this land today, more is done to influence opinion than is done by all the writers in the press. Therefore it may be well to remind ourselves of so simple a matter as this, that when we read articles in the press, in magazines, daily papers, weekly papers, we should attempt to find out the temperament of the men who write them. When we do that we discover the reason for a good deal of foolish optimism and pernicious pessimism.

There is, however, a common bond uniting these men who are interpreting the hour, and that is the passion for the success of truth and justice and right. When we have listened to them and taken their outlook, let us remit everything to the Biblical revelation that good shall be established. If we waver it is because our confidence in God is not the confidence that it ought to be. "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees"—that seems to me to be a message we supremely need to hear at this particular time.

I go back to one of the least known books of the Old Testament, the Song of Solomon, that wonderful, mystical love song, purely Eastern in its gorgeous coloring and in all its speech. In the course of it I find these words, and I resolutely adopt the old Puritan method of making use of them as an illustration of the highest relationship between Christ and His people: "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters." That is the bridegroom's description of His Bride, Christ's description of His Church: "As the lily among the thorns." The lily is of gorgeous beauty, of light and splendor, of loveliness; the thorns are rank and dank and poisonous. Yet the lily grows among the thorns in the soil in which the thorns are reared. The lily is fanned by the breezes that blow on the thorns; on the lily falls the rain that falls on the thorns. The difference is the difference between the nature of the lily and the nature of the thorns.

All about us are the things that are against us, evil days, days of darkness; and men's hearts are failing them because of fear. Evil might is attempting to master a world of love by putting it under the heel of cruelty. The lily is to grow in that soil, and in that atmosphere, full of beauty, full of grace, full of courage, full of confidence, full of assurance. Christian people are not to be aloof from the age in which they live. They are not to separate themselves from the endeavors of others. In order to win victory in this struggle we must unite. We must not be guilty of abating hope, of sitting down in ashes, of suggesting that at last that which began best is going to end worst. We are to demonstrate our belief by our courage, by our certainty, by our hope.

Through the fulfilment of this obligation in the midst of such opportunities the enterprises of God will be carried forward, men will be won for Him, and the victory will be on His side. Men are rallying to the flag from the north and the south, and the east and the west, from all the lands within this great Empire. But something more than material force is needed. There must be intercession, the activity in the secret place, if there is to be spiritual courage. These are the things needed today as never before, and these are the contributions which we can supremely make in this hour of our calamity and our need.

Never must the men of faith allow themselves to be confined in their looking to the horizon that appears. There was a man of old time who endured as seeing Him Who is invisible. And this is the question I think we need to ask ourselves today. Do we see God? You remember the story from the classics, how, when news was sent to Antigonus that an army as of ten to one was mustered against him, he looked at the messenger and said: "And for how many do you count me?" I lift the lesson into this higher realm. We are told of the enemy that they have more men, more munitions, more strength, more preparation. I affirm, then, that the question God is asking of the men of faith is this: For how many do you count Me?

Ah, yes, but we must see to it that we are on His side. We must see to it, in all our praying and our thinking and our enduring and our sacrificing, that we seek, first, right, truth, justice, mercy, compassion, and that these be the main motives of our endeavor. Then may we calmly wait amidst the furnace blast, knowing what the issue must be. The measure of our investment is the measure of the return that will reward us presently. The measure in which today we are putting into the awful business of the hour all the forces of our life, temporal, mental, spiritual, is the measure of the victory that will come to us presently.

One glance at the context in conclusion. The true attitude for heavenly commerce is a threefold one, and the apostle has carefully marked it for us. "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as

unwise, but as wise"; "understanding what the will of the Lord is." "Be filled with the Spirit." If the saints of God, the faithful in Christ Jesus, who are to imitate God and walk in love, are indeed to buy up the opportunity of the dark and evil day these things must not be neglected. Their walk must be with care, with caution. Let us be very careful now to put a guard on our lips, and in the matter and the method of our everyday conversation let us walk circumspectly. Let there be a great silence when silence is better, quiet speech when speech is called for. The Christian man who runs round his place of business and among his friends wailing over the apparent neglect of the Government, or of this general, or of that admiral, ought to be imprisoned till the war is over. Lift up the hands that hang down, confirm the feeble knees; your God will come with a recompense!

The true attitude must also be that of the shrewdness that understands the will of the Lord. In the midst of our waiting there must be the patience that recognizes the necessity for discipline. There must be no forgetfulness of that past which was characterized by forgetfulness of God. I am driven to declare to you that as I climb the heights and look out on this England of ours, this land so honored and dear to our hearts, I feel it is better this than that we should have drifted still further away into our luxury, and our ease, and our trivialities, and our indulgences. Better this, for out of it all is coming a great sense of the vastness of life, and of the reality of God. Men are discovering that the only resting-place for the heart is the belief that over the battle and the slaughter, over the waiting and the weariness God presides, and that out of it all at last shall come the new era, cleaner, purer, better.

Here also are words which, of course, have a much wider application: Be filled with the Spirit. It is true, however, that in proportion as Christian men and women today are filled with the Spirit of God, they will co-operate with Him in this hour of calamity, and the evil day will be bought up in the interest of God's Kingdom.

This is what we need to do today in order to serve our nation: to walk circumspectly as those that know the will of the Lord, and that in that fulness of the Spirit that enables us each in his place or her place, in public work, in Parliament, in the home, about our professional duty, not to be pessimistic, nor optimistic with the optimism that is foolhardy, but strong and courageous with the courage that is built on our confidence in God. So today may we redeem the time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 6:13. The Victorious Christian Life.

Ephesians 6:13.

The Victorious Christian Life.

Having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13

The words thrill with a sense of power even when taken, as I have now taken them, out of their setting. They suggest assured victory. "Having done all, to stand." Considered in their textual relation this becomes far more apparent. I think I had hardly dared to read these words as text if I had not already read their context, that passage toward the close of the wonderful Ephesian letter which the apostle commences with the words, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." Having read the passage, and knowing that it is in your memory, I repeat that these words, "Having done all, to stand," suggest an absolute and an assured victory. In that passage the enemies are all recognized—"against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." The equipment of the soldier is perfectly described, the loins girt with truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, with prayer and supplication. The clash of conflict is plainly heard. What is the issue? "Having done all, to stand." There is no quaver in the voice. The victory is not hypothetical. The issue is not for one single moment uncertain. The soldier is "to stand... withstand... and having done all, to stand." He is to recognize the fact that he is not playing at battle. He is to "put on the whole armour of God" and to "take up the whole armour of God." To "put on" may be for military parade. To "take up" is for actual conflict. What is to be the issue of it? "Having done all, to stand." That is a perfect picture of absolute victory.

We are all familiar with the conflict in greater or less degree. I think I am safe in saying that we all desire just such victory as the apostle describes in this great passage. But the question is being asked in a thousand varied ways on every hand, especially by young people who have seen the gleam and desire to follow it. Is that really possible? Is it really possible to live a victorious Christian life? Eagerly and almost in agony the inquiry is made.

How shall I answer that question? Let me say, first of all, there is a sense in which no one can answer it finally for another. The only answer that will be convincing will be that of personal experience when the conditions have been fulfilled and the attempt made. We too often refuse to make the attempt until we have discovered a theory; or, most earnestly desiring victory, we seek for a testimony of other people, and are influenced unduly by it. Seeking for a theory we have found—to use a commonplace expression—that it does not work; or seeking for testimony, we are afraid, discouraged by the exalted nature of it, or by its confession of failure and impotence. There are some things that a man needs to say very carefully, and what I am going to say now is one of them. Scores of young people desiring victorious life have been discouraged by some of the finest

books ever written, the lives of the saints of the past. I remember on one occasion having conversation at some length with a young man who had been brought to the verge of despair in his own life by reading that wonderful life of the sainted Fletcher of Madeley. He said: If that be Christianity and if that be the victorious life, it is not for me. If I could gain the ear of the young men and women here tonight who have seen the glory and in the deepest of their heart desire the victory, I would say to them, Do not trust in a theory, do not take as final evidence any testimony, but for yourselves make the great adventure. Learn the conditions as indicated; make your own venture, and come to the final proof in your own life.

I can imagine that some will say, Why are you preaching? Surely you are preaching to declare a theory. Surely you are preaching to utter the testimony of the man who wrote these words, and perchance your own. Yes, I suppose that is true. Yet I desire to deal with a theory, and declare a testimony, only in order to urge and inspire you to make the great adventure for yourself. I will not at the first declare whether or not I hold it to be possible to live this life and gain this victory. If peradventure you think you know sufficient of me and my message to know that I do believe it, try to banish that thought from your mind; and learning the conditions, go your ways to make each for himself and herself the personal adventure.

I want, then, to speak to you of two things. First, the nature of the conflict described in this passage; and second, the conditions of victory as laid down in the theory of this writer and as borne witness to in the testimony of his own life.

I begin with the nature of the conflict. In order to discover it we must first inquire to whom these words are addressed, I go back to the beginning of the letter, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, through the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." The phrase "the faithful" does not mean those who are absolutely true and loyal necessarily; but it does mean those who are living on the principle of faith in Christ Jesus. "To the saints... and the faithful in Christ Jesus." All the letter is to such. That is the preliminary condition. This letter, and this passage, and these phrases, "stand... withstand... and having done all, to stand," have no meaning for, or application to, any other than soldier saints. I am not going to deal at length with this subject of sainthood, but I do desire to remind you of what the writer says in this particular letter concerning those who wrestle against principalities and powers, the soldiers who enter into this conflict. They are, first of all, men and women who are related to Christ by the mystic and mighty ties of actual life. If you read the earlier part of the letter you will find that the apostle is at great pains to teach these people what is their relation to Christ, because they have believed on Him. As he prays for them that they may know God and know perfectly His will, he teaches them that they are men and women in whom the life of Christ is actually present. That is the meaning of the first phrase in the paragraph, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." So that my first statement is that it is impossible to test the accuracy of the apostle's theory and testimony, impossible to find out whether or not it be possible to live the victorious Christian life, until you have become Christ's own. That is the preliminary matter. It is to the soldier saint, already sharing the Christ life, already related to Him, who knows the wrestling, that I speak tonight. There is a sense in which a man never yielded to Christ may be conscious of the conflict, but he knows very little of the strenuousness of it. It was after you had yielded yourself to Christ that you came back to your pastor, teacher, or friend, and said, How is it that since I have given myself to Christ I have been more sorely tempted than ever? You began wrestling against principalities and powers

when you became Christ's own. The first thing to be remembered, then, is that the soldier saints are such as are related to Christ by the mystic and mighty tie of actual life.

There is a second matter of equal importance to remember in the teaching of this letter. Those to whom the apostle wrote were called to an ultimate vocation of strange and wonderful grandeur. In the first three chapters the apostle shows that the ultimate meaning of Christian life is not to be discovered in the present life, that it does not lie in the realm of earthly things. By argument and teaching, declaration and illuminative statement, he proves that the ultimate meaning of Christian life lies far out beyond the present age, in those measureless ages that are to come. There the saints are to fulfil their ultimate vocation as they become the messengers to angels and ages of the grace and wisdom of God. These soldier saints in this world are only in preparation for higher, larger, nobler and fuller service.

There is a third matter that must be recognized. The apostle teaches that the saints have present responsibility consequent upon these earlier facts. Let me state that in another form. These soldier saints are such as share the virtue of Christ. I sometimes think that is one of the words a man today needs to pause at. It is one of the discrowned words of our language. We sometimes speak of virtue as though it were a grace and beauty of character. It is that, surely, but that is not the essential meaning of the word. Virtue is strength. Very accurate and beautiful use is made of that word when in the familiar and beautiful story of the healing of the woman who touched, we read that Jesus knew that "virtue had gone out of Him." That translation of the Greek word, which being Anglicized might read dynamic, is perfect translation. The soldier saint is one of whom the apostle declared that he shares the virtue of Christ. The soldier saint, moreover, is one who is called to a vocation which lies on and out of sight, and for which the life today is preparatory. Having revealed these facts of virtue and vocation thus, he shows that in the midst of the present world the saints have immediate responsibilities. Listen to the actual words, "I therefore... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." The worthy walk will be, "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," growing up "in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ." And so the letter runs on, until presently he says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might." The life of the saint is not a delicate softness. It is rather a stern conflict, for the men and women who share the mystic and mighty life of Christ, and are called to ultimate vocation of strange and wonderful grandeur, have present responsibilities, and these create the conflict.

Then notice the apostolic description of the enemies. Strange and mystic words are these, "Not against flesh and blood." He dismisses all carnal thought of conflict as though it were hardly worthy of notice. It is one of those dismissals that sweep out of sight something not to be named by comparison. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." Therefore someone will say the wrestling is a figure of speech, and there is no real meaning in it, there is no conflict. The man who says that has never entered into an understanding of the fulness and majesty of human life. We still imagine that the hero is the man who wrestles with flesh and blood and overcomes. We have yet to come to an understanding of the fact that moral heroism is finer than material. In your house of business, standing behind your counter, sitting at the desk in your office, in your own home circle, in the fellowship of your earthly friends, you may have to fight a far fiercer battle than was ever won upon the field of blood. Paul knew how fierce the conflict is, and in a few sentences he describes the enemies. Notice how they stand over against what we have said. The saint is one

who is related by mystic and mighty ties to Christ, and consequently is Christ's own soldier. Therefore, the saint is in conflict with the principalities and powers in rebellion against Christ. With a touch of fine sarcasm, which nevertheless does not underrate the enemy, he says, "the world rulers of this darkness." "This darkness." What does Paul mean? Begin with the smallest circle. Ephesus was a city of light and learning and of wealth; a city in which there existed that strange combination between religion and commerce which had turned the temple of the heathen goddess into the banking house of the merchants. That city was included for Paul in the words, "this darkness." Or take the wider outlook. All the things that were against the Nazarene, all men and forces in the world that were against the ideals of the Christ and the purposes of Christ were included. He stood for the spiritual. All materialized thinking was part of "this darkness." Mark the infinite scorn of the son of light as he looked upon the condition of affairs in the midst of which he and the saints lived, "this darkness"! To the child of God that phrase will constantly recur in the midst of the world's pomp and pageantry, glitter and gaud. "This darkness"! Finally, in a comprehensive phrase that defies our analysis he says, "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." This is the picture of the spiritual antagonisms by which the life of the saint is forevermore surrounded. This man at least believed that the saint has to battle not with flesh and blood, not against men; but against subtler and more terrible forces that lie behind the visible foes, driving them, and making them the instruments of a devilish onslaught. Paul's picture of the conflict is that of conflict between the saints and devilish forces that touch the spiritual life and wrestle with men in order to prevent their realization of the ultimate.

If these are the combatants, soldier saints, related to Christ, called to ultimate vocation in the heavenlies, and having present responsibilities, and principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, what is the issue? Inevitable, real, strenuous conflict. Some of you have known the battle so long that it is almost needless that I dwell upon it; but I want to say to every young man and woman here, saintship means definite conflict with spiritual forces, spiritual powers of the air.

Christian! dost thou see them

On the holy ground,

How the powers of darkness

Compass thee around?

This is the meaning of temptation. This is the reason why on the morning when you rose with hope and consecration, before noon had come, the shadows were about you and the siren voice of evil had spoken to your soul. Principalities and powers. It is against these that we wrestle.

What is the final issue to be? That is the question I want you to ask and decide. In order to do that, let me speak of the conditions of victory as suggested by this whole letter. Stated in brief language, what are they? First, complete surrender to Christ; second, patient and persistent training under the control of Christ in order to carry on the conflict: finally, determined conflict.

Complete surrender to Christ. Admiration, patronage, imitation are each and all insufficient. You may genuinely and honestly admire Jesus Christ and never be like Him. Patronage may be in this case, as it is so often, a studied insult. Imitation is useless save as at the center of the life there has been submission, and Christ Himself is enthroned. I sometimes wonder if other of my brethren

who preach the Word of God feel as I do the enormous and almost appalling difficulty of making some commonplace thing living and vital. Submission to Christ. We have heard it so often that it has become a phrase, a clangor of words with little or no meaning. Submission to Christ means that there must be no choice made anywhere or anywhen save after consultation with Him, that all knowledge must be submitted to the mastery of His mind, that emotion, whether it express itself as hate or love, must be purified in the hot fire of His infinite love.

All choice submitted to Him. How easy it is to sing about consecration and yet live hour after hour, day after day, without ever consulting Christ. So to do is to insult Him. If I am to live the victorious life it is perfectly patent that I must submit. It is not enough to sing of submission. It is not enough to understand the theory of submission. It is not enough to consent to the declaration of the preacher that choice must be submitted to Him, and knowledge must be tested by the mastery of His mind, and the emotion purified in the fire of His love. These things must be done; and if they are not done there can be no victorious Christian life. This is the first thing, the radical thing, definite submission of the life to Christ.

That issues in the second statement, patient and persistent training under the control of Christ. Readjustment of all relationships because He is consulted in the choice. The formation of habits. I wish I could get young men and women to understand that the habits of the Christian life need forming just as the habits of the evil life do. Do not imagine that here by some mechanical action you come into the Christian life. You do in less than a moment come into the possession of the dynamic and the virtue, but you have to form new habits, and you have to be as persistent in your repetition of the good thing that is not habitual, until it becomes habitual, as you were in the repetition of the evil thing that was not habitual until it became habitual. Patient persistence also means cultivation of the neglected spiritual areas of your own personality. I am told that I no longer need to tell men they must be born anew, and in defense of the statement it is declared that many people are now refined, cultured and beautiful, apart from Christ. I admit it. In the narrow circle of what they are apart from Christ they may be in large measure—to use the language and to measure by the standards of the age—cultured, refined. That which is lacking is the consciousness of the spiritual areas of their own being. They never pray, I am told, and yet they are beautiful. I answer, So much less than beautiful, in that they do not pray. Prayer is the final attitude of life. Worship is the last expression of humanity's perfection. If there be no prayer, and no commerce with the eternal, no light of the flashing splendor of eternity on the brow, then life is vulgar, though you may refine it with the refinement of the latest university. There must be cultivation of the neglected spiritual areas of life in order that there may be victorious life.

All this means that there must be determined conflict, the perpetual battle of surrender, the refusal to act apart from Christ. Let me give you the word of Jesus in this connection, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Not once and for ever, but "daily"! Once and forever, in the sense of the radical denial of self that puts Him on the throne. That is the first thing, and it ought to be such a denial that the attitude is to be maintained; but in the maintenance of the attitude there is to be perpetual taking up of the cross. For those living the Christian life no day will dawn, until that last day that has no eventide shall break upon the astonished gaze, in which it will not be necessary to come to a new cross, and bend to a new surrender. The refusal to act apart from Him is the beginning of the conflict. This is ever followed by the struggle with old claims, old habits, and the toil of cultivating the neglected areas of the

being. When a man gives himself to Christ these spiritual areas of his own being are desert, and in order that they may blossom as the rose, and run with the rivers of God, and be beautiful with the light of the eternal morning, there must be cultivation and patience. All this is part of the conflict, and a small part of it. The larger part is that the soldier saint is forevermore pledged to engage in conflict against all that exalts itself against Christ, not only in his own life, but in his home, in his city, in the world.

I am not in the humor to say to young men and women that Christianity is easy, and that for two reasons. First, because I know it is not. Second, because I do not believe that doctrine makes any appeal to young life. I do appeal to those of you who have already put on the armor to take it up, and "stand... withstand," and find out whether it be possible, "having done all, to stand." I do appeal to those of you who tremble, and say, This is a serious message: according to this, Christianity is a serious and strenuous business; I am afraid of it. I make my appeal to you, Make trial for yourself of the possibilities.

I have a theory. I have a testimony. What is my theory? That Christ cannot fail. That if I am submitted to Him, obedient to Him, definitely fighting under His direction, I cannot fail. That is my theory. I have a testimony. What is it? That my theory works. Do not imagine I am boasting. I know how I have failed and still do fail. I have to say with the man who wrote this letter, I have not yet attained. I am not yet made perfect. I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended. In these things I am almost ashamed to take Paul's words as my own. I fall so far behind what he knew experimentally of victory. I look back and there is the battlefield where I was beaten, but I know this, that when I was beaten it was my own fault; where I ought to have been surrendered, I had kept back part of the price; or I had grown weary of the discipline and the training for conflict; or I quietly, stealthily, devilishly let in one of the enemies of my Lord, and gave him room in my life. I have never failed since I gave myself to Christ except when I have been to blame. That is my testimony.

I will end as I began. I do not ask you to take my theory, to accept my testimony. Theory and testimony was valuable so far, but you must make your own trial of the possibility of this victorious life. Suppose that it be true that no one yet has lived such a life. I do not admit it actually, but for the sake of argument, and for the moment only. That is no reason why you should not make the adventure. If the world proceeded on the assumption that what no man has ever done no man can ever do, what would be done? Mountains would remain unclimbed. Pictures would remain unpainted. Poems would be unwritten and discoveries unmade. I pray you have done with this content with the experience of the average. Stand alone, and say, I will make this great adventure, I will give, so far as I am able, this Christ His chance of victory in me. I will, so help me God, put on this armor, take it up, stand and withstand, and find out whether having done all I can still stand.

Dwight Lyman Moody, long years ago in this England of ours, when he was unknown, heard it said that the world has yet to see what God can do with one man utterly and absolutely at His disposal. That statement turned all his life. Said Moody, If that is true, I will be that man and give God His chance. Now measure the rich, generous, gracious measure in which he made of his own life, and how he influenced other lives. The story has its disparity from my appeal, but it has its similarity. Make that adventure. Let every man who has seen the gleaming glory, and asks is this thing possible, say, I have heard the theory, I have heard the testimony, they interest me, but I will

dismiss them, and for myself I will make this great adventure, and then presently, when the mists have melted, and the ultimate light is shining, there is no doubt that you will be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"; and having done all, I stand.

Philippians 2:5. The Mind Of Christ.

Philippians 2:5.

The Mind Of Christ.

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Php_2:5

The letter to the Philippians is pre-eminently the letter of Christian experience. It is most difficult to analyze, because it is so largely personal, and almost exclusively a love-letter, the letter of Paul the prisoner to his children in the faith.

Among the most remarkable facts concerning it is that of the omission of certain words with which we are very familiar in our study of the writings of Paul. The word sin never occurs. The flesh is mentioned only to be dismissed. There are no disputes referred to, except, perhaps, a friendly rivalry between Euodia and Syntyche. The dominant words are "mind"; and "joy" or its equivalents.

This is the more remarkable when we remember that this letter was written from prison, from the midst of circumstances the most depressing that it is possible to imagine. It is, nevertheless, a letter which triumphs gloriously over all opposing circumstances, and sings its perpetual song of victory.

Just as surely as that, the life of Paul may be summed up in one brief sentence from this letter, that, namely, "To me to live is Christ," so the whole purpose of the teaching of Paul, so far as Christian people are concerned, is contained in the brief injunction of this text, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

It is indeed a great injunction. It declares the philosophy of the Christian life. If we can understand the mind of Christ, then we shall come to see what is the ultimate purpose of God for His children. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

In another of his letters the apostle says, "We have the mind of Christ," but the two words must not be confused. They are not the same in the actual text. When, in writing to the Corinthian Christians, he said, "We have the mind of Christ," he used a word which might be translated, the intellect of Christ, the knowledge of Christ. By that he meant to say that all the wealth of Christ's knowledge is at our disposal. A writer of the ancient economy had declared:

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,

And which entered not into the heart of man,

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

This Paul quoted, and then continued: "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"; and he ended by declaring, "We have the

mind of Christ"—that is, His knowledge is at our disposal.

The word here used for mind is one that indicates activity, or, rather, that out of which activity grows. It is a word which might be translated: "Have this disposition in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Wherever it be possible in human life to obey that injunction, Christianity passes from the theoretical to the practical, becomes an experience against which no argument, advanced by those who are in opposition to the dogmas or doctrines of Christianity, can prevail. The final argument for Christianity is the mind of Christ reproduced in His people. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

The force of the text can only be felt by a study of the context, in which the apostle immediately proceeded to unveil for us the mind of Christ by that which is, perhaps, the sublimest statement found in the word of God upon this subject.

"Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

Let us, then, attempt to discover the meaning of the injunction in the light of the context.

First, the revelation of the essence of the mind of Christ. Second, the revelation of the master principle of the mind of Christ. Third, the revelation of the activity of the mind of Christ. Finally, the revelation of the issue of the mind of Christ.

In essence it is love. Its master principle is that of infinite, unerring wisdom. Its activity is that of absolute and prevailing strength. Its issue is that of the throne of empire, and ultimate triumph.

The essence of the mind here revealed is that of love. "As a man thinketh in himself, so is he." If that be true, it is also true that when you know what the man is thinking you know what the man is. The true thought of a man always finds expression in the activity of his life. As one gets a general view of life, the thing that lies at the back of it, which is the reason of it, the inspiration of it, the driving force of it, becomes apparent.

What is true of every man is also true of the one Lord and Master of us all. The profoundest truth concerning Him is revealed in this passage. What is the explanation of that marvelous story which Paul tells? Is there any explanation of it possible other than that of love? Think, so far as the human mind is able to think, of the vast, the stupendous stoop indicated in this wonderful word, "Who, being in the form of God... emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." Remember, in your contemplation of this passage, that the thought must be kept, from beginning to end, upon one Person, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be snatched at for personal enrichment this equality with God, but emptied Himself." The Person remained the same. He did not empty Himself of His essential personality, Whomsoever He may be. He emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, but the Person remained the same. I state this as simply as I know how, because it has been affirmed that the doctrine of Paul here is that in the mystery of the Triune Deity the second Person emptied Himself of Deity. There is no such declaration made. He remained the same Person. He emptied Himself of one form of manifestation, the form of

manifestation fitted to the eternities and to the abiding spiritual realities; and He took a form of manifestation suited to the mind of finite man. He took the form of a servant. I do not attempt to measure the amazing stoop. I stand in the presence of it, overwhelmed by the marvelous mystery, and I watch the processes of the passing of this Person from the height of the throne of all creation and all power to the depth of the position of a servant and of submission.

Then the process comes more within the possibility of our observation. He was made man, passing by the ranks of the angels, made a little lower than the angels; He took the very form of humanity.

"Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself." The whole story of His life must come back to you to illustrate that; the humility, the loneliness, the meekness, the inspiration of all which is expressed in His own wonderful words, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve; not to receive, but to give. All the story of the life of Jesus, as we have it in the gospels, is true to that note of music.

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

What explanation can there be of such action? There can be no explanation other than this: All the facts which Paul here groups in remarkable language demonstrate the profounder fact that behind all is the infinite, eternal, unfathomable love of God. Perhaps the great proof of love in this passage is that love is never mentioned. The word does not occur. "Love vaunteth not itself." Yet the thought is present. Every word is smitten through and through with its light and glory. The mind of Christ in essence is the mind of love, and the love is the love of God; disinterested love, self-sacrificing love; love stronger than death, mightier than the grave; love that can stay at nothing in order to express itself and to accomplish its purpose. The mind of Christ in essence is a mind of love.

Think once again of the passage, and mark the principle as revealed, the supremacy of the Divine wisdom. I am quite conscious that in saying that, I am saying something which does not at first appear, something that might be immediately challenged. It may be said that there is no mention of wisdom, no evidence of wisdom. It may be said, indeed, that the story is a story of unutterable foolishness, for the cross of Christ was indeed foolishness to the Greek, and the wisdom of the world, until this moment, has never agreed to the wisdom of the cross. The supremacy of wisdom is here manifest because the activity of love compasses human well-being. The wisdom of love is demonstrated by the result which is produced. If love be the inspiration, light is the law of the activity, and the mind of Christ was a mind in perfect harmony with the will of God. How men sought to prove the folly of His proposition when He mentioned the cross. When, in the language of time, speaking to men of eternal things, He declared that the Son of man "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed," men sought to persuade Him of the unutterable folly of hoping to accomplish any great purpose by the way of death. He knew the wisdom of God. He Himself was the very wisdom of God. The mind of Christ as to its master principle was a mind in harmony with that wisdom.

All the things of humiliation and suffering and death, in order to gain victory, are things of unutterable foolishness according to human philosophy. No philosophy of man has ever been able to accept the evangel of Jesus Christ. The moment you attempt to arrange your theology within

the compass of human philosophy, either one or the other must break down. Paul, writing to the Corinthians upon another occasion, said: "We speak wisdom among the perfect: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, which are coming to nought; but we speak God's wisdom"; and he said also: "Christ Jesus, Who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." As I watch this process of the self-emptying of the Son of God, the descent from the height to the depth, stage by stage, until I see Him a spectacle for men and angels in the brutal agony of the cross; I see that, which remains even until this century to the Greek unutterable folly, but I see Him in that which is the very wisdom of God. The demonstration of the wisdom is discovered in the victories which that cross has won in the reconstruction of human character and the remaking of human lives. The master principle of the mind of Christ, then, is that of cooperation with the wisdom of God, in spite of all human misunderstanding and human inability to comprehend.

Once again. We ask what is the activity of this mind of Christ? It is that of strength. It is that of strength created by the fact that persistently the mind of Christ compelled Christ to cooperation with the will of God. In the things which are referred to in this great passage, Christ was not passive; He was active. By that I mean active as against opposition. There was perpetual response in the whole ministry of Jesus to the will of God, but it was response as against opposition. The mind of Christ was not a mind resigned to the will of God. It was a mind acquiescing in the will of God. But it was a mind proceeding through opposition of all kinds and from all sources. There is one brief word in the Gospel of Luke, which we may read quite carelessly, but which reveals the strength of the mind of Christ: "He steadfastly set His face to go unto Jerusalem." Listen again to the declaration in the conversation on the mount of transfiguration with Moses and Elijah. What was the subject? They "spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Whenever I read that, I am reminded of two things. First of all, they did not speak of His death as though it were something from which there could be no escape; they spoke of it rather as of a decessus, an exodos, a going out, a triumph. Second, they spoke of that going out in triumph as of something which had to be accomplished. The most infinite mystery of the strength of Christ is suggested in His words: "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." It was an accomplished decessus, an accomplished exodos; something wrought by persistent activity as against opposition. He proceeded forevermore against the question of personal rights, against the suggestion of ease or pleasantness. The cross was the supreme expression of the campaign in which the active mind of Christ cooperated with the will of God against all forces which were opposed to the will of God. The enemy suggested to Him, in the temptation in the wilderness, that He should reach the kingdoms of the world by a short and easy method; and He declined, and accepted His Father's way of the cross. His own disciples at Cæsarea Philippi protested against His declaration that the cross was necessary: "Spare Thyself that!" In stern rebuke He denounced the false conception, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." So against the opposition of foes, against the mistaken views of friends, the mind of Christ moved with unwavering strength, submitting itself forevermore, in spite of all the forces that were opposed, to the will of God.

Of that mind, the essence was love; its master principle was conviction of the wisdom of God; its activity was that of strength that perpetually yielded itself to the good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

We come, finally, to the last thought, the issue of the mind of Christ. "Wherefore"—that includes everything that has preceded it, from that first incomprehensible step from the form of God in the mystic farflung splendours of eternity to the form of a servant in fashion as a man; and thence humbling Himself in human life, even to the death on the cross. Because of these things, "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The crowning is the issue. The triumph of God is the result. The glory of God is the ultimate of the mind of Christ. The all-conquering royalty is that of love, which acts in conviction of the wisdom of God, and with unflinching persistence bows to the will of God. That mind surely and absolutely ascends the throne, and comes to the place of universal power. All other purple fades. All other gold tarnishes. It is love that, through battle and smoke, through torture and martyrdom, climbs to the throne.

That is the picture of the mind of Christ. Love, its inspiration; acceptance of the wisdom of God as the only wisdom, its master principle; persistent and unyielding abandonment to the will of God, its strength; the throne of empire and the crowning, its issue.

Now let us hear the injunction. We must hear it in solemnity. We must hear it for our own rebuke. We may hear it, and God grant it may be so, for our inspiration and correction and encouragement. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Love is to be the master of our life. To have the mind of Christ is to have love as the ultimate reason for everything said, and everything done, and everything desired.

The master-principle of the mind is belief in and acceptance of the wisdom of God. Perhaps that is the point where one is inclined to lay the principal emphasis, not wholly, but for the sake of the hour in which we live. I pray you be very suspicious of your own doubt about the wisdom of the cross as the method of salvation. Be very suspicious of anything in your thinking which constrains you to imagine that the evangel of the cross of Christ is a mistake, or that the necessity for your own dying and suffering does not exist. We must accept the wisdom of God, which is foolishness according to the thinking of man. Unless that be the master-principle, we have not the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ was one that set the cross as the goal of His ministry. It is not for me to stay to prove it, but I make this affirmation, that not in the last few weeks alone, but from the very beginning of His public ministry, He most certainly saw the cross and moved toward it. He knew full well that the cross was the ultimate of His ministry. The wisdom of God, that infinite wisdom which apprehended the whole fact of human sin, and did not treat it as though it were a slight surface wound; that wisdom which understood that human sin can only be dealt with by that which is symbolized in the awfulness of blood-shedding; that infinite wisdom which knew full well that the deep wound of humanity could only be healed by the mystery of sacrifice, and suffering, and death; the wisdom of God, still foolishness with men; until we accept that as the master principle of our living and of all our service, we lack the mind of Christ.

Then the activity of our mind must be that of persistent yielding, in spite of opposition, to the call of love and to the wisdom which declares the cross to be necessary. We need not accept merely the doctrine of the love of God, not accept merely the doctrine of the cross of Christ, but to give ourselves to such identification with that cross as is the only sufficient expression of our identification with the love of God. We may sing of the mystery of love in the sweet and wonderful words of Whittier, or in the words of Faber, or of any of the great singers who have sung it most perfectly, and yet never come into fellowship with it; for to enter into fellowship with love is to come into fellowship with the cross, to make up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ, to have an actual share in the suffering by which the world is to be won. We can only enter into such fellowship by a mind set to obedience against all opposition, the opposition of foe and the opposition of friend; the opposition of foe, that suggests there are easier methods for victory and the healing of humanity's need; the opposition of the friend, who declares that we should take care of ourselves and spare ourselves. The most subtle opposition that Christ set Himself against was the opposition of His own mother, who took a journey from Nazareth to Capernaum to persuade Him, out of very love for Him, to spare Himself, to return home to rest. In the hour of that subtle opposition, well intentioned but utterly mistaken, He said, in the hearing of men: "Who is My mother and My brethren?... Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

The mind of Christ, if in essence a mind of love, in its master principle a mind that accepts the wisdom of God as against all the opinions of humanity, is also a mind resolutely, definitely persisting in obedience as against every form of opposition.

Do not let us, however, forget that the way of darkness that seemed to culminate with the cross did not culminate in the cross. Beyond the cross is Easter morning; the resurrection life and the reign of power; the force of victory and the triumph of the throne. "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." All those of us who, desiring to have this in mind, are yielding ourselves to His love, accepting His estimate of necessity as the height of wisdom, persistently compelling ourselves to obedience; are treading the way of sorrow, but we are treading the way to triumph. It is only out of such yielding to the mind of Christ that we can ever come to His triumph. It is a great prophecy, this word spoken concerning Jesus, of the issue that awaits all those who obey the injunction and have His mind.

So the last word becomes a personal word. Would I share His coming triumph? Then I must have His mind. Now let us observe the force of the apostolic injunction. I like the Authorized Version in this connection. It is quite as accurate, and to me at least a little more forceful. "Let this mind be in you." It is exactly the same thought, "Have this mind in you." The suggestiveness of the other translation is that it shows that if we name the name of Christ and lack His mind, we are in some way hindering what would be a natural process. To whom were these words spoken? Not to the promiscuous crowd of the men of the world. This was a letter written to saints in Christ Jesus. These are words spoken not to men in the world who have never yet submitted themselves to Christ for their own personal salvation. They are words written to those already in Him, who have given themselves to Him; who name His name, bear His sign, wear His livery, and profess to be His disciples. Thus, the great word has its signification. If we are in Christ Jesus, all the resources of His grace are at our disposal, and if instead of attempting to imitate the mind of Christ, we will let the mind of Christ have its way in us, we shall share it; not by our own effort, but by the effort of

Christ. Not by imitation and struggling shall we ever come to this mind of Christ, but by yielding ourselves to the Indweller, by allowing Christ, Who is in us and in Whom we are, if we are His, to have His own way.

Do we lack the mind, the essential love? It is because we have closed some part of our being against Christ, have never yielded ourselves to the love impulse, have checked it, hindered it, quenched it. Is not this practically, absolutely true in the case of all of us? Find me a boy or girl, youth or maiden, man or woman yielding to Christ, and immediately, without any exception, in any country or in any age, the first consciousness of the yielded life is the consciousness of love—love going out after someone else. The first movement of the life of God in the soul of a man is a missionary movement. If in this evening hour, in this church, some man yields himself to Christ before he leaves his pew, he will feel in his heart a desire that wife or child, brother or sister, may come to this same Christ. It is the life of God which is moving within him. We check and we thwart it, because this love struggling within us calls us to the cross, to sacrifice, to service. We check it, hinder it, quench it, because it beckons us along a path of sacrifice.

Mark the emphasis of my text. "Let this mind be in you." Do not quench it; let it burn. Do not thwart it; follow it. If in this hour, the life of God in your soul inspires love for child such as you have never known, love that desires your child shall always be Christ's, speak to your child. Take out of the way of your child the things that hinder, even though the taking of them away make you poor in this world's goods. "Let this mind be in you." It is in you if you are Christ's. In the moment in which you yield yourself to Him, His life within you is the love life, and it speaks of life in the terms of love, and suggests the sacrifice of love. "Let this mind be in you." We sing in the assembly of the saints: "Where is the blessedness I knew When first I found the Lord?" What was the blessedness? It was that of love springing up, running over, prompting to sacrifice, driving us out to a path of sacrifice in order to help other people.

Take the man who wrote this letter as an illustration of the great truth. When the love of God was shed abroad in his heart, he never quenched it, he never thwarted it. He let it drive him. If you want to know what it cost him, read his own second Corinthian letter; read the perils through which he passed, the sufferings which he endured, the buffetings which came to him, scourgings, shipwrecks, perils, scoffing, shame. Hear him as He says, "I bear in my body the stigmata of Christ." What does it mean? That he let the mind of Christ dwell in Him.

This is the trouble with all of us. I have spoken—how imperfectly no man knows more than myself, because the vision appals me—of the mind of Christ. We have heard it theoretically. We say, How can it be? Let the mind of Christ dwell in you. Answer its call. Have done with your prudent calculations. Be ashamed of the advice of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi. Abandon yourself to the call of the mind of Christ.

There let us leave it. In our leisure and in quietness let us take the passage again, and try to see the mind behind the mystery of the condescending, sacrificial Servant.

Then let us understand that if we are His, He has given us His life, and as we yield ourselves thereto His mind shall be ours and His victory shall be ours.

Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 1:20-23 The Exalted Christ.

Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 1:20-23

The Exalted Christ.

Wherefore God also highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name "which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Php_2:9-11

He raised Him from the dead and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come, and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 1:20-23

The word with which the passage of Scripture from the Philippian letter commences is the word "wherefore." Necessarily our minds are thereby turned back to the preceding statements. The subject we now propose to consider is that of the exaltation of Christ, and His investiture with a name to which every knee is to bow and every tongue confess. But as we approach our subject, the word "wherefore" forces us back. Ere we consider the fact of His exaltation we ask, Why was He so exalted? We ask that because the writer of these words based the fact of exaltation on certain reasons which he had already declared.

The declaration of those reasons is contained in a passage than which there is no more wonderful in all Holy Scripture in its revelation, in language at once simple and sublime, of the pathway by which God moved to the redemption of men. It is an incidental passage—I do not say accidental. The Apostle was urging the Philippian Christians to be of one mind and of one heart, was calling them to certain disposition, to certain tone and temper: "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," he wrote. What, then, was the mind in Christ? In order to reveal it he gave the story of the Christ.

The story begins in a great mystery of light, out of which light there appears One, Who descends until we see Him in the awful and tragic agony of the brutal and bloody Cross. And the end of the story is that same One's return to the highest throne in the universe of God, leaving behind Him a highway along which multitudes will follow Him to share His glory.

"Wherefore" lies at the middle of that descriptive paragraph. Let us look first, then, at the things that precede, in order that we see the relation between this ascent and descent of the Son of God.

The first words are: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God." That is the blinding light of the past. It is

....light too bright

For the feebleness of a sinner's sight.

We have looked into it, we have attempted to understand it. We have sometimes, perhaps foolishly, attempted an explanation of it. Let us at once confess that it says something about the Christ who transcends all human explanation. No translator has yet been satisfied with his rendering of the passage. All kinds of attempts have been made, and none of them is perfectly satisfactory or successful. "Being in the form of God," He "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God." Mark your margin, and see another suggestion, "counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God," counted it something to be kept. I am growingly thankful when I find a passage I cannot translate, and no one else can. When my attempts at exposition and exegesis are alike baffled, then I worship.

But emerging from that dazzling light, that strange mystery of illumination, emerging from it I read: "but emptied Himself." I do not understand it. He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." I understand that. Here is a Man. I can see that, I can handle that, I can listen to that. John will write for me what I feel now: "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have beheld, and our hands handled"—the Word of life, the intangible, imponderable mystery of life. But we saw it, we touched it, we handled it, we felt it. It is a Man. And there is no more gracious word in all the Book of God than this, "The Word was made flesh." I wanted, I needed it. The word eluded me. The mystery of Divine self-existence and revelation was beyond me. It was a whisper, a thunder, a gleam, and a glory. None of them came near me. But it became flesh, a Man. We cannot fathom these distances; we cannot measure them. Out of the mystery of an infinite light, into the simplicity of a human life. Oh, in the name of God Almighty, I charge you, do not think the Christ began to be in that life of Jesus. We must have the mystery behind, this unfathomable wonder, this Being Who thought it not something to be snatched at to be on an equality with God. It is He that is clothed in the warm flesh of humanity. Now I can follow Him, or I think I can. Presently I shall find I cannot. I will begin. "Being found in fashion as a Man," He humbled Himself here, "and became obedient unto death," yea, the death of the Cross. Forgive my halting; I cannot speak of this agony. More and more it crushes me and overwhelms me. This Cross, this rough, and rugged, bloody and brutal Cross, hateful Cross, is as great a mystery as that light behind. "He became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." You ask me if I will not explain atonement. I cannot do it, dear heart. You ask me to measure the Infinite Light; when I can do that I can plumb the infinite darkness; both elude me. But we have at least seen this Person, immeasurable within our measurement, going to that Cross of pain and sorrow and suffering.

Now I come to "wherefore." On the basis of that mystery of humiliation and pain, and because of the mind that brought the Person out of mysterious light into mysterious darkness to work redemption, "wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Again the glory breaks with new light, and in meaning still defying my analysis, still shining with such radiant splendor that all attempts to paint it are of no avail, all attempts to describe it are utterly futile. We had better confine ourselves to a consideration of that which God gave to aid us, the Man Himself. As we were able to look at Him for a little on the pathway of His obedience,

humbling Himself, and as we were able even to get some brief glances of Him in His dying in the tragic, awful, and inspiring mystery of His pain, what shall we do now? Has He ceased to be as Man? Has the personality that made it possible for me to apprehend Him passed away? Nay, verily, if so, I have lost all my power of comprehending God. God exalted Him. Who? The Man Who died. If we would know the measurement of the exaltation, we must take also the passage from Ephesians. God "made Him to sit on His right hand, in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

Let us endeavor to come face to face with that exalted Person. We cannot exhaust Him in the human Person even in the glory. He is more than a Person that can be seen. That Person is the Revelation of the Infinite Mystery; that Person is coming again to gather His people to Himself, and to be the localized King and Judge of humanity, but the infinite and the eternal and the immeasurable quantities will abide there and here. All the localization is for our frailty, and our understanding, the method by which we touch that which could not be touched, and see the unseen, and hear the unutterable. That is the essence of my creed, the foundation of my faith, that the same Jesus whom John saw and handled and heard is at the center of the universe of God, highly exalted, and that same One is to come again. With the story of His coming I am not now dealing, but only with the fact of His exaltation.

Mark the statement: "God highly exalted Him." In writing to the Philippians, Paul said, "God highly exalted Him." In writing to the Ephesians, he said, "He made Him to sit at His right hand." That is a figure of speech, and yet so simple that there can be no misunderstanding of its meaning. He exalted the Man of Nazareth by resurrection and ascension to His own right hand. That is the place of infinite and unfading glory, the right hand of God; the place of rest, where weariness never comes; the place of power, where weakness is never known; the place of glory, where there is no shadow cast by turning, and no darkness—and all these also are figurative expressions. As a matter of fact, we cannot express the true position of the Man in any language at our command today. We shall need the heavenly speech, the heavenly language, the heavenly method of expression to explain it. But there, placed at the point in the universe of God, which is the central point of Divine manifestation, is this Man of Nazareth, highly exalted to the right hand of God. He was weary here. He is beyond weariness now, knowing still my weariness, perfectly acquainted with it there, but never wearied by my weariness. In all my affliction He is not afflicted. It is a great passage of Scripture that tells me that in "all their affliction He was afflicted." Many of you have heard, doubtless, that it is a great question whether it was ever so written. It is far more likely that it was written, "He was not afflicted," which does not mean to say He was not acquainted with the sorrow and did not share the affliction, but which does mean that He came into the midst of it, and affliction never mastered Him, never tired Him, never wearied Him beyond the power of renewal and regaining of strength. Whether that be true as to the past I will not argue, but it is true now.

In every pang that rends the heart,

The Man of Sorrows hath His part.

But He is strong, He is in the place of rest.

He is, moreover, in the place of unlimited power, and to my weakness, which He knows, from His place of rest there comes the power that is His. He is in the place of glory, exalted to the right hand of God. Think of it, figure it forth in what language you like. This at least is true, that the Man of Nazareth, because of the suffering and victory of the Cross, has been crowned by God King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and is at the center of the whole universe of God, its glorious Master and King.

If God indeed has highly exalted the Man of Nazareth we may argue therefrom one or two matters of importance concerning Him, and of value for ourselves.

First of all, this exaltation of the Man of Nazareth by God implies the absolute perfection of His life, as revealing to me a pattern. I go back to some of the Messianic Psalms (Psalms 22, 23, 24). Listen to some of the words of the last, which speak of His triumph:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in His holy place?

And the question is answered:

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;

Who hath not lifted up his soul into vanity,

And hath not sworn deceitfully.

Mark the fourfold description. First, "clean hands," right action. Behind that "a pure heart," purity of thought and of motive. "Not lifting up the soul to vanity," reality in all his dealings. "That hath not sworn deceitfully," truth in the inward parts and in the outward expression. They are pregnant phrases which describe the man of absolute integrity, in the moral fiber of whose personality exists no taint of evil. Who fulfils that ideal?

The Man who ascends into the hill of the Lord and stands in His holy place. Who is it that is exalted to the hill of the Lord? Who is it that stands in His holy place? None in the right of his purity, save this Man of Nazareth. He it is whom God highly exalted, placed Him on His right hand, on the holy hill of Zion, in the midst of the light of the infinite and unsullied purity. And from the exaltation of this Man I argue the absolute perfection of His life. That life is the pattern life for humanity. If you want the one ideal that is perfect, you must take the ideal Man that God has lifted out of the centuries, and put at His right hand, because of the perfection of the pattern. He exalted Him, the Man of clean hands, the man of the pure heart, the Man Who never lifted up His soul to vanity, the Man who dwelt in realities, the Man who never swore deceitfully, the Man in whom there was no cunning, no double-dealing. Straightness in speech and action. That is true greatness. That is the character which ascends the throne, and sits at the center of the universe of God, the one perfect pattern of human life.

There is more than this, for notice that the "wherefore" with which my text opens leans back, not merely on the obedient Servant, but on the obedient Servant Who suffered to death, even the death of the Cross. When I lift my eyes by faith, and look toward those distant hills, to that high and holy place, I see the Man Jesus perfect, but I see Him as a "Lamb having been slain." There are

wounds. There are the marks of this very dying which the Apostle has described with a great reserve of description. "Yea, the death of the Cross." It is not merely the exaltation of a perfect pattern, it is the exaltation of a perfect pattern which has been wounded, bruised, afflicted, and has passed to death.

And now I ask again, what does this exaltation mean? Why was He wounded? Why was He bruised? Why was He afflicted? "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." He went to the Cross, intending to bear the sin of the world. Did He succeed? Oh, behold the exalted Man! And as I see that wounded One lifted up out of death by resurrection, lifted back to Heaven by ascension, placed by God at the heart and center of all the universe, I know that He succeeded, that He bore my sin, that He made it not to be in the mystery of His dying. The exalted Christ is not merely the revelation of a perfect pattern. He is the assurance of a perfect salvation.

And yet one other thing. This exaltation does more than argue the perfection of His ideal and demonstrate the success of His work. The fact that God has taken this Man and set him there at His own right hand is to me the word that speaks of my security; for seeing God has set Him there, I know that none can ever dethrone Him. To do that has been the attempt of all the centuries since he lived. The work of evil, the work of His enemies has been to dethrone Him. Devils and demons, fallen principalities and powers, through one organized and persistent effort have attempted to dethrone Him. Blessed be God, they have never succeeded. The perpetual attempt of man in his opposition to Christianity has been to dethrone Christ. Say anything of Him you like, only dethrone Him, says evil through man. Say He is not there, that He has ceased to be. Say, if you will, He was a good Man, hoping to do well, but He died. Admire the fair example of His life if you will, but do not let Him be enthroned.

Let us go back to the Psalms again:

Why do the nations rage,

And the peoples imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves,

And the rulers take counsel together,

Against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder,

And cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,

The Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath,

And vex them in His sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my King

Upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said unto Me, Thou art My Son;

This day have I begotten Thee.

Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance,

And the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

Let us catch the message of it. God has exalted Him. The rulers take counsel together, but the Lord has them in derision. They may attempt to break the bands and cast away the cords, but it is useless. He is the crowned Lord of all, and Jesus seated at the right hand of God—to use the exquisite figurative language of these New Testament writers—is at once the revelation of perfection, the demonstration of salvation, and the assurance of ultimate victory. So God highly exalted Him.

Then the Apostle passes on, and writes a thing full of tenderness and beauty. "And gave unto Him the name which is above every name." What name is this? He had many names here. They were all beautiful. They called Him Messiah. Prophets spoke of Him as Immanuel, the Branch, Shiloh, Dayspring, Daysman, Daystar, King, Prophet, Priest, Shepherd, names and titles all full of beauty. What name is it that He has as He sits there on the throne of God's universe? Is it some new name I must wait for until I reach the land of light? I think not. My own conviction is that the Apostle intends that we shall understand that he explains his own statement in the words that follow. He says, "God... gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow." I am quite aware that there are great diversities of opinion concerning this passage. So eminent a scholar and so correct an exegete as the Bishop of Durham holds that it does not refer to the name of Jesus, rather that God invested Him with His own great name forevermore. And I bow very largely to Dr. Moule's exegesis and interpretation. But, with all humility, I do not at all agree at this point. I believe that what the Apostle wrote admits of no interpretation except this: that God gave Him when He exalted Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Not that He then gave Him the name, but that he gave Him, in the moment of His exaltation, the right that every knee should bow in that name. So He did give Him then the name of Jesus in a sense in which He had never done.

The name of Jesus was given before. When He was to come into the world, an angel messenger said, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." It was then a prophetic name. The mother was to utter it as expressing the hope of her own heart and all the human race which she represented. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." It marked a purpose. It uttered a prophecy. It sang of a hope, as Mary first, with the Babe on her bosom, bending over Him in sweet maternal love, in obedience to the angel command, called Him Joshua, Jesus.

He went His way, and lived His life; and He went His way and died His death; and He went His way and brake the bars of death asunder; and He went His shining way back to the everlasting spaces; and then He was invested forevermore with the same sweet name that His mother had uttered in obedience to the angelic message as a prophecy. Now the prophecy of the name is

fulfilled. Let Heaven recognize it. Let earth know it. Let hell tremble at it. Joshua, Jesus, human Saviour, is the Divine Lord of all life forever and forevermore! God gave Him the same sweet name to make the infinite music of all the coming ages when He exalted Him to His right hand. And do you wonder that Paul said that it is above every name?

Jesus, the name above every name, above every name in preciousness. No name so dear to the ear of God as the name of the One Who did His will, accomplished His purpose, wrought out His infinite plan of salvation. No name so dear to man as that. There are other names very dear to us, and names that become dear according to the persons for whom they stand. I could name human names that some of you find no music in that thrill with music for me. But bring me the sweetest of them all, and the dearest, and utter it, and then say this one word, Jesus, and all the earthly music becomes dim, and dies away, and the earthly glow is cold.

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,

Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,

From the best bliss that earth imparts,

We turn unfilled to Thee again.

Oh, men and women, there is no name in all the world so sweet as this to the world. Away on the lonely sea tonight some soul will sing it, and it will be a haven of refuge. In the midst of the awful loneliness of the crowded city some tired heart will utter it, and it will be a pillow of rest. Out yonder, on the veldt in Africa, some young man, tempted and tried, will hear it and will win. There is no name like it. You know it, you do not want me to argue it. It is above every name in preciousness to God and man, and it is above every name because it is the name that stands for manifestation of such love as men have never dreamed of. Stronger His love than death or hell. Love that reaches to the lowest, love that lifts to the highest, love that lasts forever. Shakespeare sang of earthly loves, and said:

Love is not love

That alters when it alteration finds.

Did you ever find any earthly love that quite rose to that level? If you want me to find you a love that alters not when it alteration finds, I bring you back to Jesus. He loved me. He loved me—I cannot tell why, but He loved me. And in my heart of hearts I know it, and, in spite of all that I have been, He loves me still. There is no one else like this in love—"above every name."

And what is the purpose of God? I have touched the fringe only. You will follow it out. That is a part of the sermon that never could be finished. You will finish it when you are tempted tomorrow. You will finish it when you are in sorrow the next day. You will finish it when you are in perplexity the day after. You will finish it all the way through the week, and if you will only trust Him you will find there is no name like it in Heaven above or in earth beneath.

By now, finally, God exalted Him, and gave Him this name for a purpose. What is it? That every knee should bow, that every tongue should confess that He is Lord. I am not now going to discuss the principle and deal with the general purpose of God, I am going, rather, to ask you what relation

exists between you and this crowned Man at God's right hand. Have you bowed the knee? Have you confessed Him Lord? Oh, if I could shut you up to this question! Have I bowed the knee to Him? Have I crowned Him? Have I confessed Him Lord? A great many will have to say, if they ask this question honestly, No, I have done none of these things. I have admired Him, read about Him, loved to listen to anybody who talked about Him. I have faced my Lord, but I have never bent the knee, I have never cast my crown, the crown of my manhood, my womanhood, at His feet. Then, so far, you have violated the purpose of God concerning this Man. There must be the bending in His presence. There must be at last the confession that He is Lord. To-day that confession brings salvation. I do not know how long it will. I find no warrant in my Bible for telling you that if you confess Him Lord in the age to come you will thereby be saved. Here and now confess Him Lord. Crown Him resolutely, submit to the Man at the center of God's universe, accept His pattern as the ideal of your life, the mystery of His passion as your way of salvation, the assurance of His presence as the guarantee of your victory. Trust Him and you shall be saved. "If thou shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead"—that is, that He has been exalted and crowned—"thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Now I pray you, in the name of my Master, and for the sake of your own soul's eternal welfare, ask that question, Have I confessed my Lord, and, if not, Shall I? May God in His mercy bring you to the one only true choice.

Philippians 2:15. Holiness: A Present Possibility.

Philippians 2:15.

Holiness: A Present Possibility.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world.

Php_2:15

In our first study we attempted to understand the meaning of the term "holiness," and its relation to righteousness. I may summarize that study by reminding you that holiness is rectitude of character, and righteousness rectitude of conduct. Apart from holiness there can be no righteousness. When there is holiness there must inevitably be righteousness. While righteousness is that after which we seek, and for which we pray, we must ever remember that it can be established in individual, social, national, or racial life only when there is holiness of character.

Now, somewhat narrowing our outlook, we are to inquire what the New Testament teaches concerning the possibility of holiness in the present life. Holiness of character, ideally, is attractive to every man in the deepest of him. There are very many devout and sincere expositors of Scripture who hold that the unregenerate man has no admiration for holiness. I differ entirely from that view. If you will allow the word stated as testimony rather than as theory—I have yet to meet the man who does not in the deepest of his thinking know that the life of holiness is the life of beauty. The man who has never yet come into living relationship with the Lord of holiness and righteousness, the Lord Christ Himself, does most strenuously deny the possibility of living the holy life in this present world. He dismisses quite readily, and quite resolutely all contemplation of the ideal of holiness, because of his deep and profound consciousness of his inability himself to be holy. Of course, no person born of God denies the beauty of holiness, or the desirability of realizing the character of holiness. To have received the Spirit of God, the gift of life Divine, is to know a great desire after holiness of character. It is quite possible that we so stifle the desire, so resolutely refuse to submit to all the indications of method, as by and by, even though we still name the name of Christ, to lose that desire altogether. Then we shall speak of the ideal as a counsel of perfection. You will remember that this phrase, "counsel of perfection," has come to us from the Roman Church, and is used by its theologians in reference to the laws of life for such as give themselves to the vocation of saintship. It is declared by them that the life of holiness or saintship is not possible for the ordinary Christian man or the ordinary Christian woman, that it is reserved for a select few who have received some higher call, and abandon themselves thereto. Among those of us who are of the Protestant faith there is a great tendency to deny the possibility of holiness, using that very phrase, "counsel of perfection." All Christian people agree that in heaven we shall be holy in character. This admission is evidence that we think that death will be able to do something for us that the living Saviour cannot do. That statement in itself ought to be

sufficient to make us inquire quite carefully whether this life of holiness expressing itself in a life of righteousness is possible here and now.

I think that the one verse I have read, not so much that I may deal with it in detail this morning, but as a key to a line of investigation, ought to answer forevermore the question whether the life of holiness is possible. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish." Oh, yes, you say, that will be so in heaven! Let the apostle finish his sentence before you object, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." I do not think you will care to suggest that to be a description of heaven. It far more accurately describes London, or the place where you live. "In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are as lights in the world." How? By the life that is "blameless and harmless," the life of "children of God without blemish."

Our inquiry ought not to be made of any system of theology, or of the experience of the Church. Thousands of people who have seen something of the glory of the life of holiness, and earnestly desire to attain thereto, turn from the great spiritual vision to inquire what man has to say concerning this. Without desiring to touch on things that are controversial, let me say that for many years in this country there have been two schools of interpreters of holiness, labeled, accurately or inaccurately, Keswick and Methodist. Happily they are becoming so merged that you can hardly tell which is which. Now if we want to know what the New Testament teaches about holiness we should turn to the New Testament itself.

A letter has reached me this week from a sincere seeker after truth, after knowledge of the law of this life of fulness of the Spirit. The writer, after a long letter, puts this as a question to me: "Will you tell me if you have met anyone living the Spirit-filled life?" I am not a judge. I have no right to judge. The Lord knoweth them that are His. I would warn everyone against attempting to decide as to the possibility of the holy life from the experience of saints. I will not, however, leave the inquiry at that point without another word. Yes, I have known saints, so far as I have a right to judge, in whom perfect love has cast out fear, in whom perfect love has become the law of life, gentle, tender, gracious, patient, wooing, winsome souls; strong, angry souls, protesting against all iniquity, holy men and women, and, therefore, righteous men and women. Yet I will not base anything on the experience, either the exceptional or average experience, of the saint. If it cannot be demonstrated that any man or woman has ever yet in nineteen centuries realized the ideal which the Bible presents, I yet decline to lower the ideal to the attainment of those who have failed. It is for me to strive after the highest if no other has. The teaching of Scripture is that the highest is possible. Therefore, I desire, taking this verse simply as a keynote, a starting point, to make my appeal to the teaching of the New Testament. The difficulty, in a brief summary of statement, must necessarily be that of selection. I propose, therefore, to make a sevenfold statement in answer to the inquiry whether holiness is a present possible experience, in each case selecting one principal declaration of the New Testament in interpretation of the general thought.

First of all, then, the New Testament declares that holiness of character is possible because it is the will of God for His people.

In the twenty-ninth verse of the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans the apostle writes these words in the midst of a great argument concerning the life of spiritual fulness: "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Take that simple little passage out of the great paragraph, a

paragraph full of mystery and yet full of revelation, a paragraph in which the apostle is showing the original thought and intention of God in the work of His Son, a passage in which occur the words that still fill us with fear as we attempt interpretation of them—the words "foreordained" and "elect." The foreordination is not to salvation but to character, "foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son." That is the will of God. A great deal has been lost in our own Christian thinking and in our own Christian life by treating the initial things of Christian experience as though they were the final things, by not getting far enough back in our endeavor to understand the real purpose of God in the mission of Jesus and the work of Christ. Some time ago I passed through these writings of the New Testament, and made a catena of passages in which the purpose is declared, passages in which the word "that" occurs in the sense of "in order that." Take one illustration: "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." Mark the purpose of the great and gracious work which originated in the councils of eternity, the work that operated in the stream of time, a work that includes within itself the marvelous mission of God in Christ—Who gave Himself for us in order that He might forgive our sins? No, but rather to "redeem us from all iniquity," and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works. The will of God is our sanctification, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son." In the days of our childhood we used to sing, "I want to be like Jesus." Have we ever ceased singing it? If so, why? It was a profound word. It was a word full of simplicity, so simple that the child sings it yet and loves it, and catches something of its meaning; yet it is a word as sublime as the eternal purpose of God for every child of His love. Nothing less than that can satisfy the heart of God. Nothing less than that ought to satisfy the heart of the child of God, that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son." That is fundamental; the New Testament declares holiness to be possible when it declares that it is the will of God for His people.

Second, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because it clearly teaches us that for the creation of that character Christ came into the world.

Already in the minds of all of you who are at all familiar with the New Testament, passage after passage has been remembered. Take the first and simplest in the Gospel of Matthew, the word spoken to His mother by the angel in connection with the foretelling of His coming: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." Not He shall forgive sins; that is initial, preliminary, very true, but that is not the statement. "He shall save His people from their sins." His people, the Hebrew people, yea verily; only remember that by the coming of Jesus Christ the horizon was flung back and the Gentiles were brought to the rising of His light, and into all the values of His mission. The phrase "His people" includes all such as turn to Him, submit to Him, trust Him. It does not mean He will save from his sins the man who is still in rebellion. It is His people that He shall save from their sins. It is these first principles that we are in danger of forgetting. The word does not say that He shall save His people from the punishment of their sins, but from their sins, from the sins which are the outcome of sin; He saves them from sins by saving from the power of sin. Therefore it is possible that I should live the holy life, according to the purpose of God, and according to the work that Jesus Christ came to do.

Third, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because of the administration of the Spirit of God in the life of the trusting soul.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." While this passage may be perfectly clear to the majority of you, be patient while I attempt to make it clear to the youngest. The term law in verse two has no reference to the Mosaic economy, neither has the phrase, "the law of sin and of death" any reference to the decalogue. In the third verse the term law has reference to the Mosaic economy. What, then, is meant by the term law in the second verse? Allow me to substitute a phrase for a word, and read: "For the master principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the master principle of sin and of death." That is a scientific statement of the work of the Spirit of life in the believer. What is it that the indwelling of the Spirit does in the life of a man? It sets in operation a new law which negatives the old one. Can this be? Surely we know it can be. Often the simplest illustration will help the seeking soul. At this moment, as I hold this book in my hand, one law is negating another law. The law of gravitation is pulling the book toward the desk. The law of muscular contraction is holding it there, mastering the other. If for one single moment I withdraw the law of muscular contraction, the law of gravitation obtains, and the book falls. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets me free from the law of sin and of death. The law of sin and of death is in my members. "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind," paralyzing me, making it impossible for me to do the thing I would do, "to me who would do good evil is present." But, says the apostle, there is another law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and that sets me free from the law of sin and of death, makes me master where I was mastered, or, better, makes the Spirit master where sin had been master. It is a unified statement, and the whole of that section of the Roman letter is needed to illuminate it. By the indwelling of the Spirit a new law is at work in the life of the man, contradicting, negating, denying the law which had mastered him, "the law of sin and of death."

Fourth, the New Testament teaches that holiness of character is possible, because the spiritual forces that are against holiness of character are all defeated.

There is no greater passage in all the New Testament as revealing this than the one in the Colossian letter, in which Paul, in a few bold, black strokes, sets before us the work of Christ. He makes the Cross the final battleground between Jesus and the spiritual antagonisms which are against human life and human character. I am quite well aware that in these days one speaks in an atmosphere of unbelief in regard to these spiritual forces. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." All of the New Testament writers believed in the antagonism of spiritual personalities outside human life, in fallen angels, in demons marshaled and mastered by Lucifer, the son of the morning, fallen from heaven. There in the Cross is seen the last battle between Jesus and these forces. Again and again He came into open conflict with them. In the wilderness the prince of the power of the air was dragged into the light, and Jesus entering into conflict with him, mastered him by standing wholly within the will of God. The same voice spoke through Peter at Caesarea Philippi; and in the Garden of Gethsemane its echo was heard in the very prayer that Jesus offered. All the way the forces of evil

were against Him in His pathway of holiness and righteousness. The apostle declares that in the Cross He finally triumphed over them, making a show of them, mastering all the underworld of evil. Therefore, when we enter on the life of faith, and put our lives under subjection to the Lord Christ, we begin to fight against a defeated foe, and we serve under the Captain of Salvation Who already has met and vanquished the enemy. Not ultimately and finally in our experience yet is the victory won, but in the measure in which we follow Him Who never loses a battle we too are victorious.

Perhaps I may put all this into another form and say, if we will be quite honest about our failure in the Christian life, about the sins we committed yesterday even though we are children of God, about those hours in which we yielded to temptation and grieved the Holy Spirit, and smirched the spotless linen of our purity, and disgraced the name of our Lord, we all know that we failed because we did not fight under the orders of the King, but leaving our proper habitation of loyalty to Him, walked in the way of temptation, and attempted in our own strength to overcome, and thus were defeated.

I can yet sin, being allured and defeated by the foe. I need not sin for the foe is mastered by my King, Who has bruised the head of the serpent, and if I follow Him the serpent's head is bruised under my feet also by virtue of the victory my Lord has won.

Fifth, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because it is already, in germ and potentiality, imparted to the believer. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians he did not write to Christian people who were living as they ought to have lived: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." They were divided among themselves, were careless of their Church discipline, were lending themselves to some of the unclean practices of the pagan world in the midst of which they lived. Yet to these people he said, "Ye were washed... sanctified... justified," by which he meant to say that in the hour in which they rested in Jesus Christ all the potentiality for the fulfilment of God's ideal was given to them. There is no man or woman who has really rested on Jesus, and received by the gift of the Spirit of God His life in the soul, but that in that reception has received all the forces needed for living this life. Everything that is necessary for holiness is mine in Christ.

Sixth, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because the whole sanctified territory is possessed by the Spirit of God.

I go back again to that Corinthian letter, and I read these remarkable statements made to these very people. "Ye are a temple of the living God," not, Ye may become a temple of the living God. "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you," not, He will come and dwell in you if you pray long enough, and wait long enough. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"! That is the clear, sharp, dividing line between the man of faith and the man of the world; the one is a man indwelt by the Spirit of God, while the other lacks that Indweller.

Are we really Christ's? Have we believed into His name, and received absolution? Then He calls us His own; then we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; then the Holy Spirit is at this moment dwelling within us. We may be locking up certain chambers of the temple from the administration and arbitration of the Spirit, but we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Hear the great promise, "I will dwell in them," the resident God; "and walk in them," the active Deity; "and I will be their God," the governing One. These are the promises of God, and these things the apostle wrote, not to a

company of men and women who were living on the highest height of Christian experience, but to a church of men and women who were sadly and awfully failing. When next, in the hour of stress and temptation, we are tempted to declare that it is not possible to live the holy life, let us remember this, "We are the temple of the living God." We must find some other reason for our failure, for there is no reason why we should fail if we are submitted to that Indweller.

Seventh, and finally, the New Testament declares holiness of character to be possible because of the limitless resources at the disposal of the believer.

In the Colossian letter we have Paul's great argument concerning the mystery of Christianity. He begins with the widest circle of the mystery, that of the Church. Then he passes to an inner mystery, that of the individual membership of the Church, "Christ in you." Finally, he comes to the ultimate mystery, that of Christ Himself. In the course of that argument he makes two statements: first, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; second, "in Him ye are made full." If, then, I declare that the life of holiness is not possible I affirm that Christ is not able to make me holy, or that the statement that all He is, He is for me and in me, that all the resources of His wisdom and might are put at my disposal, is not true.

Such is the teaching of the New Testament. May we be constrained by the Spirit of God to bring our lives to its measurement and standard, and if the doing of it searches us, scorches us, shames us, so much the better for us and for the world, and for the Kingdom of God, if as response to such searching and scorching and shame we yield ourselves anew to Christ, that He may in us fulfil all the high purposes of His will.

In conclusion, let us return to the passage with which we commenced. "That ye may be blameless." There is a very great difference between that and "faultless." The New Testament never suggests that it is possible for the Christian man to be faultless in this life. At last, when the work is all done, when the Potter has perfectly molded the vessel to ultimate perfection, then we shall be faultless. He will present us faultless before the throne. But we can be blameless here and now. I do not think I can better illustrate the difference between faultless and blameless than by using an old illustration. I think it was first used by Mr. John McNeil, of Australia, in his little volume on the Spirit-filled life. I remember reading and being impressed by it; but it became vivid to me when it happened in my own experience. I will use the illustration from that experience. When in 1896 I first crossed the Atlantic there came to me the first letter from my first boy. He was then about six years old. The spelling was individualistic, the grammar original. Whenever he referred to himself he wrote the personal pronoun with a small letter. I did not correct that, for we all grow out of it quite soon enough. It was a very faulty letter, but I have it yet. I cherish it, for it was blameless. Love prompted it. Love did the best it could at six years of age. I had another letter from him last week. If I put them side by side the last is no more blameless than the first, but it is far less faulty.

"That ye may be blameless, and harmless." Harmlessness always grows out of blamelessness. In a beautiful phrase the two things are combined, "Children of God without blemish," that is, such children that the Father can say He is pleased with them. He will not announce it to your neighbor, and you will not announce it either. If you announce it we shall question it. It is a secret the Father whispers in the ear of His child, "without blemish." Have no anxiety about the opinion of your neighbor, but be very anxious about the opinion of your Father. "Blessed is the man," said the

psalmist, "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." He did not say, Blessed is the man unto whom his neighbor imputeth not iniquity. It is infinitely easier to please God than any man or woman ever born. He is more tender, more gentle. "Children of God without blemish." I know the call is to a life, high, noble, pure, but I know the God Who calls. He is a God of patience; He judges the motive, the aspiration. If I am His child, though I tremble and fail, He in infinite love counts my life blameless when the master passion of the whole endeavor is the pleasing of His heart.

How can I live this blameless and harmless life? Go back to the words which immediately precede. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you." I am to work out that which He by the power of the Spirit works in. I am to translate into manifestation all that He works in mind, and heart, and will, as I yield myself to Him. So holiness is not to be obtained by climbing to a height, it is to be lived by being a little child keeping close to the side of the Father, and following Christ by the guidance of the Spirit.

Philippians 3:10. A Good Friday Meditation.

Philippians 3:10.

A Good Friday Meditation.

The fellowship of His sufferings.

Php_3:10

We are gathered here this morning not so much to observe a day as to take advantage of it. This is a day which affords us one of those opportunities, all too rare, for the display of our oneness with the whole Catholic Church of our Lord. The purpose of our assembly is pre-eminently that of meditation in the presence of the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

By the selection of this one brief phrase from the writings of Paul we take the highest level of consideration possible to us in these days of our probation and our waiting for the full manifestation of grace in the Advent of glory, that level of consideration, namely, which is occupied with the subject of the fellowship of the saints in the suffering of the Saviour.

It is quite evident that these words describe what Paul himself considered to be one of the highest possible phases of experience of Christian men and women during this period. He immediately continued, and declared that he had not yet attained, had not yet apprehended, all the fulness of his Lord's purpose for him when his Lord apprehended him; and if we read to the end of this very wonderful biographical chapter in the letter to the Philippians we find that Paul did not think it was possible for us to enter into the ultimate experience of Christianity until the very body of our humiliation should be changed and fashioned according to the body of Christ's glory? For the present, for the "little while" of this earthly, limited, straitened life, the Apostle evidently considered that in this passage he had revealed his estimate of the highest experience.

This experience he described in a threefold way. The consuming passion of his heart was, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." That is a description of Christian experience on an ascending scale. First, "That I may know Him"; second, and therefore, "That I may know... the power of His resurrection"; third, and consequently, "That I may know... the fellowship of His sufferings."

The words immediately following reveal the condition on which the believer may enter into this threefold experience, "Becoming conformed unto His dying." Thus, in this strange and yet wonderful unveiling of Christian experience, the Cross is seen at the commencement and at the culmination. "By becoming conformed unto His dying," I know Him; and by such knowledge of Himself, I know the power of His resurrection operating in and through me; and by such knowledge of the power of His resurrection, I come back again to the Cross, not now merely for conformity to it in order that I from it may derive benefit, but rather for that highest, holiest, most mysterious experience, that I may have fellowship with His sufferings.

Notice, further, that in this description of Christian experience Paul places this fellowship in suffering last, because it is last in the experimental order; it is the final experience of the saint in this world; it is the largest, deepest, highest, broadest.

Surely, we also have to say about this that we have not yet attained, we have not yet apprehended. Gleams of the infinite and mysterious glory have we seen; passing experience of the deep, the profound, the sorrowful mystery have we known; but, oh, to know Him so that we may also know the power of His resurrection, so that we may also enter into the true, abiding fellowship of His sufferings!

For this threefold experience the Apostle had counted all things as refuse, and had resolutely turned his back on every ambition, hope, and aspiration. We may well, then, in quietness and solemnity attempt to meditate on the sacred matter.

What, then, are the sufferings of Christ in which we may have fellowship? Such an inquiry necessitates a declaration which in some senses need hardly be made, for we are all convinced of its truth, that the central, supreme, mysterious values, quantities, qualities—I know not the true word—of the sufferings of Christ we can never share. At last He trod the winepress alone, the darkness into which He passed was such as no other has ever known. It is quite alone, this Cross of Christ, if our eyes can see the central Person, for He was not merely the Man of Nazareth, He was God in Christ, quite alone by reason of the infinite reaches of it, for the Cross, so far as our calculation can carry us, is far older than creation—"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Through all this strange, perplexing history which we find in the ancient Scriptures the principle is found: ever and anon high, noble souls, by heroic abandonment to the vision, were permitted to enter into some measure of sympathy and fellowship with the central mystery. Abraham on the mountain, offering his firstborn, was brought nearer to understanding the God Who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" than he could have been in any other way. Isaiah exercised a great ministry, part of the meaning of which is voiced, in the paragraphs found in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy. The cry of Isaiah's heart was, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Yet out of that very personal experience he rose to a higher height, portraying the picture of One in Whom all sorrows should meet and center and find their fulfilment, and through Whom all light should break on the darkness of human nature.

All the way we find the Cross, and all the way we may discover some measure of fellowship with it by those who saw the vision and yielded themselves to the will of God. All the way also there were great deeps and heights and mysteries eluding those watchers and toilers and warriors.

Now for two millenniums men have gathered about the Cross; saints and scholars have attempted to interpret its meaning to us; and here we gather again today, and still we have to say, It is too deep for us, too high for us. Neither theologian nor philosopher has ever yet been able to penetrate to the heart of the mystery and unveil before the eyes of men its deep processes. Therefore we once more adopt the simple and sublime language of the Bible, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree." There is nothing to be added to that; no final explanation of it is possible; it baffles theology, for it is too great for theology. In the vastness of it I hide; there I find rest amid the conflict with evil, within and without; and there, at last, when the sun goes westering and I pass o'er the line, I shall find my refuge, singing on the way,

Nothing in my hands I bring,

Simply to Thy Cross I cling.

I can have no share in the Cross, in all its profoundest meanings, save as I take from it the benefit that heals and helps and renews hope within my heart.

In what sense, then, is it possible for us to have fellowship with the suffering of our Lord? Reverently I want to suggest to you some of the things that have come to my own heart in meditating on this great matter. I must at once say that I am most conscious that I cannot exhaust even this aspect of the Cross, and there may be those of you who have known this Master of mine longer than I have, or in a briefer period have come to know Him better than I, who perchance may know the meaning of these words far better than I. Such will, I know, be patient while I attempt to interpret what I have seen of the possibility and speak of some of the things in which it is given to us to have fellowship with Christ in His suffering.

The first possibility which I see is that it is given to the saints to have fellowship with Christ in the sense of sin. This is possible only to those who have a very keen sense of the perfection and beauty of the Divine will. It is possible only to those who are living in close conformity to the ideal which Christ has revealed, in the power of the life which Christ has communicated. Of the way into the secret I will speak again; I want to speak now merely of the experience itself. I think I may venture to affirm that our Lord always suffered in the presence of sin. Wherever He saw sin, He suffered. It is given to us to have fellowship with Him in that suffering. It seems to me this morning—I speak now for myself and for none but myself—that I can interpret the thought that is in my heart only by turning my statement round and making it negative. Is it not true that familiarity with sin tends to breed contempt for sin? After all is said and done, the most callous men and women are those living nearest to sin. How easy it is to see sin, and to see it so often, and to look on it so constantly, even though we ourselves may be delivered from its power and may not be yielding to its seduction, that it ceases to make any appeal in our heart, and ceases to produce any suffering in our soul! That is the perpetual peril of familiarity with sin. If I go back and look at these pictures of the life of the Lord and watch Him reverently, I believe that whenever He looked on sinning men sin caused Him suffering. In the suffering, there was ever the mingling elements of love and of anger. Sin forevermore caused pain to the heart of the Lord because sin was the violation of the Divine order, something spoiling the Divine purpose, interfering with all the highest of the Divine conceptions. The measure in which it is difficult for us to understand this is the measure in which we fail to have fellowship with our Lord. I am almost loath to take any illustration, yet suffer me one: how a discord hurts the man of music, how disproportion wounds the artistic temperament. It is a very low level of illustration, but it is an illustration on the level of the mental. If it be possible to climb by way of it to the plane of higher spiritual conception, then we see at once that our Lord, not merely in the final, supreme hour of the Cross, but in all those days in Nazareth, in public ministry, suffered in the presence of sin. Every discord hurt His soul, all lack of proportion touched Him to the very quick of His high, holy, sensitive spiritual nature. Sin hurt, sin filled the heart of the Christ of God with pain. Not merely the cruel bloody Cross, but all that made that Cross possible in the ruin of the race and necessary for the redemption of the race gave Him pain.

We have fellowship in His suffering when sin, wherever it is manifest, brings pain to the heart. It was no idle thing that our fathers and mothers said to us when we were children, though we could

hardly believe it, that our wrongdoing hurt them. It was true. When you and I have true fellowship with Christ, then when our eyes rest on a man, a woman, bruised, broken, smirched, soiled by sin, we suffer in the presence of sin. Paganism at its highest gathers its garment about it and holds sin in loathing and contempt; Christianity lays its robe aside and endures the agony in order to save the sinner. That is fellowship with Christ's sufferings.

That leads us to that which is closely connected with it, which is indeed but another phase of the experience. We may have fellowship with Christ's sufferings in the presence of man's misunderstanding of God. He knew God, and, knowing God perfectly, He suffered as everywhere He saw God misinterpreted because misunderstood. In speech which to this day scorches and burns His hot anger proceeded against men who misinterpreted God to the multitudes.

Fellowship with Him in this is possible only to such as live in the love of God. Misunderstanding too often embitters, and so ceases to cause pain; and this is almost invariably so when the misunderstanding is of ourselves. That is a very low level of illustration, from which we resolutely turn. Our Master suffered because God was misunderstood. Do We? How much do We know of pain when We take up some brilliant magazine article that libels God, that reveals the writer's absolute inability to interpret One he does not know. It is perpetual sorrow to the saint living in fellowship with Christ that God is not known, is misunderstood and misinterpreted. How much do we know of this fellowship with God which issues in fellowship with the suffering of our Lord? I apologize for my illustrations, because I recognize that no illustrations Can reach the high level of the great theme we are attempting to consider. How We suffer if our friend, whom We thoroughly know and understand, is misunderstood! How we burn with indignation when something is said that libels our friend! Do we ever feel angry with an anger that grows out of a great agony when God is libeled, when God is misunderstood, when God is misinterpreted? Such pain comes out of only the closest fellowship with Christ. We cannot force the experience.

One other note, and only one. We can have fellowship with Christ in His pity for human failure. Sin in itself causes Him to suffer. The misunderstanding of God causes Him pain. But there is something beyond this, while yet related to it. I look at my Lord through life and in death, and am almost overwhelmed by the fact that He suffered in the presence of human failure, and suffered in sympathy even with the punishment that was inevitable. If I quote old and familiar words I do so because they recur naturally. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." The awful word must be pronounced. There is no weakness in God. No violation of holiness can be permitted. "Desolate," He said, but as He said it His voice was choked with tears. That was not His will for Jerusalem. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth—that is the dream of God for Jerusalem. "Desolate" is Jerusalem's choice, and it broke Christ's heart. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners"—the old version translated, "against Himself"; the new version translates, "against themselves." When my eyes first lighted on the change I was startled and I thought I had lost something. He "endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself"; it was a great picture, that of the Lord enduring man's attitude of hostility toward Himself. But look again: endured the gainsaying of sinners against themselves; their attitude toward Him was rebounding against themselves; their waywardness was making for their own destruction. That is what Christ endured.

That was the deepest note of His suffering, the suffering of pity for human failure. A great prophetic word, uttered long ago, declared that judgment is "His strange act," necessary in the interest of love and holiness and in order to establish the universal kingdom of peace, but strange. I shall have come into some true measure of fellowship with Christ's suffering when I speak of a lost soul, not as though I rejoice, but with a breaking heart. Robert William Dale said to me when I was beginning my ministry, I have known one man who as an evangelist had the right to speak of a man being lost, and that man was D. L. Moody, because he never could do it except in tears. That is fellowship with the suffering of Christ.

We may, we ought to have, perpetual fellowship with Him in these aspects of His suffering. Sin always ought to make us suffer. I do not mean sin in our own lives merely, but sin in other lives. These streets of our city, these multitudes of fallen human beings sinning—we ought to carry the sorrow of it all perpetually on our hearts. The fact that our God is being misunderstood and misinterpreted should rest forevermore as a grief on our souls. There should be in all the declarations of the counsels of God that are vibrant with terror something of the infinite pity and sorrow of the heart of Christ, Who even while denouncing the doomed city expressed Himself in sorrow and in tears.

How is it possible to know this fellowship? We can come into fellowship with Christ in suffering only through the power of His resurrection. The sense of the Master's suffering comes only when His own life is regnant in the life of the saint. It is Christ in me that fills me with compassion. I know it to be true. I cannot—God forgive me if the confession is an unworthy one—produce within myself any pity for some sinning men; but the measure in which my Lord lives in me, masters my life, dominates me, the measure in which I dare yield myself to the impulses of His indwelling, is the measure in which I cannot look upon sinning men without suffering and desiring to help. The beauty of His life amazes and shames me as I watch Him in Judea, Galilee, and Perea; but when by the way of the Cross it is liberated, illuminating my intelligence, firing my emotion, bending my will, then I live one life with Christ and have fellowship in his suffering. The man who here wrote about the fellowship of His sufferings is the man who also wrote, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." Commentators, expositors, and exegetes who declare that Paul did not mean that do not know Paul, and they do not know Christ. When Christ has full possession of the life, then out of the tides of His life, His risen life, surging through the life of the saint proceeds the passionate cry, I would I could be accursed from Christ for the deliverance of these others. By the power of His resurrection, and by that alone, can I know the fellowship of His sufferings.

Before it, yet hardly before it, for it is so intimately related to it, that we cannot omit it, is the phrase, "That I may know Him." The first movement of the resurrection life of Christ in the soul is the consciousness of Christ, and it is when I know Him that I know the world without; and to know Him makes me know the truth about sinning, suffering men and women. First, the knowledge of Christ, then the consciousness of the power of His resurrection in the opened vision, and the inspired emotion, and the driving will. Then I move into the great realm of fellowship with His suffering. He suffers in me, through me, for I have become part of the mystic body of Christ. He Himself is the Head, in Whom all pain is focused, but I may be part of the throbbing nerve system that has fellowship with that central pain. It is by the way of knowledge of Him and of the power of His resurrection that I can pass into fellowship with His suffering.

That leads me to the phrase just beyond my text to which I have already referred, "becoming conformed unto His death." There we really begin. Until we are conformable unto His death we cannot know Him, we cannot know the power of His resurrection, we cannot know the fellowship of His sufferings. What is it to be made conformable to His death? The whole chapter from which our text is taken gives the answer by illustration. Paul said, "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse." What things? All the sinful pleasures of this world? Nay, they were out of sight! What things? All the things he had counted gain. What were they? Pride of birth, of religion, and of ethical attainment. All high and noble things until he had a vision of Christ, but then the things in which he had boasted, blood, religion, and ethical attainment, were dross, refuse. He gave himself entirely to the Christ, dying to all that lay behind. That is the way to know Christ. Christ is never known until He alone is desired. The highway to the upper levels of the Christ-life is the low way of the Cross, wherein we die to everything else. That is what hinders so many of us. We sing:

Were the whole realm of nature mine...

Are you ever afraid that you are committing blasphemy as you sing it?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were an offering far too small:

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Yet we still cling to ambition and to high ideals which, in the deep subconsciousness of our religious thinking, make us imagine that we are not quite dependent on Christ or His Cross. To know Him everything else must be counted as refuse.

This is, it seems to me, the highest level on which it is possible for us to consider the sufferings of Christ. There is a contemplation of the lonely sufferings of Christ, the results of which we receive by grace, which is perfectly right, but which may be terribly wrong. If we gather to gaze on that Cross only to know the benefits conferred on us, only to gather them into our own souls, only to spend right, high, holy, spiritual things on our own small needs, then, after all, is not that the blasphemy of all blasphemies? Can I dare to be selfish in the presence of that Cross? If I dare, am I not sinning the sin of all sins the most deadly and most dastardly? Is it not necessary that while I come empty-handed and God fills my hand with blessings, while I come to the Cross and receive the infinite benefit of His Cross, I should understand that my full hands are but symbols of my responsibility to press closer still to Him, in order that through me there may be made up that which is behind in the suffering of the Lord?

Yet my last word is this. Do not miss the blessedness of the fact that the fellowship of His sufferings means that He has fellowship with us. When I enter into the fellowship of His sufferings I am not alone, for He is forever with me. I can endure no pain for Him that He does not share with me. When I stand in the presence of sin and suffer—if I have climbed high enough, in that moment He is with me, He is feeling the same pain, He is suffering with me. When my heart is moved with hot anger because God is misunderstood, He is suffering with me. My fellowship with Him means

His fellowship with me. When through pity born of His love my heart breaks over the awful punishment that is falling on the head of the sinner, never let Satan suggest I have reached a higher level than the Lord, for He is having fellowship with me, my pity is born of His pity, and His love is suffering with my love.

Paradox of Christianity which no man can explain—there is no joy like the fellowship of His suffering! What is the sense of sin that causes you pain, dear child of God? It is the outcome of purity. The measure of purity is the measure of suffering in the presence of sin. In the infinite mystery of pain there is the deeper heart and core of holy joy. What is that suffering of your heart in the presence of misunderstanding of God? It is born of your perfect satisfaction in God. Why are you angry when that man libels God? Because you know Him. Your hot pain and great sorrow come out of the quiet rest of intimate knowledge. What is that pity for the sinner that throbs through your soul, fills your eyes, breaks your heart? It is the outcome of the love of God shed abroad in your heart.

Oh, verily, if we can but come to the Cross now, and in its presence "...lay in dust life's glory dead," then, indeed "from the ground there blossoms red, life that shall endless be."

Colossians 1:14. Forgiveness.

Colossians 1:14.

Forgiveness.

... the forgiveness of our sins.

Colossians 1:14

These words constitute a phrase of interpretation. It stands in this verse in apposition to the word "redemption," and declares its fundamental value. "In Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." Redemption in its finality means far more than forgiveness of sins. In that finality it is complete restoration of the life to fellowship with God. In the fulness of redemption the spirit of man is consciously at peace with God, in righteousness as a condition, and in joy as an experience. In the fulness of redemption, the mind of man apprehends the things of God and finds perfect rest therein. In the ultimate perfection of redemption, the body of humiliation will be fashioned anew and conformed to the body of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this whole finality is the result of forgiveness. The experiences of fellowship are impossible apart from that of the forgiveness of sins, but let it be added immediately, they are the inevitable result of that experience. Where the forgiveness of sins is truly known, there does immediately result the sense of spiritual peace and mental rest, and the song of the final is already in the heart; so that even if today in these tabernacles we groan, we do so not as without hope and confidence that there shall be the perfecting of our personality ere the work of redemption be completed. All these phases of redemption, spiritual, mental, and physical, follow this fundamental sense of the forgiveness of sins. This, then, is the first wonder and glory of the Cross, for the Cross is the tree to which the Lord bore up our sins that we might be set apart from them, be dead to them, and so live unto righteousness.

Into the woods my Master went,

Clean forspent, forspent.

Into the woods my Master came,

Forspent with love and shame.

But the olives they were not blind to Him,

The little grey leaves were kind to Him:

The thorn-tree had a mind to Him

When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,

And He was well content.

Out of the woods my Master came,

Content with death and shame.

When death and shame would woo Him last

From under the trees they drew Him last;

'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last

When out of the woods He came.

To that tree He bore up our sins, that we being dead to and separated from those sins might live unto righteousness. The first value of the Cross, then, is that of "the forgiveness of our sins."

The apostle's sense of the vital importance of this experience is revealed in this particular passage by two things. It is seen first in the fact that he does thus make it stand for the whole fact of redemption: "In Whom we have our redemption," and as exposition of redemption he is content to write this phrase, "the forgiveness of our sins," knowing very well, none better than he, as all his writings testify, that growing out of that fundamental experience are all the infinite reaches and values of Christian victory and Christian triumph. Here, however, everything begins, and so he puts the gracious first and fundamental part as inclusive of the glorious whole to its finality. "In Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." The apostolic sense of the vital importance of the experience is even more remarkably manifested in the fact that in this relation he reaches the highest level of his teaching as to the One through Whom that redemption is made possible. "In Whom we have our redemption...." We take the phrase, change its emphasis, and make it a question: in Whom have we our redemption, this forgiveness of sins? Clustering about the brief phrase, we find the apostle's highest teaching about the Person of the Lord. Mark the phrases as I take them away from their context, knowing your familiarity with the context, and knowing that you will fill in mentally all that I omit: "... the Son of his love... the image of the invisible God... the firstborn of all creation... the firstborn from the dead..." the One in Whom all fulness dwells. The stupendous, majestic descriptions lend their dignity, force, and meaning to this: "In whom we have our redemption,..." and lend the note of assurance, hope, and confidence to all sin-burdened souls, "... the forgiveness of our sins."

If we are to escape the tendency of the age, that of questioning the fact or undervaluing the value of the forgiveness of sins, we must familiarize ourselves with this setting of the thought in relation to the One through Whom the possibility is affirmed. The mystery of forgiveness is commensurate with and must be interpreted by, the mystery of the One through Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

First, observe He is no solitary member of the human race but its Root and its Source, "... the Son of His love... the image of the invisible God...." The One from Whom all things have proceeded is God, Who is love, and the Saviour is the Son of His love in the deepest and most profound sense of the word; in the sense of that mystic relation to Him which is taught from beginning to the end of the New Testament and has been the central belief of the church through two millenniums: He is "... the Son of His love... the image of the invisible God." So I repeat, this One is not a solitary

member of the human race but the One from Whom the whole race has sprung; its Root and Source.

Again, He is no stranger to the race, but Himself its final glory, "... the firstborn of all creation." In passing it is necessary that we should remind ourselves that this expression "firstborn" does not mean first in order of time but more probably last in order of time. The "firstborn" is not one who is at the beginning but the ultimate flower and fruitage of the creation. Here the Son of God is seen in that infinite mystery of relationship to the human race which makes Him no stranger to it but Himself the final glory of it; the One toward Whom the whole creation moved by whatever process it Went forward, the firstborn, the last, the ultimate glory.

Yet again, and here we touch the inner heart of the matter; He is no stranger to the tragedy of sin but is the One Who was identified with all even unto death; the One Who vanquished all and Who therefore can no longer be described as "firstborn of creation," the final flower and fruit of a process, but "firstborn from the dead" and thus the Originator of a new order and a new race, the One Who moves toward the ultimate realization of the Divine purpose.

Once again, He is no mere heroic dreamer attempting splendid things. There have been many such in the history of the world, but Christ is not to be numbered among them. I repeat, He is not merely a heroic dreamer attempting splendid things, but One Who accomplishes all in the sufficiency of the fulness of Godhead; the One in Whom all fulness dwells; the fulness of originating power, the fulness of capacity for suffering, the fulness of capacity for overcoming all suffering and originating a new and redemptive order. "In Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins."

Thus the apostle, unlike so many of his interpreters, makes no attempt to discuss the forgiveness of sins as in the abstract and apart from the Person to Whom the great evangel is immediately related. By these things redemption must always be interpreted, and in their light the possibility of the forgiveness of sins must be considered. As a Christian man, I must decline to enter into any argument or discussion with any man as to whether the forgiveness of sins be possible until that man shall come face to face with this Person. It is a subject transcending all science save theology, and theology, the science of God, is progressive and growing and has never reached its final statement by way of system or exposition. It is inclusively contained within the Divine writings, and its greatness and grandeur are revealed by the fact that through these running centuries, devout and sincere thinkers have differed and have seen only parts of the whole. The catholic church moves on toward the final exposition, but we have not reached it yet, and until we have reached that final science of God we cannot discuss finally the possibility of the forgiveness of sins because it is related to God Himself. In the same way I affirm that this is a truth vaster than all philosophy save that of the wisdom of God. I suppose I shall do no violence to philosophic thought and the history of philosophy if I say that human philosophy has never yet reached the hour when it has been able to admit the possibility of the forgiveness of sins; and that because of its own inability to take in the whole sum of things as that sum of things is contained within God. Behind philosophy there lies theology, and if it be not finally uttered, neither is philosophy finally apprehended, and therefore no man can explain philosophically the mystery of the forgiveness of sins.

We are gathered in spirit around the green hill, around the tree to which Jesus of Nazareth went. Flashing upon it, in the light of these descriptive phrases, we find that He is the Son of the Divine love, the very image of God, the firstborn of creation, the firstborn from the dead, the One in Whom all the fulness of Deity dwells. We are amazed, mystified, and held away, so that we confess that we cannot finally understand; and yet out of the supreme and effulgent glory of the mystery and majesty of the Person, the song that rejoices our heart is this, "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins."

It seems to me, the possibility must be conceded when these things concerning the Person of the One Who claims authority are apprehended. I do not say that the possibility is understood. I do not say it is explained, that man can finally give a definition of the mystery of it as within the Divine economy, but grant this Person, and the possibility may at least be admitted.

From that level let me descend. The possibility of the forgiveness of sins is demonstrated also by the experience of the forgiven. Perhaps this never can be cumulative; perhaps it may be true that we cannot take the forgiveness of this man and the forgiveness of that man and join them together and declare that there is added weight to the argument. There is no aggregate of sin and no aggregate of sorrow; sin is individual, sorrow is individual; we cannot add sin to sin and make a great whole; we cannot add sorrow to sorrow and make a great totality; we must deal with individuals. As in the realm of sin and sorrow, so here also perchance. The experience of one individual, however, is enough to arrest attention and demand consideration. Therefore, I declare that the possibility of the forgiveness of sins is demonstrated by the experience of the forgiven.

What then is that experience of the forgiveness of sins, as an experience? First, it is moral readjustment; second, it is mental transformation; third, it is spiritual emancipation. Having consented to admit that there may be no aggregate of experience, you must bear with me if I speak out of my own experience and become a witness rather than an advocate. What is this sense of the forgiveness of sins which I claim to know and have within my own soul, against which claim you can by no means produce any argument strong enough to render me an unbeliever in that which I myself do know. It is first that of moral readjustment, second, that of mental transformation, and consequently, that of spiritual emancipation. It may be that in the order of the Divine procedure within the soul of man, spiritual emancipation is the first thing, then mental transformation, issuing in moral readjustment. So far as personal experience is concerned, this is the order; moral readjustment, mental transformation, spiritual emancipation.

Moral readjustment. There is an underlying human consciousness of the difference between right and wrong. That consciousness is human. It is not the result of civilization, it is not found alone in any peculiar locality; it exists wherever man is. In that consciousness, so far as we know, man is differentiated from everything beneath him in the scale of beings. I am growingly a believer that we do not know all about the animal creation beneath us and am inclined to believe with St. Francis of Assisi, John Wesley, and others that the animals also have an afterlife. But so far as we know, man stands alone in this matter of the consciousness of the difference between right and wrong. Ask a man for the standard and he may not be able to give it, even though he live in London, but this underlying sense of it is present. There is nothing more full of hope to thinking men than this fact, that this underlying consciousness of humanity always beats true to the revelation of God found in the sacred Scriptures. There comes back to me as I speak an illustration from the Old

Testament which I think is very full of light. When Jeremiah was exercising his great ministry in Jerusalem, he said upon one memorable occasion to those people who were rushing headlong to destruction in spite of all his teaching, "Refuse silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." I am interested in that word now, not because of its application to the children of Israel, but as the revelation of a persistent fact. Here were people who had had light and opportunity; they had refused the light; then said Jeremiah, "men shall call you refuse silver." That is to say, deep down in the human heart and conscience there is that which recognizes the beauty of holiness, the truth of good, and the right of righteousness. If people of privilege refuse to walk in the light, the people outside watching, name them refuse silver. That is true today. Underlying all our difficulties, our problems, our procedures, and our conflicts, there is this human consciousness, and it is universal; varying in its interpretation, often crude and uneducated, but ever present. Let no Christian soul be deceived, and let no unchristian soul attempt to deceive itself. Man knows the thing that is right and the thing that is wrong. If I could but reach the deepest of the man who persists in the wrong and persuade from his reluctant soul the absolute truth of the thing he knows, he would tell me that his badness is bad and that goodness is the best. That includes immediately the personal consciousness of sin, of sin committed, of consequent pollution, and of resultant paralysis. I admit men may so harden themselves that the consciousness of sin committed brings no pang to the heart or conscience.

But now let us proceed to think of the man who knowing his own sin, becomes conscious of his pollution, and becomes conscious also of paralysis. To that man hell hardly has any terror. I am growingly suspicious of the morality that results from the fear of hell. I have had to do with men and women—and I have known something of the experience in my own heart—to whom hell would almost be a relief if by any chance they could persuade themselves that its fires would cleanse them from the sense of pollution and filth. It is that sense of pollution in the soul resulting from sin with which forgiveness deals. Involved in that sense of pollution is the terrific, appalling, despairing, agonizing sense of paralysis; "When I would do good evil is present with me." Let us not recite that as though the apostle were a dialectician pressing an argument; he was talking out of his soul, mastered by the consciousness of sin, choked by it, poisoned by it, hindered by it. That is the sense of paralysis which is the heart agony of the sense of pollution. All that is background. All that is the background of Calvary, the ugliness of Golgotha, the terrible tragedy of the green hill.

"The forgiveness of our sins" is first of all the deep, profound sense in the soul, of being delivered from sins, being set apart from them; the relationship between them and the soul, as to pollution and paralysis being broken. I have quoted more than once, though not in the exact words but with slight change, those wonderful words of Peter, "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins...." The arresting fact in that verse is that there we have a word translated "died" which never appears anywhere else in the New Testament. It is not the usual word for death. It was a very common word in the Greek classical writers, and it was used for death. But what it really means is simply to be set apart from. That is the sense of forgiveness, the sense that comes to the soul who trusts in Christ; who obeying His call and falling in with His simple condition of repentance and faith, now receives the gift, the setting apart from sin. It is always accompanied by the sense of humbling, the sense of shame, and the sense of sorrow. It is always accompanied by the sense of gratitude and joy and singing. It is a strange, mystic consciousness, Christ-begotten and in no other way begotten; that which every man and woman

who has truly trusted in the Lord knows in some measure and which no man or woman finds apart from Him; a mystic sense, no longer as a theory but as a fact—I am forgiven. I repeat, that always brings humbling, and to live a forgiven soul is to live in all humility and in all gladness.

You may discuss this scientifically, philosophically; you may come to the conclusion that science admits no possibility of forgiveness; you may declare that in all your thinking you have never found how this thing can be; and I object to your scientific and philosophic thinking concerning the definite experience of one soul. I know my sins are forgiven. If you will not admit the aggregate, at least stand reverently in the presence of the individual confession.

It is more than a sense of being set apart from one's sins, it is the sense of positive freedom. Witness the new moralities that spring out of this conviction wherever it takes possession of the soul of man. Mark the men who tell you they have been forgiven, men who have been in the grip of every form of evil and bestiality; mark them and see springing out of those lives all beauty and truth, all grace and loveliness; listen to the songs coming up from the souls that were filled with the darkest despair; witness the humility which manifests itself and the new service that begins!

Forgiveness is also mental transformation. There is a sense in which this is gradual, progressive. Peter charged those to whom he wrote to "... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Do not separate those two things. We very often quote that passage partially, "grow in... grace." It does not end there; "... and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Mental transformation is immediate but progressive. We know the Lord and follow on to know the Lord and so grow in knowledge. Through those great letters of the imprisonment, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, there runs one note of almost agonized prayer on behalf of Paul's children in the faith. What was it he was asking for them? They had faith, and he thanked God for their faith; they had hope, and he rejoiced therein; they had love, and he gloried in it; yet he prayed that they might have full knowledge. This mental transformation is first a new apprehension of God; second, a new apprehension of self; third, a new view of other men. A man forgiven knows God as he never had known Him before. Intellectually, he may have been convinced of His existence and have feared Him with a quite wholesome fear. Following forgiveness, the intellectual becomes emotional, and the fear of Him which was dread of Him, becomes fear lest His heart should be wounded by his sin. A new vision of God and a new understanding of himself, and of his relation to God and to all things in the midst of which he lives, and therefore, a new view of his brother-man; all these follow forgiveness. A new passion for knowledge and a new devotion to inquiry, the discipleship which will issue in full knowledge; these also result and that progressively.

So finally, forgiveness is spiritual emancipation. The forgiven man is the worshiping man; the forgiven man is the serving man. I have not brought these words idly together; they are closely related, not only in experience, but in revelation. I go back once more for illustration to the mystery of the wilderness temptation of our Lord and to the answer He gave the enemy as he finally assaulted Him, "... It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Observe the relationship between the two. The man emancipated spiritually is the man who worships and who serves; no man serves in the full sense of the term, unless his service proceed from worship, and no man worships in the full sense of the term, unless his worship drives him out to service.

The forgiven man is the spiritually emancipated man. He worships, and the first exercise in his worship is praise, while the second is prayer. The first note is praise, not prayer. The new life bestowed upon the forgiven man, the tearing away of the veil between himself and God, and dissipation of the darkness, the sense of God, does not first create within him a desire for something for himself even on the highest levels. He desires first to give to God; there breaks from his heart a song, crude and mean in its expression though it may be, but sacred and holy as a vestal flame in its inner inspiration. I sometimes think the best level of illustration is the simplest. Those who have had to do with souls in the deeper darkness of life, those who perhaps are devoid of all educational and intellectual advantage, have seen new-born souls beginning to worship. Worship is praise, the emancipated spirit, finding the face of God and singing. Our priesthood is first eucharistic. I do not like the word in some senses because I want every child to understand it; but I use it of set purpose for it runs all through the New Testament. What is the eucharist? The thanksgiving! Our priesthood is not first intercessory, it is first a priesthood of thanksgiving. When a man knows his sins forgiven, he finds spiritual emancipation and he begins to praise. Then he comes to a sense of his brother's wrong, and he begins to pray.

Spiritual emancipation means not worship alone, but service, for it means a spirit brought back into right relationship with God and realizing within itself Divine inspiration. The forgiven soul immediately finds fellowship with that in God which makes forgiveness possible. It begins to know something of what it is to fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ, to share His Cross, to be driven out to serve as He served. The Divine inspiration is the Divine compassion, and blessed be God, it is something more; it is the Divine energy. That enables us in all service which the Christ appoints, and the Cross is its true and only way. These are the spiritual emancipations which come as the result of the sense of forgiveness. I am not surprised that when Paul said "In Whom we have our redemption..." he covered the ground and exhausted it, calling the first phase of the experience, "... the forgiveness of our sins."

Finally, quietly and reverently, we gather back in imagination to Golgotha, to the Cross itself. What is this upon which we look? We look upon the outward symbols. Let us remember that, for that will keep us reverent in the presence of the Cross. We cannot look upon the inner mystery. Here is light too bright for the feebleness of a sinner's sight. Here are matters too profound for the comprehension of finite intelligence. These are symbols, signs. They are signs material, and mental; signs which admit us a little nearer to the heart of infinite mystery.

What are the material signs? The place of a skull, the Roman gibbet, and a Man of matchless tenderness and beauty and sinlessness dying, cruelly murdered.

As He passed through the darkness, words passed His lips giving me symbols in the mental realm of the spiritual things which lie behind. I listen to them, not daring to omit any one of them. "Woman, behold thy son!... Behold thy mother!" There are some things I dare not begin to try to interpret! Listen to this, "... Father forgive them, for they know not what they do...." Ye men and angels, who is this, what does this mean? Listen to this, "... To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Listen to this, "... I thirst." Listen to this, "... It is finished." Listen to this, "... Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit...." How much do we know? The supreme knowledge is that we cannot know. We have been led to the margin of unfathomable things, and most wonderful of them all is that which I have omitted, "... My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

"In Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." I come to that tree, and I come a sinful man! Dare I doubt? So help me God, I dare not! I venture; I believe: "My God is reconciled, His pardoning voice I hear." The mystery grows upon my soul as the years run on, but the healing and the peace are more precious today than ever. There, and there alone, let us find our rest.

Colossians 1:18. Church Ideals: The Church Governed.

Colossians 1:18.

Church Ideals: The Church Governed.

He is the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

Colossians 1:18

It will at once be conceded that there are very many matters full of interest and full of value suggested within the compass of this sublime declaration of the apostle. Let me say at once that I am now proposing to deal only with one aspect of the truth included in this statement, that, namely, of the Headship of the Lord in the Church.

Having considered the subject of the constitution of the Church, we have now to deal with the Church as a separate entity, unified by a common life, while yet made up of distinct individualities. Our present theme is that of authority within the Church, the nature of the government of the Church of God which has thus been constituted, and which is thus growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

The question of government is one of difficulty, because of the fact already referred to, that the Church is made up of separate individualities; that men and women, believing in the Lord Christ, and being by the Holy Spirit baptized into living union with Him, do not in the hour of that baptism and reception lose their personality, their individuality, their separateness, in some sense of the words. There would be no difficulty in this matter of government apart from this fact.

If the figure of the apostle incidentally referred to in our text, and wrought out into fuller detail in his Corinthian letter, the figure of the Church as the Body of Christ be borne in mind, then at once the whole question of authority within the Church, of the government of the Church, is revealed so patently that there can be no misunderstanding of the ideal. As is the head to all the members of the body, so is the Christ to the whole of His Church.

But the difficulty referred to remains, and experience shows it to be a very serious difficulty; and therefore, we need carefully to consider what the New Testament teaches on this matter. And let me again say, as I said in connection with our previous study, not merely that we may know, but that by the grace of God we may be conformed to His Will in this matter as members of His Church, and so fulfil His purpose according to the measure possible to us.

The first affirmation of the New Testament to which I would draw your attention is that contained within this text. It is the declaration of the absolute Headship of Christ, that He is Himself, in some special and wonderful way, the Head of the Church—special, that is—in distinction from the fact of His Headship over the whole creation. And yet, the fact of that Headship over creation must be borne in mind in this connection, for to take this particular verse from its context will be to rob it of

much of its virtue and many of its values.

Let us take time to remind ourselves that this declaration occurs in the passage which we read as our lesson, a passage in which we have perhaps the most full and wonderful statement in the whole system of Paul's doctrine of the Person of Christ. It is indeed a great passage, and it was written in order to set forth clearly—as clearly as such infinite mysteries may ever be set forth—the truth concerning the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle first shows the relation of Christ to God in one sublime and swiftly ending sentence, "Who is the Image of the invisible God?" In greater detail he then sets forth the relation of Christ to the whole creation; and that relation may be summarized in this brief word taken from the fuller description, He is "the first-born of all creation, and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist"—that is, hold together. Thus the apostle affirms the pre-existence of this mystic Person, and His activity in that glorious hour when the sons of God sang together in the presence of the dawning wonders of a new creation, declaring that He was Himself the Creator. The apostle speaks of Him further as Sustainer of the Creation, as he describes Him as holding all these together by His own power, so that in Him they consist.

He then passes to the subject of the relation between Christ and His Church, declaring that He is Head over all things to the Church; and here again he uses the phrase already employed in connection with creation, but with a modification that demands our attention, "The Firstborn from the dead."

Let us now pause to make the distinction to which we have already drawn attention incidentally. This Person is described as "Firstborn of creation," and it is at once recognized that the word is figurative, and suggestive of abounding life, and used in reference to that primal origin, the mystery of which is always beyond us, but the solution of which is always ready to our hands when we open our Bible and read, "In the beginning God created."

But in the midst of this creation is the fact of death, and we are everywhere conscious of the dark pall of it, the tremendous mystery of it, the alarming pain of it! Then the apostle draws attention to One emerging from it, Who is the selfsame Christ, Firstborn from the dead! By virtue of all that strange and mystic phrase connotes, He is Head of His Church, Head of that gathered-out company of men and women, who, having had a vision of the one Lord, have exercised in Him the one faith, and have received the one baptism of the Spirit, and thus have been created His ecclesia, His called-out people, under His authority, exercising His authority in the world.

Now from these spacious outlooks and these magnificent heights of the apostolic vision and teaching, we may safely and reverently turn, in order to declare that the one only and absolute authority within the Christian Church is that of the Lord Himself. He is the Founder and Builder of His Church. His work made it possible for the Spirit of God to come in that new method discovered to us in the story of Pentecost. Belief in Him precedes that baptism of the Spirit whereby we are quickened into a new life of fellowship with God. He abides forevermore, the sole Possessor of His people, and His will must be the final authority within His Church concerning every individual member, and concerning every detail of the manifold and complex life of every individual member, and consequently, concerning the whole Church, as to the methods of its service, as to the meaning of its service, and as to the processes by which it fulfils that service. We inquire, then,

what is the government of the Church? To that inquiry we reply inclusively and exhaustively when we say, "He is the Head over all things to the Church."

So far all Christians are in perfect agreement. Our disagreement or our difference—or shall I rather say our difficulty?—begins when we inquire how the will of that one Lord and Master is to be made known to His Church.

Let us for a few moments turn from the fundamental consideration in order that we may inquire whether, in the days of His flesh, He said anything that will help us. And immediately our thoughts revert to His Paschal discourses, to those final words spoken, not to the promiscuous multitude, but to the inner circle of disciples in the upper room, to those wonderful words recorded only by John. To those words, therefore, let me take you back for brief quotations only.

In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel I find these words: I pluck them out of the rest, I hardly like to do so, and yet, they are what we specially need for our present consideration—"I will inquire of the Father"—and that is not satisfactory, but a little more so than "I will pray the Father," for when we read "pray," we think of asking, as we present a petition; and Christ never so prayed. His word for His own prayer is always different from that used to describe our praying; He asked upon the level of perfect equality and fellowship: "I will inquire of the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive." Or, turning to a declaration a little later in the sixteenth chapter of John, I find these words: "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself: but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak; and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come: He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine: therefore, said I, that He taketh of Mine, and shall declare it unto you. A little while, and ye behold Me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me."

Now in the last declaration of that passage there is no reference to a second advent, its reference being rather to the new and spiritual vision that should be granted to these men by the coming of the Spirit; to that fact to which Paul referred when he said, "We henceforth know no man after the flesh, even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more."

Christ said to that little band of His own disciples, whose hearts were breaking because He was going away, and who were strangely perplexed as to the mystery of the things He was saying to them, who did not, even after He had finished His speech, understand Him, but were compelled to wait for this selfsame enlightenment of the Spirit: "A little while, and ye behold Me no more." John will no longer be able to lay his hand on Mine as we sit at the board, or lean his head upon My bosom as I tell him secrets of love. "And again a little while, and ye shall see Me." You will see Me as you have never seen Me before, and John will be able to write: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." And this change would all be wrought, he declared, by the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came, in the first place, to reveal to the inner circle of His own disciples the Person of the Lord perpetually, persistently, perfectly. The Spirit came to reveal to them the meaning of things which Jesus had said, and which they did not yet understand. The Spirit came to abide with loyal men and women and children, and to reveal to them the will of the Lord about all the details of their lives.

And consider, brethren—thinking only for the moment individually, for presently, the corporate question will become more difficult, thinking only individually—how wondrously the living authority of the Lord has been established in the lives of men by the Holy Spirit. He came to reveal the Person of Christ. One of the central and perpetual wonders of Christian experience is that of the individual acquaintance of individual men and women with the Lord Christ, an individual acquaintance of individual men and women with a Person Who is to them in their thinking as human and as real as the Man of Nazareth was to Peter, James and John. I feel the difficulty of the thing I am trying to say. I know this Christ—suffer the word of experience—I know what it is to live with Him, and walk with Him, and talk with Him, and travel with Him, and have Him rebuke me; ah, and have Him whisper to me, "Well done!" And I have in my heart the picture of Him. He is as real to me, more real than any other earthly friend, and that, too, in human seeming and semblance; and that is why I very much dislike pictures of Him. Oh, there are a few I tolerate, and yet I seldom look at them without becoming critical, and without having to say, "No, that is not the picture of my Lord." It was a portrait of Him, the Lord, to the man who painted it! If by some sacred magic at this moment this whole audience could become artists, and each person could rapidly sketch the portrait of the Lord as he or she knows Him, what infinite variety, and yet what underlying unity, we should have. If we could merge the myriad photographs of Him into one picture, what glory, what beauty! Four men did that long ago. Matthew said, "This is how I saw Him"; and Luke said, "Theophilus, I want to draw Him for you as I have found him"; and Mark said, "This is how Peter saw Him, and how I saw Him"; and John said, "Wait, just a few touches more, there are many things not yet described!" And they are all different; but we bring them together and merge them, and, lo, this is He! How did Matthew write his gospel? On the human standpoint he wrote it with perfect naturalness, and with no conception that he was inspired; but the Spirit had come, and He was revealing his Master to him, calling back to his memory things he saw Him do, and heard Him say; and so he wrote. And that inspiration did not cease when the gospel stories were written. It lives until this moment. I ventured a moment ago to say experimentally to you, I know this Christ, and, as I said so, I saw a light on many faces which meant, We also know Him, we walk with Him and talk with Him; He is as real to us, more real than any other earthly friend.

The Master said, "Yet a little while I am with you, and yet a little while and I will come again"; and He came, and He has since been the perpetual presence. I know Him personally, individually, and that by the ministry of the Spirit of God, taking hold of what I am in myself, finding the recesses of my need, and filling them with the revelation of my Lord's sufficiency, indicating to me the dynamic force of His energy for the overcoming of the weakness of my frailty; and not of me only, who am less than the least of all the saints is this true; it is equally true of the whole company of the saints for nineteen centuries. And when at last we reach His heaven, the picture we have seen of Christ will have become our own portrait, for we shall be like Him. Then, when God has gathered the varied and matchless splendors of the whole host of the ransomed into one effulgent glory, behold the Firstborn from the dead! Thus He is making known to us His authoritative will by individual interpretation.

Brethren, the Church of God is not a company of people gathered around the memory of a dead and lost leader; it is constituted, not by the acceptance of a final ethic uttered nineteen centuries ago, not by the adoration of a great ideal that passed across the vision of humanity in Judaea long ago, but by the Abiding presence—where two or three are gathered in His name—of the Lord

Himself. By the living presence of that living Lord, and by the interpretation of the abiding Spirit, we know Him; and His will is made known to His own who desire to know it, amid the hurry and the hubbub of London; in the Houses of Parliament; as that Christian man sweeps the streets; upon the professional round; in the midst of a thousand and one domestic duties. He is with us by the Spirit, to say what is now to be done, to all such as are yielded to Him, and desire to know.

What, then, should be the Church's attitude toward these facts? The acknowledgment of His Headship; submission to the indwelling Spirit Whose office it is to interpret His will to all His people, and therefore initially—cessation from self, consenting to that separating redemption that brings us away from the world, abandonment to those cleansing fires that purify us from iniquity, a yielding of ourselves to that impulsive love, that makes us forevermore a people zealous of good works.

Now to turn from these things which are the true things and the deep things, and yet which are in a measure mystic. We inquire, how is this authority of our Lord to be applied in the actual corporate life of the Christian Church? I would remind you of what we considered in our previous meditation, that this word "Church" occurs about thirteen times in our New Testament in reference to the whole catholic Church of God; that it occurs over ninety times in reference to local assemblies, such as the church at Thessalonica, the church at Corinth, the church at Colosse; and that as we watch these occasions, and observe what doctrines gather about them, we discover that most evidently in the mind of these new Testament writers the local church in a microcosm of the catholic Church.

What, then, we ask, are we to learn from a study of these Scriptures concerning the authority of Christ, and its application as within the Church of God? First of all, I think they teach us that the authority of Christ by the Spirit in the Church is apostolic in principle, but not in detail. Apostolic in principle, that is as to these very things which we have been considering; the apostolic teaching concerning the Headship of Christ Himself; the apostolic teaching concerning the priesthood of all believers, and their right of access within the Holy of all for thanksgiving, as the eucharistic priesthood; and for intercession, the priesthood of prayer; the apostolic teaching concerning the guidance of the Spirit and the laws of spiritual life; and I venture to add personally, of conviction, the apostolic teaching concerning the ordinances of our Christian faith, the ordinance of baptism, and the ordinance of the observance of the Lord's Supper. These are great principles laid down by the holy apostles for our perpetual instruction, and to all these we are to be in obedience, and know that as we are living in obedience to them we are acting according to the will of the indwelling Christ, Who is our Lord and Master.

But we are not to be obedient to apostolic example in detail. I do not want to stay with this subject very long, but must touch upon it. The questions of music and of buildings, of times and seasons, of feasts and fasts, as we may find them in the New Testament, are questions of detail rather than of principle. We are not to be bound by the details of apostolic habit, but we are to be governed by the principles of apostolic teaching.

The reason for this is that this ministry of the Spirit for the interpretation of the will of our Lord is immediate and direct. The Spirit will, within the assembly of His people today, indicate His will if His people are waiting to know that will; and the Spirit will perfectly equip His people for the doing of His work in the world by the bestowment of gifts necessary for that work. Let us ponder these

simple things carefully; first, that we cannot find a complete list in the New Testament of the gifts of the Spirit; that this great apostle of the Church, Paul, gave one list when he wrote to the Corinthians, and another when he wrote to the Ephesians. Some included in the first list are found also in the second; some are omitted; but in the second there will be those not in the first. We cannot find at any one place a list of the gifts of the Spirit, and therefore, let us never make the mistake of gathering out from all the different passages the gifts, and writing them in order, and saying, "These are the gifts of the Spirit." No, the Spirit giveth to everyone severally as He will, which means that, according to the necessity, so is the gift bestowed. There were gifts named by the apostle in the early Church that we cannot find in the Church today. If you tell me that that is a sign that the Church is degenerate, I answer, by no means, for there are gifts in the Church today not found in the Church in apostolic times; and that is not a proof that the Church in apostolic times was degenerate. The Holy Spirit is always changing the gifts according to the changing needs of changing times, and one of the gravest perils threatening the Church is that it does not discover the gift when bestowed, and make way for its use. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," abiding gifts for the ministry of the Word; but many others, helps, governments, healings in the past, and in the present new gifts bestowed constantly; so that if there be a piece of work to be done peculiar to London, the Spirit of God will give a man the gift he needs, which would be of no use in New York; so that if there is to be a peculiar work done in New York, the Spirit will bestow the gift upon some man for that work. The trouble is we send men out to India that God wants for London, and keep men in London that God wants for India.

Wherein, then, lies the failure in the Church in the matter of government? We have been trying to govern the Church otherwise, and by our own wit and our own wisdom to find out the way to do God's work, instead of remembering that the living Lord, and not a dead Leader is at the center of the Christian Church, and that the living Spirit, and not past interpretations, constitutes the method of guidance and direction in all our work. The Spirit calls whomsoever He will. He qualifies whomsoever He calls. He sends whosoever He qualifies. The trouble is that the Church of God so often is not prepared to do what the church at Antioch did, and to say, "It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us to send forth Saul and Barnabas."

The Church should be in direct contact with this supreme Will, apostolic in her attitude, but direct in her obedience. Our Lord is not divided from us by the distance even of the holy apostles. They did their work; they formulated the doctrines; they pioneered the way along which others have followed in the proclamation of the evangel; and, so far as their writings have been preserved for us, they become the basis of authority; but so far as their own example was concerned, it is not binding upon us. I do not ask what the Church in Jerusalem did in the matter of its worship, or in the matter of its work. I ask what will the living Lord have us to do in London? Let Him tell us by His Holy Spirit Who is with us now.

All attempts, beloved, to substitute an authority within the Church for that of the living Christ are wrong. Nay, I will go further. All attempts to create mediation between the authority of Christ and His Church, save the meditation of the Spirit, are wrong; and whether it be the substitution of an authority, or whether it be the attempt to discover His authority through other meditation than that of the Spirit, these are the lines, following which we wander from the way of His will, and make ourselves weak in our testimony to the world.

We require no pope who is God's vicar, because the Lord is not absent. We require no king to ratify our appointments, because the King Himself appoints and ratifies. We require no bishops to prescribe for us the order of our service, for the Lord Himself will arrange. We decline to allow any Conference, or Union, or Synod to interfere with the freedom of our work, for we are in glad bondage to the Living Lord. We deny that the Church meeting is authoritative by reason of the fact that a majority is in favor of this or of that. That is not Church authority; and where the Church—if my brethren of other ecclesiastical convictions will be patient with me for a moment—where the Church is Congregational, and gathers together in its Church meeting, and proceeds always upon the basis of the vote of a majority, it is surely going astray. In the life of the spiritual church there will come mystic hours in which a majority will say, "This is our thought and will, but we will not do it. We will wait and consult and pray with the minority, and wait upon the Lord, until the unanimity of the Spirit possesses us all." It is the authority of the present, living, reigning Lord in the assembly of His people, which is the true Church authority. The Lord has never delegated His authority. We believe in the real presence of the living Lord, and the result of that is unity, not uniformity, the unity of His Kingly Headship, differing in detail at different times and under differing circumstances, caring little and less for ritual, for uniformity of dress, or even of creed. Not mental unanimity, not bodily uniformity, but spiritual unity, is the great result of the recognition of the presence and Headship of the Lord, and the submission of His people to His rule.

But the final and the personal word under such consideration is that this government of the Lord Christ within His own Church is principally interfered with when we are not in right relationship with the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter, the Spirit Himself.

Let me but recall to your memory three little words of the New Testament which seem to me to exhaust the perils confronting us concerning the Spirit: "Resist not the Spirit," "Quench not the Spirit," "Cause not sorrow to the Spirit." To resist Him in the working of His mighty energy for the accomplishment of Divine purpose, to quench Him in the bestowment of His fire-gifts whereby we cooperate with God; to cause sorrow to Him by our disobedience and our disloyalty; these are the ways in which we prevent His fulfilling His ministry within us, and among us, and through us; these are the ways in which we lose the vision of our Lord and our sense of His nearness, and wander away from the pathway of His will, and fail in our attempts to realize His purposes.

May these be granted to us, first of all a new and abounding consciousness of the supremacy of Christ, and then a new and more complete yielding of ourselves to the Spirit of interpretation; that so there may come to us a larger, fuller, richer sense of the unity of the Church; that so, finally, God through us may be able to move forward toward the goal of the establishment of His Kingdom, through Christ our Lord.

Colossians 1:20. Peace By The Cross.

Colossians 1:20.

Peace By The Cross.

Having made peace through the blood of His Cross.

Colossians 1:20

Peace in human experience is the issue of pardon and purity. There can be no peace so long as sin is unforgiven; there can be no perfect peace so long as impurity remains in the life, dominant and influential. Peace is a necessary sequence in experience; if indeed my trespasses are forgiven, if indeed my consciousness is purged, then issues peace.

The need of peace is created primarily by the fact that man is out of harmony with God. Here I need hardly stay to argue or discuss; I suppose it will be readily granted that this is true. This the Apostle declared in words both blunt and bold: "The carnal mind is enmity against God"; the "natural man" does "not know the things of God." He cannot know them. The natural man is in intelligence dark toward God, ignorant rather than intelligent; in emotion contrary to God, hating rather than loving; in will perverse against God, disobeying rather than obeying.

If instead of stating these things in these terms of doctrine I state them in the realm of experience, the fact is perhaps more patent. Man does not want to talk about God. In the most refined society—using that word in its very degraded and abused sense, for the only final refinement is the refinement of spiritual culture—the one subject which is "taboo" is God. Man is out of harmony with God, afraid of God, unbelieving toward God, and today, worst of all indifferent about God.

The reason for this is sin. Find me a man who is afraid of God, and I will find you a man who is a sinner and living in sin. The sin may be manifested in a hundred different ways, but it lies at the back and is the sole reason for lack of harmony with God. It is sin that cuts man off from God, for it is sin that blinds his vision, so that he cannot see God; deadens his emotion, so that he cannot love God; turns his will into perverse attitudes, so that he cannot obey God. Sin prevents the fulfilment of purpose, and thus puts man out of harmony with God.

Moreover, sin reacts on the sinner, polluting the very sources of life, and this pollution prevents communion, so that a man is not only alienated from God by his sin, but by his alienation from God prevented from ceasing to sin. Sin excludes me from the Divine presence. Being excluded, it may be that I want not to sin, but I have lost my power not to sin, for the only power that enables a man not to sin is that of direct communion with God. That is the awful tragedy of sin: its reflex action in human life. Men are coming to understand today that if man is to find perfect peace he must find his way into harmony with God. In his Varieties of Religious Experience, Professor James tells us that he has come to the deliberate conclusion along lines of scientific investigation that, somewhere, somehow, man has business with God, and that man fulfils his highest destiny only as he submits himself to the call of God.

But men are not having dealings with Him, do not find Him; cannot find Him though they search through the long and misty avenues of scientific investigation, though they spend long and weary years in philosophical elaboration and research. God is never so found. Yet men out of harmony with God are conscious that they lack peace, and the reason of the lack of harmony and the absence of communion is sin, the direct and wilful and personal doing of wrong, when right and wrong have stood confronting man's reason and his will.

Because man is out of harmony with God he is utterly out of harmony with everything else. A man who has no peace with God lacks peace within his own personality. A man who has no peace with God, and who lacks peace within his own personality, fails of peace with his fellow man. The man who has no peace with God, and lacks peace in his own personality, and therefore fails to have peace with his fellow men, is out of harmony with the whole of Nature.

The man who is out of harmony with God is out of harmony within his own personality. My text occurs in one of the stupendous passages of the New Testament: in order that its light may flash on my subject, I ask you to consider the context. The Apostle is dealing with the great subject of creation and of Christ's relationship thereto. He speaks of Christ as being the Image of God, and also as being the Firstborn of creation. He distinctly says that the God-created things were made by Him and for Him. He distinctly affirms that in Him—that is, in Christ—"all things consist." Then he declares, right at the heart of the great argument, that this Christ, Firstborn of creation, Upholder of creation, shed His blood in the midst of creation; and that through the mystery of that blood-shedding, in the midst of the creation held together by Christ, and created by Christ, He will reconcile all things to Himself, both on the earth and in the heavens. That is the majestic sweep of the passage.

In Christ all things consist. Banish from your mind all the larger outlook on creation. Forget the spaces by which you are surrounded: forget even this one little planet on which you stand, and out of its myriad mysteries consider your own life. You are part of creation; the principle that obtains in the whole creation obtains in you. In Him, the Christ Who is the image of God, things consist. In Him they harmonize, part fitting to part, power answering power, joint uniting with joint. If you banish this Christ from the life by sin, if you put God out of count, then you no longer consist, you no longer hold together. You become, within your own personality disorganized, broken up, disintegrated. Every man who is Godless and Christless is disintegrated in his own personality; he is a mystery to himself. He finds the physical—we all know the physical; he finds the mental—we are all conscious of the mental; every now and then he hears, not from without, as though a voice out of the blue addressed him, but from within, the voice of his spiritual nature. This last he stifles, silences, drives back. The mental he sometimes attempts to cultivate and refine; the physical he ministers to with all his power; but he is a broken man. The spiritual, which is the essential, is dethroned, imprisoned within the personality; the mental has the wrong vision, the wrong outlook, and, consequently, is perpetually degraded; and the physical is made the principal; that man lives, as Paul says, "in flesh" instead of in spirit. There is no harmony; and out of that discord of a human life come the questionings and the agonies, and the conflicts, and the defeats that are perpetual in human history. Out of that discord comes the dual cry of a man when he says, I would do good. Evil is present with me. I would climb, but I fall. The man who is Godless lacks peace within. There is passion within, there is power within, but not peace. Passion runs riot, power is misapplied; ambition, aspiration, desire, endeavor, all these things; but no peace. Moments that seem

peaceful are broken in on by some rush of passion; moments that seem quiet are disturbed by some new mystery within the life of the man of the world.

Oh, man, thy personality is as marvelous as is God's universe, and the things in conflict are great things, God-made things. Every part of thy personality is the result of a Divine thinking, and a Divine creation; and if thou art living without the Divine Who thought, and the Divine Who created, the great forces in thy life are conflicting and clashing, and there is discord, but no peace.

The result is that man is not at peace with his fellow man. Each man being disorganized within his own personality, social disorganization must necessarily ensue. Are you prepared to say there is peace in the world? Of course, by comparison there are countries that are at peace, but I am not at all sure that the peace of today which is perpetually attempting to be ready for war is not more disastrous than war itself.

Is there social peace? Nation is divided against nation, class against class, there is commercial strife, and social strife is rife, and why? Because the units are at strife within themselves. When strife meets strife, strife is perpetuated, and you will never have the peace of a great socialism until you have the peace of a great individualism.

Finally, man is not only out of harmony within himself and with his fellow man, he is out of harmony with Nature. I take up my Bible, and I turn over to that great psalm about man:

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?

And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

And now hear the answer:

For Thou hast made him but little lower than God,

And crownest him with glory and honour.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen,

Yea, and the beasts of the field;

The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea,

Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

That is a picture of God's intention for man, dominion over Nature, harmony with Nature, mastery of Nature; a beneficent mastery of Nature that leads Nature out to its highest and its best—that is God's thought for man.

At the beginning God put man into a garden; what for? So that he might admire the flowers and pluck the fruits? No! "To dress it and to keep it." He put him into the garden in order that man might put his God-made hand on God's unfinished work and finish it. The Garden of Eden was a garden of potentialities, waiting for the touch of man to make it perfect. God placed man in it, and said,

Now touch it with labor, and it will laugh at you with flowers. We can see something of this even today. One's mind goes to the simplest of all illustrations among the flowers. Who of us has not seen the wonderful development of what in my boyhood's days was a simple country flower, the chrysanthemum? I remember it in my father's garden. It was so old-fashioned that there were gardens that would not have it, but there is not a garden that has not room for it today. It has grown since those days, and the petals have run out into wavy gracefulness and tender tints. What has happened? Man has touched it. The potentialities of the chrysanthemum of today lay in the old-fashioned garden chrysanthemum, but it waited for man to complete the work of God. At this hour Nature as a great whole is an unconquered territory because man is Godless. You tell me that the most scientific men are Godless men. You tell me that the countries that are most scientific are the most Godless. I do not believe it. Let us study the map of the world; imagine you see it before you. Now put your hand on the places where most discoveries have been made. And while your hands are resting on those countries in which men have done most in the work of mastering Nature and discovering her secrets and giving them to men, they are resting on the countries where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has prevailed most. That is the larger outlook. You bring me to some man whom you call scientific, and he is Godless, and you say that scientific investigation makes a man Godless. I tell you it is a narrow outlook. It is just as narrow an outlook as the outlook of Robert Ingersoll when he said that something happened as naturally as water runs down hill. If you think that is true, read Father Lambert's reply, and see how Father Lambert demonstrated that water does not run down hill, that the vast mass of the waters of the world are piled at the equator.

In the light of Godliness men have mastered Nature; electric light has come directly as the result of Godliness, for if you find lands that are Godless you find them in darkness in every sense of the word. Man remains out of harmony with Nature until he finds his way to God. One man tells me he will climb to Nature and find God. Never. You must find God and then climb into Nature. Neither as to its beauty nor as to its potentiality can you ever be at peace with Nature until you are at peace with God.

And how we long for peace. Oh, the restlessness of the present age! Oh, the friction! Sometimes one pauses to listen and it seems as though surging through the cities, coming up from the quieter country, beating on the listening ear, from all the continents and the isles of the sea, there is the noise of strife and battle, man within himself hot and restless, feverish, lacking peace; man battling with his brother man for territory, for commerce, for advance; man out of harmony with Nature, losing his love of the beautiful, failing to interpret its message of God, but slowly discovering its deep underlying secrets. Peace seems absent, and yet how man longs for it, sighs after it, sings about it, courts it, and fails to find it.

But there are men and women who have peace; there are men and women living at the very center of it. There are men and women who know peace with God, within themselves, with their fellow men, and with all the universe of God. And how has this peace come? I go back again to the first chapter of Colossians, and again ask you to let the great and stately argument of the Apostle pass before you. Christ, First-born of creation, all things held together in Him; Christ bowed to death, to the awful and lonely tragedy of an earthly dying, in the midst of the lack of peace, and making peace through the blood of His Cross.

This is the third time we have come to this central mystery, and for the third time I say to you, I do not know how it was done. I cannot fathom it, but I see the infinite order in the economy of God of which Christ is Originator and Upholder. I see the awful discord and lack of peace that sweep upon men and everything to the utmost limit of the universe. I see at the center the worst disorder of all, the dying Christ, and I see proceeding from that Cross reconciliation, the restoration of peace, men finding God, men finding themselves, because they have found God; men finding their brother men and getting back to them because they have found God; men finding the secrets and beauties of Nature because they have found God. Already I hear across the nations and the continents, war-mad, strife-occupied, the song of an infinite peace. How came it? It began in the mystery of His dying, and the awful darkness of His blood-shedding. I cannot fathom it; I cannot measure it. I cannot tell you all the deep mystery of that outpoured life and flood, but this I know, that through it peace is born.

First of all, peace between man and God. Let us take three phrases of the New Testament. "Justified by faith, we have peace with God." "Peace from God our Father." "And the peace of God shall garrison your heart." "Peace with God," "peace from God," "the peace of God." This is the experience of the soul that comes back to God from sin and pollution by the way of the Cross of Jesus. No man can speak perfectly of this peace. It defies analysis, it transcends explanation, it may sing itself into snatches of song, but the great infinite experience can never be told; it must be known. Peace with God, that is, if you will have it so—judicial peace. I have sinned against Him, and I am afraid of Him. But I come to Him as He calls me by the way of the Cross, and my sin is put away, I am no longer afraid. The fear is gone, that which made me afraid to speak of Him, to think of Him, has all been put away, and small as I am in His great universe, and utterly unable as I know myself to be to comprehend the full meaning of His existence, this at least is true—fear has been banished, I am at peace with Him, at peace with Him Who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, at peace with the infinite Force and Intelligence. As God is my witness, standing by that Cross, claiming and receiving its pardon, its purity, I have also its peace, and I am not afraid. So the soul that comes to this Cross is first at peace with God.

This peace is also from God, the quietness that comes into the life when man knows that God is pleased. There is no language that can tell the deepest truth here, but as I am accepted in the Beloved, as I am complete in the Christ, the very blessedness of God rests on me, because it rests on Him, the Christ Himself. I have been joined to Him, and "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And as the good pleasure of God was declared with the Christ, it is declared also with all such as put their trust in Him: pardon for the past, purity for the present, and the peace of knowing

My God is reconciled,

His pardoning voice I hear;

He owns me for His child,

I can no longer fear.

With confidence I now draw nigh,

And "Father, Abba Father," cry.

And yet once more and most wonderful of all in this connection, not merely peace with God, and peace from God, but "the peace of God." What is God's peace? It is the peace of His omniscience, the peace of His omnipotence, the peace of His omnipresence. Do you not see how all these things must necessarily create peace in the very Being of God? What robs me of peace in the small affairs of life? My limitations. I cannot see the end, and I am afraid. I cannot be where I would be, and my heart is hot and restless. I cannot do what ought to be done, and, panic seizes me. God sees the end from the beginning, God is always where He is needed. God is always equal to the demand that is made on Him, even though it be the redemption of a lost race; and, consequently, in the presence of the fall of man, in the presence of the sin of the race, in the presence of the wrong of the centuries of pain, God's peace in its deepest was never disturbed, because He knew how out of it He would bring life and light and glory, until at last heaven would be reached over the mystery of evil, and its mastery come by the way of the Cross.

The perfect peace of God is the peace of the child of God. Not that I now can see the end from the beginning, but I know He can, and so I sing. Not that I now can be everywhere at the same moment, but He is, and so while I stand here, separated by miles from my friend in danger, I speak to Him, and in the act I am with my friend, for God is with my friend. Distance is annihilated in this life of fellowship, power is perpetual, and the things I cannot do, I can do in Him and through Him. The man who is at peace with God enters into the peace of God, for he has found his way, small atom though he be, infinitesimal part of the universe, into harmony with the order of the universe.

This necessarily means that the peace that comes to us is exactly what we need in other respects, not only in relationship to God, but in relationship to self. The whole being is balanced and quiet.

Look at these two men. What is that man? He is a spirit indwelling a body, having a mind. What is this man? He is a spirit indwelling a body, having a mind. What is the difference between them? This man is perturbed, he lacks peace, he is always full of fear, he is hot, restless, feverish. That man is quiet, calm, strong. What is the difference? This man is out of harmony within himself. The essential spirit is starved, dwarfed, driven out, consequently flesh is glorified, and worshiped and served. He lacks balance, harmony, there is no consistence in this man, because he has not found God. That man has found God, his own spirit is taken out of the prison house and put on the throne. The flesh is not bruised, the flesh is not scourged, it is governed, kept under, made servant, instead of master. He has found the true proportion of things. He is consistent within himself, and his life is full of peace. Why? Because he found God, and finding peace with God and from God and of God, he gained peace within his own personality, and his life became strong, free from friction, quiet, calm, powerful.

Watch that man still; that man knows what peace is with his fellow man. I know that Jesus said, "I have not come to send peace but a sword." That is perfectly true. That is the effect produced among Godless men by the presence of godly men; so long as there are godless men they will hate the godly, and so will attempt to destroy their peace. The measure in which professing Christians fail to make peace is the measure in which they are not Christians. I think the day has come when we ought to be more ready to "unchristianize" the man who libels Christianity than to "unchristianize" Christianity on account of such a man. You tell me of a Christian man who is always making disturbances; I do not believe it. Oh, but he is a minister; that does not matter. He is a deacon; that has no signification in this connection. He has been a church member for forty

years; I cannot help it. If the influence of his life is not that of peace, he is not a Christian. When once the peace of God possesses a human life, when once the peace of God dominates a human life, the influence of that life is peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

And yet that is after all but a negative way of arguing the case. Take the positive statement of truth. There are still those who dare say that war is devilish. There are some of us who still believe that you cannot justify war, and we say so because we believe in Jesus Christ. Thank God for the lonely singers! There is a good deal to be heard beside their song. There are a great many other voices attempting to express in harmony the glory of war; but I hear the singers on the other side of the sea and in this country; and even on that poor war-mad continent there are some foolish souls who believe in peace, and who will try to bring it in.

Where did they learn their song? It was never born or learned anywhere save in living relationship to God. The song of peace, prophetic, expectant, determined, is always the song of godliness, never the song of godlessness; and we know that all the peace that comes in social and national relationships is the outcome of relationship to God, restored in human lives by the mystery of the Cross.

Man finds his way back into the place of peace with nature by this selfsame work of Jesus Christ. As a side light on our subject read again the eighth chapter of Romans, and read it this time not so much in order to learn its marvelous teaching concerning personal relationship to God; listen for the larger thing in it. You will find groaning mentioned three times over. The Apostle says: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." "We also groan within ourselves waiting for the redemption." "The Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The groaning of Nature is everywhere. The Spirit of God interprets the agony of Nature to the godly man, and the godly man groans in the midst of it, inspired by the Spirit into sympathy with it. "Preach the Gospel," said Jesus, "to the whole creation," and the Gospel of Jesus Christ has its application to all the sorrow and the evil there is in nature. Before the Cross has won its last triumph man will be restored to Nature, and Nature will be restored to man. When God's Second Man and Last Adam went down into the wilderness, He met and mastered evil, and at the close we read: "He was with the wild beasts," and we have read it as though it were a message of terror. It means He was with them in company and comradeship, and they were unafraid of Him. Because of His own absolute perfection ferocity ceased; there was no wild beast in the presence of God's Perfect Man. Neither will there be in the presence of a perfectly redeemed humanity. The earth is not old, it is young. This earth effete? By no means. We have hardly begun to realize its resources. The race is struggling still in its kindergarten days, believe me. When by-and-by His reign shall be established, when by-and-by man shall have found peace with God in a larger sense than the merely individual, then he will begin to find Nature and its secrets, then such flowers as men have never looked upon, then such wonders as we would now call miracles, then the resurrection of Christ shall no longer be a mystery to scientific thinking. Do not imagine, my brothers, you know all about Nature. So far, you have just scratched on the surface of things. That is all the race has done. When the Lord of creation, Who is First-born of creation, shall have won His perfect victory and reconciled all things to God, then man will have found peace with Nature. Have you entered into peace with God? If not, you have never seen a flower yet:

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His and He is mine!

Peace! It can come to you, my brother, personal, social with Nature, only as it first comes with God. I beseech you, "acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." And the only way is at the

Trysting-place, where heaven's love
And heaven's justice meet.

The only place is at the Cross, where He made peace through the shedding of blood.

Colossians 1:21-22. The Atonement.

Colossians 1:21-22.

The Atonement.

You, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprieveable before Him.

Colossians 1:21-22

There are two brief declarations in this Colossian letter which may be said to embody its teaching. The first is that in which the apostle declares, "In Him," that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The second is that in which he tells those Christians to whom he was writing, the saints at Colosse and the faithful in Christ Jesus, "In Him ye are made full." The theme of the letter is that of the glorious Christ, and of all the glories of the Christ at the disposal of His Church in order that she may fulfil all the good pleasure of the will of God.

In the course of dealing with these great subjects the apostle wrote some of the most wonderful things, if I may suggest such a distinction, that the New Testament contains concerning our Lord and Master. In the passage which we read this evening He deals with the threefold fact of His glory; His glory in relation to His Father in that, He "is the image of the invisible God"; His glory in relation to the whole creation in that, He is "the firstborn of all creation," all things coming by the word of His power, all things moving to the goal of His purpose, all things consisting, or being held together by Him; His glory in relation to the Church, in that, He is the Head of the Church, "the firstborn from the dead"; and, finally, He says of Him "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence."

It is not to be wondered at that in the midst of such spacious and wonderful declarations concerning the glory of Christ, the apostolic reference to the Cross should be equally spacious and equally mysterious. It is in this great passage in which we see Christ in His relation to the whole cosmos, its Originator, its Sustainer, its Goal; that we also see Christ in His relation to the chaos, its Redeemer, its Reconciler, its Restorer. In this passage the apostle declares that through Christ the work of reconciliation is accomplished; not only between individual men and God, not only in the complex mystery of an individual life, not only in this world, but also in the heavens.

Thus the apostle places the Cross of Christ at the very center of everything. As Christ Himself is at the center of all things, and as all things are upheld and made consistent by His power, so also at the center of all is His Cross. The power of the Cross is felt not only in the nearest things but to the utmost bound of creation. The work of the cross must be ultimately measured, not merely by what it does within individual life, but by what it accomplishes in the heavens, among angels, and at last by what it has done in the being and nature of God, because by it righteousness and peace are able to meet together and to kiss each other.

In an atmosphere so full of glory, in the presence of declarations concerning our Lord and His Cross so calculated to fill the soul with awe, we come to this central word, this word that touches us most nearly and most intimately, the word that reveals the way of our reconciliation.

This statement first reveals our need of reconciliation; secondly, declares the provision made by God in Christ, and unveils the method thereof in so far as it can be unveiled for our eyes; and, finally, makes clear to us the purpose of that reconciliation in the economy of God.

The need of reconciliation is made clear in the words, "You, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works." The way of reconciliation is declared in the words "reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." The ultimate purpose of reconciliation in the experience of man is declared in the last words, "to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before Him."

The need of reconciliation. Let us at once interpret the meaning of reconciliation by the term atonement, always remembering the true and simple meaning of that word. Our fathers were accustomed to say that the word atonement means at-one-ment. That has been contradicted, but it is a very interesting fact that the very last of our lexicographers, Murray, declares that to be the true meaning of the word. The verb "atone" is not that from which the substantive "atonement" is derived, for the substantive preceded the verb, and at-one-ment was a word used in our language before the verb "atone." The word "atonement" does not actually reveal the method of reconciliation; it rather describes the state of reconciliation. In our theological formulae we use the word as indicating the method which produces the result, and then attempt to explain it. I am not using the word in that way now, but rather in the old and simplest sense, that of being brought into at-one-ment with God.

Is there a need for this? Has man lost his at-one-ment with God? The apostle declares that he has and describes his condition as, "alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works." This is not mere rhetoric. It is a most careful setting forth of the truth concerning man in his sin, beginning with the profoundest, essential fact in human personality, the spiritual, which is alienated; describing in the next place the mental attitude, the consciousness of human life, "enemies in your mind"; and dealing finally, with that physical side of personality which is the expression of the spiritual, "in your evil works."

Alienated. The force of the word is not, aliens. It is not the fact that they were aliens that was in the mind of the apostle, but the fact that they were alienated, and that suggests activity on the part of God. It presupposes a reason which it does not yet declare, but it declares an action, an action on the part of God. They were alienated, cut off from fellowship with God, and that by the act of God. Just as surely as reconciliation is in one of its profoundest aspects judicial, so also is the alienation that makes reconciliation necessary. Translate the Greek word literally and it reads, "you were made to be strangers," a common word at that time, used of those who had lost their citizenship.

I pause to lay all this stress upon the true meaning and value of this word, because it involves a truth which we are in danger of forgetting. This word recognizes the sovereignty of God. We are very much inclined to speak today as though the fact that we are offspring of God puts us on some equality with God, which gives us warrant to talk to Him about our rights, to make terms with Him as to how He may deal with us, or even to descend low enough in the scale of blasphemy to

declare what we would do if we were God. All this is the tendency of the hour.

In the presence of the Cross, making the declaration of the need there is for reconciliation, the apostle declared that man is alienated from God by the act of God, and that in perfect righteousness by reason of man's own sin, the sin of his own will, of his own choice, wherein he has turned away from God. The turning away from God on the part of man, results in the definite act on the part of God by which He shuts man away from fellowship with Himself. "Your sins," said the prophet, "have separated between you and God." That is the Old Testament declaration. It is exactly the same truth. Because of your sins, thundered the prophets to Israel of old, God has cut you off from fellowship.

The sinning man may still pray, may still continue to cross the threshold of the earthly house of God, may still take His name upon his lips, may still sing the songs of the sanctuary, may still intellectually attempt to apprehend the doctrines of Christianity; but he has no personal fellowship with God. God will not admit him to that fellowship. No man can see the Lord without holiness. No man can have fellowship with God while he is still in his sin.

Let us pass to the next phrase and phase. In the deepest fact of human life men because of their sin are alienated from God, cut off from fellowship with him, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, they must be described in the words of the apostle as "Enemies in your mind." That is the consequence of alienation. The consciousness in the soul of man of God's attitude toward him in his sin, creates the attitude of enmity toward God on the part of man. Let me state it thus. God is forever at war with human failure, making no terms with it, making no peace with it, making no excuse for it; therefore, man is forever at war with the will of God which forbids his sin, which would interfere with his sin, which would take from him all the activities wherein he is destroying himself, and perpetuating evil in the universe of God. God is at war with sin in every man, and with every man who is sinning. God is angry with the wicked every day. The wrath of God abideth upon the ungodly. In the strange and mystic consciousness of every man there is the conviction that this is the attitude of holiness toward his impurity, of righteousness toward his wrong, of purity toward his corruption; and he answers it with the attitude of rebellion, and of persistent enmity. Man hates God because God hates man's sin. This is illustrated by the attitudes of men toward God in the world today. I am not speaking merely of blatant and brutal attacks upon the Christian religion. I am thinking also of the objection there is among men everywhere to the mention of the name of God, as though God had some cruel purpose toward man. We may talk of politics, of play, of books, but if we talk about God, we are considered objectionable. Why is it that men will not talk about God? Because they are enemies in their mind against God. Why? Because they know that God is at war with sin, that God excludes the wilfully sinning from fellowship, and will make no terms with their sin. Therefore, men are at enmity against God.

What is the final result? It is expressed in the words, "In your evil works." All the activities of life are evil, when they are activities out of harmony with the will of God. We look upon these activities, and divide between them as between vulgar and respectable, but all life which is godless life is evil life. The man who is alienated from God, and has no direct, immediate contact with Him and fellowship with Him, no conscious fellowship with God, that man is at enmity against God; if he does not blaspheme His name, if he does not write a book to prove He does not exist, nevertheless, he objects to hearing of Him with the result that the physical life is a life of evil, "in

your evil works."

Thus, while an initial act of sin called for alienation, continuance in sin results from alienation; and therein is revealed the utter helplessness of man in his sin. The profoundest fact in human life is the spiritual, and if it is excluded from God, alienated from God, then that spirit life has no right of entry within the veil; it has not ceased to be, but it has no way of appropriating the resources which strengthen it; it is offspring of God, and yet excluded from fellowship with God. Therefore, the mind is at enmity against God, and the works are evil works.

How can there be reconciliation between God and a man in that state? We turn immediately to the next words of our text; words full of sublimity, to be considered with great reverence, "Now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." In the words, "In the body of His flesh," the apostle refers to the actual human life of Jesus of Nazareth. Behold it for a moment, and think of it, as it stands in vivid, startling, almost appalling contrast to the picture of humanity which we have been considering. Man is alienated from God. This Man lived the life of perfect fellowship with God. Man because of his alienation in spirit from God, and the consequent enmity of mind against God, is in his bodily life performing evil works. This Man, because of His friendship with God, went about doing good, good works instead of evil works. This Man is of my humanity; but by this contrast He is seen to be entirely different from that which I am. We know the meaning of Paul's words, alienated, enemies in your mind, in evil works. We know every phase of the description experimentally. We know their inter-relation; that because we were away from God, our minds were at enmity against God, and the works of our lives were works of evil. Knowing these things, we come into the presence of this Man in the body of His flesh. Everything is of our nature, but is not of the nature of our living. We were alienated! He lived in perfect fellowship! Our mind was enmity! He was the Friend of God, the One in Whom alone that phrase has ever been perfectly fulfilled and manifested in meaning to the sons of men. Our works were evil. He did only good works.

Now, let us understand this. We have not yet reached the realm of reconciliation. Not by what He was in the body of His flesh can He reconcile me to God. The whole stupendous truth is declared in the next two words, "through death."

The incarnation is not reconciliation. In its very nature it cannot be, for God in Christ, in the perfection of the life of Jesus, is the sternest foe of sinning man. That fair and beautiful life condemns my faulty and sinning life.

The teaching that fell from His lips, the ethic He revealed as being the will of God for man, simply brings me to a consciousness of my humiliation. It is impossible for me to realize that high ideal.

All His deeds were deeds directed against the evil works in which I live. If I have nothing in Jesus other than that unveiling of Divine purpose, and that picture of a Man Who is of my nature but lived in other relationships, then there is still no reconciliation. I am still at war with God in Him. If Jesus Christ were merely a Teacher, a Social Reformer, He could win this country and all civilized countries within six months. But it is because He still stands for heart purity, for rectitude of spirit with God, for the fundamental things of holiness and righteousness and truth, that men are against Him. Not in the body of His flesh with its revelation of the true meaning of every human life and the divine intention for human life, is there reconciliation, nor can there be.

This Man died. Now, if our reconciliation could have been by incarnation, then that death was the most awful reflection on the power and wisdom of God that has occurred in all human history. Unless there be some profound meaning; unless it be, as Peter said it was, of "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," unless there be something infinitely more than the capture of a victim by brutal humanity and his murder, then the permission of that murder undermines my faith in the goodness of God and in His righteousness, for the problem of evil is focused here. Sigh as you will over the sorrows and sighings of humanity, over the problem of evil, there is no problem of evil in London slum or suburb, in China, Africa, or India, comparable to that of the Cross. What is the meaning of that death, the death of One Who in the body of His flesh lived a life of perfect harmony with God, realizing the Divine purpose, illumining the Divine meaning, and satisfying the Divine requirements?

"You... hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." This declaration does not attempt to tell all the secrets. The New Testament never has made that attempt, and those men who have made the attempt have proved their inability.

"Through death"; and if we would interpret the meaning of the word "death" there, we must do so by remembering the Person referred to. The image of the invisible God; the first-born of all creation; the Origin and Sustainer and Goal of the cosmos; in a mystery entirely baffling my poor finite mind, He came into flesh, and He died. That is the one death. There is no other death by the side of that. The death is infinite because the Person is infinite. In the body of His flesh "through death." Here is the manifestation, the unveiling. Just as in His life, the grace and glory of the Father are unveiled by their veiling in flesh; so that death, of infinite passion and pain, is an unveiling. We must interpret the death by the One Who died. There is no analysis of this, no plumbing of its depths, no possibility of satisfactory theorizing!

"Through death." What is death? Death is the penalty of sin. We cannot escape that word penalty. Death is the penalty of sin, not merely its issue, its outcome; that also for the method of God's penalty is always poetic. Penalty is the fruitage of sin necessarily. Then here is the mystery, that the Sinless died.

May God help us to remember this that before that Cross of Calvary we never can see everything. These are some of the things we may see. In the mystery of that Cross, this One upon Whom our eyes have been resting is not in conflict with God. He is working together with God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"; not merely in the days of public teaching, not merely in the days of miracle and wonder-working, not merely in the subsequent days of resurrection light, but surely also in the Cross, "God was in Christ reconciling." "You... now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." That act of death no man can fathom. It excludes me forevermore as I try to understand its deepest meaning. So far as I am allowed to say this let me say it, I have never read a book on the atonement that has quite satisfied me, but every one has given me some new and true view of it. Still, I have never read a book that has satisfied me. There are quantities and elements that defy analysis and elude comprehension. That death, at the heart of the universe, is felt to its remotest bound, for He reconciles all things in the earth and in the heavens to Himself, and in that great reconciliation, great because of the Person and the death, I find my possibility of reconciliation. By that death is created the greatest possibility for the man who is alienated, that he may come into fellowship with God; for the man who is at enmity against

God, that he may come into friendship with God; for the man whose works are evil, that he may come to fruitfulness in all good works before God.

Now, I am certainly touching things we are all familiar with, for I am touching the realm of the experience of the saints. There are men and women, thank God, many of them in this house who know I am speaking the language of their own experience, men and women who can say, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," by which they mean God speaks to them and they speak to Him. They call to God and He hears them. Men may indulge in all the speculative arguments against prayer that they please, but they will never disturb the certain confidence of these people. They know, they hear the voice amid the roar of the city, they hear the voice in the silence of their own heart. God speaks to us, we speak to God. We are no longer alienated, made to be strangers; we are made fellow-citizens with the saints, and fellow-citizenship with the saints means right of access to God. We know that God is, not because you have argued for Him, or demonstrated Him by syllogism, but because He speaks and we hear, we speak and He answers. That possibility was created through this death. It is by what that death has done for us in our own moral consciousness that we have found our way to God. It is out of that consciousness of sin forgiven, which in this same chapter the apostle speaks of as "our redemption the forgiveness of sins," that we have come to fellowship with Him. That fellowship means friendship, we love to speak of Him and all His wondrous ways. In the days of formalism, when Malachi delivered His message, he declared, "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another and the Lord hearkened and heard." God is still hearkening and hearing men and women who love Him, as they speak of His name out of friendship with Him, and love of Him.

This fellowship and friendship issues in the possibility of fruitfulness in goodness. Very slowly does the full fruit come! We know that all too well; but thank God, He is patient with us. It is first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, and He with patience waits for the final fruitage.

The ultimate purpose is that we should be holy, that is, no longer alienated but in fellowship with life, holy in character as He is; without blemish, that is, no longer enemies, but by love satisfying love; and unreprouvable, that is, no longer evil workers, but pleasing Him in all things.

Let this last matter be most carefully observed. The work of reconciliation which He did is necessary to a reconciled life. Concerning this there is very much false thinking today. The atonement is too often spoken of as though it afforded a mere provision of pardon. It does that; but infinitely more. Its results are judicial, necessary to experience. It is judicial, but it is radical; it touches character.

Atonement was necessary. Until alienation, and enmity, and evil works are dealt with there can be no reconciliation. God cannot be reconciled to man in his sin. Man must be reconciled to God in His holiness. The possibility of holiness is the true gospel hope for those who know their alienation, and who in response to the constraint of the Holy Spirit enter into fellowship by the way of the Cross. We may find our way back into intimate personal fellowship with God; "Nothing in my hand I bring Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

If we so come, we shall know the reconciliation; and it will be reconciliation that begins with the consciousness of God and issues in love of God, and finds its crown in the works that are pleasing to God.

Colossians 1:27. Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory.

Colossians 1:27.

Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory.

... to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...

Colossians 1:27

The text is part of a great argument. The words describe the central of three mysteries, which yet are not three but one. By way of introduction, let us notice the relation of these words to the context.

The Apostle in this epistle deals preeminently with the glories of Christ, and with these as at the disposal of the Church. The principal declarations of the epistle are, firstly, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"; and, secondly, "Ye are complete in Him."

In the paragraph in which the text occurs the Apostle uses the word "mystery" three times. In verse 24, he says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church"; omitting verse 25, which as to argument is in parenthesis, we read again in verse 26, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations." Then, in verse 27, the words of our text, "God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Then, in the second chapter, and the second verse, "Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ."

First, the Church, the mystery hid from the ages; secondly, this mystery, Christ in you, the hope of glory; finally, the mystery of God, even Christ. The word "mystery" has a uniform sense in the New Testament, and that sense has been most lucidly expressed by Dr. Handley Moule: "A mystery is a truth undiscoverable, except by revelation. Never necessarily, as our popular use of the word may suggest, a thing unintelligible or perplexing in itself. In Scripture a mystery may be a fact which, when revealed, we cannot understand in detail, though we can know it and act upon it. A mystery is a thing only to be known when revealed." If that definition of the use of the word "mystery" in the New Testament be accepted, the Apostle speaks of the Church as hidden in past ages, and never discovered until revealed.

He then passes behind the mystery of the Church and comes to the words of my text, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Church consists of souls in whom Christ has had a personal advent, and in whom He lives. This is another mystery, never to be explained by the unspiritual, never to be perfectly explained by the spiritual. The mystery of individual souls in whom Christ dwells lies at the back of the mystery of the Church.

Then, presently, he passes on, still following his argument, until he comes to the yet deeper mystery, the mystery of God, which is Christ. In order to see the connection let us take these in the other order. The first great mystery of God is Christ Himself. The central mystery of Christianity is that of Christ formed in individual souls. The final mystery is that of the Church of God fulfilling high and holy functions throughout all ages.

Now, out of the great sweep of that argument we take the central words, and turn from the things introducing, and the things issuing, that we may consider the central mystery of the Christian faith, which is thus expressed by the Apostle, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The first and second advents of our Lord initiate and perfect this mystery of the realization of Christ in the individual life of the trusting soul. In His first advent He came to atone, to make possible His entrance. At His second advent He will come to perfect His possession of individual life. I share in the atonement of the first advent and the perfecting of the second advent if he have His advent in my personal life.

Our rejoicing in His first advent, and our gladness in the hope of the second advent, are alike due to the mystery of His personal coming into our own life. Let us consider that central advent, first as to the fact suggested, then as to the experience resulting. First, "Christ in you"; and, secondly, "the hope of glory."

"Christ in you." It is significant that at this point the Apostle uses the title rather than the name of our Lord. This indicates the inclusion of the Person and His work. There is no one perfectly sure of Jesus Christ in history unless he is sure of Him in experience. No one can have a final demonstration of truth concerning the nature of Christ or His work save as he can say, I know Christ because He is in me. It may be said that this is mystical, and cannot be explained to the scientific age in which we live. That is perfectly true. That is what the Apostle says. It is a mystery; this presence in the individual life of Christ Himself in all the marvelous glory of His Person as Very God and Very Man. Human sympathy, human love, human purity, and human power, all surcharged with those infinite resources of God, which made Him as man perfect Victor, are present in all in whom He is formed, eventually and through processes, to make them equally victorious with Himself. It is a mystery, but if it be a mystery that cannot be explained to the scientific age it is a fact known in the lives of countless multitudes.

Christ in me—and I need hardly apologize for testimony at this point, for speaking rather as a witness than an advocate—Christ in me is the most certain thing in all my personal experience. He is present in my inner life, so that I have not to ascend to heaven to find Him or descend into the depths to bring Him up. Neither have I to go on long pilgrimages to reach Him. Amid the hurry and rush of the day, the Christ is within. He was not always there. He came by the act of the Spirit when I fulfilled the conditions of the Word, but His advent was positive, and His presence is as real as, and more real to me than, the advent long ago in the Judean country far away. The historic is proved by the experimental.

As I have already said, the use of the title suggests not merely the presence of the Person in the life, it suggests also the work of Christ in you. He was at once Prophet, Priest, and King. "Christ in you," the one Prophet and Teacher by whom the whole life is to be governed and ordered, whose philosophy is the only philosophy, whose teaching is the only teaching which the soul trusts.

"Christ in you," also as Priest, the one perfect Saviour, operating in the inner shrine of the individual life on the altar, and by the way of sacrifice, so that through the intermediation, not of Christ far off, but in me, I have personal and immediate access to the Presence of God, which is both within and encompassing me. Then "Christ in you" also as King, ruling all the life, not by the law of carnal ordinances, written on tables of stone, but by the perpetual inspiration of His indwelling presence.

This is the essential, personal, individual miracle of Christianity. Christ within, the Prophet, teaching so that I need no man to teach me. Christ within, the Priest, so that I need no other priest and need take no pilgrimage to find a shrine of worship. It is in my own life, for He is there. Christ within, as King, so that I bow the knee to no scepter and no throne, except to such as He authorizes.

"Christ in you." That is the great miracle, the great mystery, the individual fact on which all the other facts of Christianity are based, and through which the other forces of Christianity become operative in the history of man. Christ in me—the Christ light—so that I see with His eyes. Christ in me—the Christ aspiration—so that I desire with His desire. Christ in me—the Christ impulse—so that I am driven as He was driven. Christ in me—the Christ consciousness—so that the world's sin burdens me in the same fashion as it burdened Him, and the world's agony hurts me as the world's agony hurt Him.

What is a Christian man? A "Christo-centric" man is a man in whom Christ is enthroned at the center of personality, not as a sentiment, but as a Person; not as an ideal without, but as a dynamic at work within.

What is the issue as to the Christ and as to myself? As to the Christ, He gains in every soul He indwells an inheritance. As to the indwelt soul, that soul gains in the Christ an inheritance. If that statement seems to be almost unbelievable it is but the teaching of the Word, and the experience of the soul answers it and seals it true. Is Christ formed in you? Hear me, for I speak with great reverence, and yet with all boldness—that Christ is richer for having you. That is the individual application of the magnificent argument of the Ephesian epistle in which Paul tells us plainly that God gains an inheritance in the saints. But what does Christ gain in you? He gains an instrument through which He can flash His light upon some other dark soul. He gains a medium through which He is able to touch with healing other wounded spirits. He gains a channel through which He is able to move out in the grace of healing to other wounded hearts. He gains whatever He comes to possess. By His advent nineteen hundred years ago He came to claim the wide world, and He will never cease to work until He has absolutely won it and subdued it. There may be other methods ahead. There may be other dispensations. But, believe me, He will not fail or be discouraged until He hath set His judgment in the earth, and answered the waiting isles with His own law. But if I am to be—oh, matchless miracle of grace—the means and medium of manifestation what do I gain? I gain all His resources, for I have fellowship with Him in all the larger purposes of His life.

Now let us turn to the experience resulting, "the hope of glory." The word "glory" here refers to the great consummation in which God's purposes are to be perfectly fulfilled; in which Christ, seeing the travail of His soul, is to be satisfied; in which the Church, with one voice of perfect song, will say, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want"; and in which the whole creation, which is still waiting in its

groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God, will find its groaning cease, and join the chorus of praise to Him who sits upon the throne. God's glory consists in the realization of the purpose of His love in all that His hands have made. Christ in you is the hope of this glory. What is hope? I often wish we bore in mind more carefully the real significance of the good old Anglo-Saxon word "hope." It does not mean foundationless expectation, but rather confidence in something yet to be, with an accompanying endeavor to reach it.

Christ in you is the hope of glory. Christ in you creates the consciousness of the better thing to be. Christ in you drives you with perpetual passion towards its realization. Christ in you is the one unanswerable evidence of the ultimate victory. He is always singing the song of the future. He is also always energizing the effort of the present. Is there anything we need more today than to hear the anthem of the indwelling Christ telling us of the victory that is yet to be? It is a wonderful thing how in the history of the race, whenever men have really climbed the mountain heights and looked out, they have sung. Great dirges have been uttered, but always in the valleys, and they have their place. But all the seers, the prophets, and the psalmists in all human history and literature, when they have climbed have begun to sing. The dream of the golden age is part of humanity's inheritance from God, and, notwithstanding the fact of man's sin, has never been utterly obliterated. It has been caricatured, and men have drawn us the most curious pictures of the age to be, from Moore's Utopia to Bellamy's Looking Back. Yet underneath the mistaken interpretation is the passion for something better and the belief in its possibility. If Jesus Christ had not come into the world all these songs would have ceased long ago. They had well-nigh ceased when He came. The Hebrew nation had produced no prophet for four hundred years. They had been years of hopeless despair in Judaism, and the great thinkers and the great hopers of the world had lost hope. The Greek teachers had said, and it was their final word, We can only ask questions; we wait for another to answer them. So said Plato, and so said Socrates. But Jesus came to little Bethlehem, and angels brought the music again that men had lost, and it has continued through the centuries, permeating the literature of all civilized people. Men are singing of "a good time coming," of which they would not have dreamed if our Christ had not come to start them singing again. He has started the music, and all the world hears it, and yet it never becomes perfectly articulate, perfectly harmonious, until He sings it in the individual life. Thank God for the company in whose lives Christ is singing the anthem of His coming victory. We are in the midst of the smoke and din of battle. There are days when we sit and fold our hands and say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" No Christian man has ever waited that out but that presently there came singing back through his soul the answer of the Christ. When I face human agony, and am appalled by the suffering of humanity, the Christ in me says, "I know all the pain better than thou. I have trodden the via dolorosa alone, and as out of My cross and suffering there sprang the light and glory of the first resurrection morning, so through the suffering and sorrow of humanity at last I will lead them into the light." Then I go back and pick up my piece of work again. Christ in me is the hope of glory; the anthem of the ultimate in my soul is perpetually the inspiration of the present.

But "Christ in you, the hope of glory" means a great deal more than that He sings an anthem of the future. That would be a poor thing by comparison. That in some senses is what other men did in other ages of the world's history. But the great value of my text is that Christ is in me as hope; not merely in the sense of expectation, but in the sense of endeavor, Christ energizes the present.

He who gives us a vision of the ultimate as He sings the anthem of it in our heart is present to deal with all the forces which oppose. When I say to men, "God loves you," I say it, first of all, because He sings it in my heart, but I say it knowing that when I say it He will clothe my poor word with the power of God, and men will know it is true because He says it through me.

If there be a larger outlook and application than this, and surely there is—if the hope of glory means that at last the wrongs will be righted, and the tyrannies broken, the despotisms spoiled, and humanity delivered, then remember that Christ in me means power in me to help to bring it to pass. I am renegade if I sit still and listen to His singing and do not co-operate in His effort.

The song of the coming victory is the call to present battle, but it is, moreover, power for the fray, ability to accomplish. So the real optimist is the man in whom Christ is singing and Christ is driving. He is not a superficial optimist. He does not shut his eyes to evil and say there is none, but he looks through it. Take up your letter to the Romans, and there is not a more optimistic book in the whole Bible. Its grand song is "rejoicing in hope of the glory." The man who wrote Romans was not a man who shut his eyes to existing evils and said things were better and there was nothing to trouble about. If you want to know what evil is at its worst read the first chapter. The Christian man is the man in whom Christ dwells, and who, therefore, has Christ's vision; and Christ was the Man who said to His own generation, "Ye are an evil generation," and yet who died to master the evil and redeem the generations and set up the city of God. So if the great untold mystery of God in Christ has become the personal mystery of Christ in me, then what? Then I see with His eyes all the evil, and evil is never so devilish to the conscience as when eyes anointed with Christ's life look out on it. But that is not the ultimate thing. What is the ultimate thing? It is that He who came to destroy the works of the devil will destroy them in me. He who came to destroy them throughout all the round world until His kingdom is established cannot fail.

His victory is assured. The song of it is in our hearts. God help us to answer the call of the song and hasten the triumph.

Colossians 2:6. How God Has Made Possible What He Requires.

Colossians 2:6.

How God Has Made Possible What He Requires.

As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.

Colossians 2:6

In reading these words we find ourselves in the same realm of ideas as that in which our thought has moved in the preceding meditation. The figure of walking is employed in dealing with the subject of living. The idea of a destination and progress toward that destination is at once the simplest and fullest suggestion. Life is considered as an effort toward a consummation. It is a walk along a highway that leads to a destiny.

In this text, however, we find ourselves in a new atmosphere. We have traveled far from the Old Testament, and are breathing the very spirit of the New. There we found the Divine requirement, and considered the agreement necessary to its fulfilment. Here we are in the presence of the Divine provision, and in its light are enabled to consider our responsibilities. There we had ever to end by saying that we had not found the Gospel, but only the need for it. Here we are beyond the Gospel, knowing its terms, realizing its benefits, and facing the obligations arising therefrom, "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

The Gospel is implicated in the apostle's reference to receiving Christ Jesus the Lord; while the responsibilities and privileges of obedience are summed up in the command, "Walk in Him."

The line I propose to follow is to consider, first, the Person referred to, "Christ Jesus the Lord"; second, the relation referred to, "Ye received Christ Jesus the Lord"; third, the command, "So walk in Him."

In the first of these considerations we shall find the Gospel itself, inclusively and exhaustively implicated in the titles and name, "Christ Jesus the Lord." In the second we shall discover the way by which that Gospel becomes of real value to us, "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord." In the third, we shall face the new responsibility of agreement with God it creates, and consequently of walking humbly with Him, loving mercy, and doing justly.

Let us endeavor, then, first to fasten our thought on the Person Who is here presented to us, and the way in which He is here presented, "Christ Jesus the Lord." Within these words as applied to the One Who bears the title and name the whole Gospel is implicated. In the first title and name, "Christ Jesus," Saviourhood in all its fulness is intended and affirmed. In the final title, "the Lord," sovereignty is declared. The Saviourhood leads to the Sovereignty, from which, indeed, it has proceeded. The whole description of the Person constitutes the fullest and most glorious designation of the Son of God. In the New Testament writings this name and these titles constantly recur; sometimes each of them alone, Christ Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus, Jesus the Lord,

the Lord Jesus Christ, or, as in our text, Christ Jesus the Lord. I believe that the grouping is never haphazard. There was always some reason in the mind of the writer for the particular form in which the name or title occurred, and that particular reason invariably appears in the context if we take time to consider that context carefully. I believe that in this particular grouping of the familiar titles and name of our Master there is a revelation of supreme importance if we are to apprehend the Gospel.

The familiar title, "Christ," is supremely the title of His Saviourhood. This word "Christ" is but the Greek form of the old Hebrew word "Messiah," and its central thought is of anointing. The Hebrew thought of Messiah, as the Anointed One always had in it two elements, Kingship and Priesthood. The Messiah to the Hebrew was the King-Priest, both the One Who reigns and the One Who mediates. These two elements are perpetually united in suggestion when we use the word "Christ." The title "Christ" suggests government and grace, requirement and reconciliation, law and love, light and life. Consequently, in their very merging, in the fact that these two master ideas are both perpetually suggested by the word "Christ," that word becomes the supreme title of the Saviourhood of the Person referred to. He is surely King, governing, requiring, giving law, shedding light; but, with equal assurance, He is Priest, administering grace, bringing about reconciliation, expressing love, and communicating life to the souls on whom the light has fallen. The King is also the Priest. The King Who has supreme authority, and Whose law has been broken, is the Priest mediating between Himself and the sinner who has broken His law. The lawgiver—never for one moment lowering the standard of requirement, never consenting to condone sin or pass it over as though it did not matter—is yet the Lover of my soul Who comes to me in that state of bondage and pollution which results from my breaking of His law, and so deals with me that the chains are broken and the pollution is cleansed, and I can find my way back into the place of loyalty to His supreme Kingship. Consequently, the Cross is the trysting place where God and the soul meet, keep appointment, pass into agreement, for the Cross is the throne of the King and the altar of the Priest.

With equal separateness from every other part of the designation, let us fasten our attention on the next word, "Jesus." This word is supremely the name of human relationship. It is His name as Man. It is His name as friend of sinners. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." The name "Joshua" was a name especially created for a man. The man who was to succeed Moses in the leadership of the Hebrew people was named Hoshea, meaning salvation; but when he was to become the leader his name was mingled with the name Yahweh, or Jehovah, so that Joshua means the salvation of the Lord. In Old Testament history it was borne by two persons: the great leader who brought the people into the land, and the priest seen in the vision of Zechariah standing by the altar. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem long ago there were probably hundreds of Joshuas in Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem. So when it was announced, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins," the significance of the declaration was that in Him the intention of the name was to find fulfilment. Then bear in mind Paul's declaration concerning the name: "God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." The name given to Him in babyhood, and carried by Him in boyhood and through manhood, was the sign of an intention. He received it anew when He ascended to the right hand of the Father as the sign of the fact that He had accomplished the

intention. The name became the name above every name; but it is not a Divine name, it is a human name; it is the name that brings Him near to me in my humanity; it is the name borne by One Who looked out on life with eyes like mine, felt its emotions with a heart like mine, walked its way with feet like mine, did its work with hands like mine; it is so truly the name of a man of my humanity, that I feel that I may, without irreverence, lay my hand on His and call Him Brother-Man. That is the supreme significance of the name Jesus, and thus it expresses the truth the title Christ affirms, "for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." In its relation to the Person who bears it the name reminds us that He brings infinite things to our level in order that we may understand them. Jesus of Nazareth was the central, final, ultimate anthropomorphism. Because men could encompass a conception of God only by projecting their own personalities into immensity, God out of immensity contracted His personality to that of a human being, that men might see Him and know Him, grasp the infinite, fathom the unfathomable, and come through flesh into communion with the eternal spirit. In His manhood Jesus was the sacramental revelation of the things that are infinite in their splendor, their glory, and their magnificence. The name "Jesus" reminds me of the Man, and yet reminds me of the Man through Whom I am enabled to find my way into fellowship with infinite things.

It is the name, moreover, of One Who in that very nearness to me in His manhood inspires the love which inspires loyalty. How often young people have said to me, and with absolute reason, How can I love God? I can love father, mother, wife, child, brother, sister; but how can I love God? I can reverence Him, adore Him; but how can I love Him? To such inquiries I reply, familiarize yourself with Jesus; walk with Him, talk with Him as He is seen in the Gospel stories, and you will love Him, and that is to love God, I am not now speaking of walking and talking with Him in those profounder exercises of the soul to which the saints come after long processes of discipline. I am speaking of the very first and simplest things. Take up your New Testament, read it, and think in the presence of the One of Whom you are reading; and I defy you to do that, without coming presently to love Jesus. The infinite tenderness of that great heart, the abounding strength of that great soul, the splendid courage of the Man Who dared confront all the vested interests and call them what they were, hypocrites, vipers; the exquisite tenderness of the voice which, tremulous with emotion, could say to weary souls, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—these are the things that compel love. Idealize the reality revealed in the Gospel, get to know Him, and you will come to love Him, and love Him in spite of yourself, and in spite of your sin; even though you go on sinning, you must love Him if you see Him and know Him. But ever remember that loving Him will not bring you salvation. There are thousands of people who love Jesus but have no faith in Him, who never repose confidence in Him, never crown Him, never bend the neck to Him, never cast themselves in hopelessness and helplessness on His mercy.

We come, then, to the last title of the text, at which also we will endeavor to look in separateness from the rest. Yet not wholly can this be done, as we shall see. "The Lord." This is supremely the word of His Godhead, the word that reminds us that He is the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Accomplisher of human redemption. When we read this title it reacts on all that we have been thinking in the presence of the former title, and the simple name as it suggests the infinite value and nature of the things we have been referring to. "Christ" is the name of the Saviour, merging in the word the thoughts of Kingship and Priesthood. He is the Lord, which is to say, His Kingship is

ultimate, final sovereignty. Mark what this apostle says about Him. The apostle calls Him the Son of God's love. He describes Him as the "Image of the invisible God." He declares that He is the fount and origin, the strength and goal, of all creation. The sovereignty of this King, then, is ultimate sovereignty, beyond which there can be no appeal. Consequently, His Priesthood is ultimate priesthood. He came to reconcile all things to Himself. This was done by the blood of His Cross. When we read that declaration the emphasis should be where I have placed it. Think not of the sacramental blood as being merely the blood of a man. It was the unveiling before finite, human eyes, of sacrifice in the heart of God Himself, ultimate in its values, universal in its reach.

This final title, moreover, illuminates the central name "Jesus," the symbol of manhood. This Jesus is the Lord, and so we learn the eternal glory of humanity: that humanity was in the purpose of God in His eternal thought, and that man was created to share the eternal life of God, that Man is to last while God Himself shall last, and so He has exalted Man to His own right hand, and given to Him the name that is above every name, the name of glorified humanity, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So I say again in these hurried sentences that in the significance of the titles and the name the whole Gospel is implicated. What a Gospel it is! How mighty, how vast, how satisfying! If some soul, sin-burdened and undone, may be asking, How can it be that by the life and death of One two millenniums ago I should hope to escape the penalty and the power of sin? let that soul remember Who the One is, Who long ago appeared in this world of ours and wrought out into visibility the things of the eternities. He is Christ Jesus the Lord!

Now let me reverse the order, and employ that which we find in the earlier part of this epistle. He is the Lord, ultimate Sovereign, and ultimate Saviour; He is Christ, on Whom the holy chrism rests, the anointed King to reign, and Priest to redeem. And for me, that I may not be intellectually bewildered by the vastness of the provision, He is Jesus of Nazareth, man of my manhood, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, spirit of my spirit; man of trust and temptation, of toil. I come to Him as Jesus, and I find the Christ, and through Him I find God, and, behold, His Cross is the trysting place where He and I meet and agree in order that we may walk together.

So let us pass to the second part of our consideration, the relation between the human soul and this Person referred to in the text, as it is revealed in the words, "Ye received." In all evangelistic work the term "to receive Christ" is very familiar, and it is a perfectly accurate and strictly Biblical word. It is well, however, to consider what the New Testament writers meant when they spoke of receiving Christ. In a memorable passage John used the word and interpreted it, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." By that added sentence of interpretation we have John's conception of what it is to receive Christ: it is to believe on His name. While that is fundamental, there are other things implicated. All are found in our context. Writing to these saints in Colossae, Paul said that he had heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and of their love toward the saints, and of their hope. In that passage we have three very familiar words—faith, love, hope. Moreover, they occur in an order and sequence, suggestive and closely related to the grouping of the title and names in the text. Whether this was incidental or intentional on the part of Paul matters nothing; that there is spiritual value here I affirm, and of that we shall attempt to make use.

Faith is the word which supremely indicates relationship to Christ, that is, to the Saviour. Love is the word which supremely indicates relationship to Jesus, that is, to the Man Who is the friend of sinners. Hope is the word which supremely indicates the relationship to the Lord, that is, to the Creator and Sustainer. So that in the soul's relation to the Person presented, which is described inclusively as receiving that One, these great activities of the soul are found—faith, love, hope. To have faith in Him, to love Him, to hope in Him, is to receive Him. I should be very sorry to convey to the mind of any person the idea that this is a sequence in the sense that we mechanically start with faith, then, as a second blessing, have love, and, as a third blessing, hope. These things grow out of each other as the fruit grows out of the flower, and the flower from the root. There is one supreme and fundamental attitude of the soul toward this Christ which means reception of Him; it is the attitude of faith, and wherever that faith is exercised, it follows that love springs up in the heart; and wherever love growing out of faith in a human soul springs up in the heart, there begins the song which is the song of hope. Faith fastening on Christ as Saviour expresses itself in love to Jesus as Friend, and finds its hope and confidence in Him as Lord. So He is received.

Faith is supremely the word indicating relation to Christ as Saviour. Faith marks the soul's relation to the two elements that merge in the Saviour's work. He is King, He is Priest. Faith is submission to His Kingship, and confidence in His Priesthood. Faith is repentance, which is submission of the soul to Kingship. Faith is confidence in His Saviourhood, which is the determined risking of everything on His great words and abandoning forevermore the cares and anxieties about the past, with which we never can deal, but with which we may trust Him to deal. The answer of the soul in faith is response to the two elements that merge in His Saviourhood, submission to His Kingship, confidence in His Priesthood. This is to receive by faith.

Taking the other title I declare that Christ may be thus received by faith, because this anointed King and Priest is the everlasting Lord. I declare that He can be trusted, because this everlasting Lord, Who is also the anointed King and Priest, is Jesus stooping to my level, enabling me to put confidence in Him because He is Man of my manhood.' When, through the infinite simplicity of His true manhood, my soul enters into submission and confidence, lo, I find I have kissed the scepter of the eternal God, and I have trusted in the heart and passion of that self-same eternal One.

He is also received by love. Love is the word indicating the relation to Jesus the Man, the Friend of sinners. It marks the soul's response to Himself. Thus He is received by love. To know the man Jesus is to love Him, though you may not be able to accept the doctrine of His Deity. To know the Man Jesus is to love Him, even though you are puzzled by the mystery of His atoning work. As man, He is to be loved. The soul which thus goes out to Him in love does by that love receive Him. You will not become a Christian soul because you understand the doctrines of the Christian faith. It is possible to understand them in large measure, and yet never to be a Christian. Intellectual orthodoxy concerning the Person of Jesus Christ will not make you a Christian. That which does so is relation to Him, submission of the soul to Him, the going out of the soul in love to Him, if that love become the inspiration of submission and surrender. Love becomes faith when it is submissive to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, finally, we come to the reception of this Person in hope which is supremely the word indicating relationship to the Lord, the eternal One, the Creator, the Sustainer. It marks the soul's confidence in God. John said in one of his epistles, "Every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself,

even as He is pure." Am I not right when I say that there is no hope in this world worth having that is not set on God? It is the only hope that maketh not ashamed, because it is hope which is laid up in the heavens. Are we not learning this today through suffering and tears, through slaughter and through blood? We centered our hopes on armament or disarmament, and both have jailed us. There is no hope that maketh not ashamed but the hope set on God. But when this Christ is received, when the heart goes out to Him as Christ in faith and as Jesus in love, we find beneath and beyond the veil of His flesh Deity, Godhead. Then there begins—on the darkest day, and in spite of the most abject failure of the past, under the blight and mildew and blasting that have cursed the being—a song of hope, not hope trusting to my endeavor, but hope centered and founded on God.

I can hope in Him, the infinite One, because though I cannot encompass Him in my thinking, I find Him in Jesus. I must hope in this infinite One because, although I cannot understand how such a vastness of might and majesty can stoop to my level, yet in the Christ I have beheld the vision, and dare not despair.

This, then, is the relation and order of receiving Christ: faith, submitting to Kingship, confiding in Saviourhood; love, fastening on that central Person represented by the name of ineffable sweetness, Jesus; and hope springing in the heart to sing its song and light the darkest day, because in Him the soul has reached God!

So we come to the last of our divisions, the walk enjoined. For the present we shall deal with this in broad outline only, "As ye therefore received Him"—in your faith, in your love, in your hope—"so walk in Him." The walk here enjoined is continuity of faith. Continuity of faith means persistent loyalty to Christ as King, and unswerving confidence in Him as Saviour. Mark the two elements: first, unswerving loyalty to His Kingship. I admit the necessity for that. I see it; I strive after it: but Oh, my God, I do not do it. I stumble and fall. Then let me never forget the second, unswerving confidence in His Saviourhood. The subtlest temptation that ever assaults the heart of man, of the struggling saint, is the temptation to doubt God's willingness to forgive. Unswerving confidence in His Saviourhood means that I make confession of my sin to God, and rest in the knowledge that He will forgive and put away and blot out. He does none of those things easily, for behind them lies forevermore the infinite, unfathomable passion and sorrow of His heart. To walk in Him is to walk in continuity of faith.

Walking in Him as we received Him is to walk forevermore guarding love. How are we to guard love? By yielding to the fear which results from the casting out of fear. When we know His perfect love it casteth out fear, but it inspires a new fear. No longer do we fear the consequences of our sin as it affects us, but we fear the consequences of sin as it affects Him. No longer do I fear that He will blast and damn me; but I fear lest I crucify my Lord anew, and put Him to an open shame. Strange, beauteous, paradox of the life of love; His love has banished all my fear for myself; but, oh, I am afraid lest I wound Him, grieve Him, cause sorrow to Him. To walk in Him is to abide in love by faith, in keeping the commandments. The experience must be cultivated in the secret place; and the expression will be manifested in public places, in my perpetual love of His name, and the kindling of my eye when He is referred to, and my readiness to speak of Him, and in my love to all the saints, and for all for whom Christ died, and who are near and dear to Him.

Finally, the walk is maintenance of hope. As in receiving Christ hope was born in the soul, so in walking with Him that hope is to be maintained. We shall maintain hope as we dwell in the light which keeps our vision of His ultimate purpose clear. Our hope will be maintained as we resolutely refuse to doubt Him on the darkest day. Paul talks about the things by which the saints would be surrounded and might be disturbed: vain deceits, rudiments of the world, traditions of men not after Christ. If we listen to the vain deceits of men, if we allow ourselves to be bound by the traditions of men, if we measure our outlook and inspire our thinking by the rudiments of the world, hope will surely die out. In proportion as we are walking in Him, though it be amid the furnace, we shall sing, we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of God. So that to walk in Him is to walk in faith, that is, humbly with God; in love, that is, loving mercy; in hope, that is, doing justly. All this is made possible to us by the Gospel.

This is the Gospel. This is good news. Here I find not merely that which God requires of me, not only that in order to fulfil His requirement I must be in agreement with Him; but that He has come to my level that we may agree together, and that in Christ He descends and walks with me in order that I may walk with Him.

This is based on God's faith in Himself and therefore in man, on God's love, which needs no argument, love so amazing, so Divine; on God's hope in Himself and so for man.

The question of the moment, the last, the final question is, "Shall we receive this Christ?"

Let us begin where God intended man to begin, at the center, in Jesus. Let us remember that receiving Him does not mean, first of all, perfect understanding of all the mystery of His Person, or the doctrines of His grace. It means surrender of the soul to Jesus. That is the first thing. If we begin thus, where God intends us to begin, let us do so, including all that God intends us to include. This Jesus is the Christ, anointed King and Saviour. This Jesus is the Lord, the eternal, the immortal.

Is not that Gospel enough for you? Can you not trust yourself to the vastness of this strength? Sin not against the light by postponing thy reception of this Christ, but ere this day closes receive Him, and thus begin to walk in Him.

Colossians 2:9. The Deity Of Jesus.

Colossians 2:9.

The Deity Of Jesus.

In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Colossians 2:9

In the midst of multiplied service it is good that we should ever and anon remind our hearts of the central creeds which are the perpetual inspiration of service. No one, in thoughtful moments, can possibly undervalue a creed, a belief, a conviction, a certainty of the mind. I very readily concede that written creeds are encumbrances, imprisoning the mind, giving occasion for heresy hunting, and sometimes creating dishonesty on the part of such as profess to hold them. No written creed can suffice for a thinking man for long. But a creed is an absolute necessity. All service springs from belief. I do nothing save upon the basis of conviction, and the conviction which lies behind the conduct is the creed. Attempts have been made to differentiate between religion and theology, and I am quite conscious that there is a difference. But if we make the difference so marked as to entirely separate the two, then we have not understood either the one or the other. It has been said that religion is the life of God in the soul of a man, and theology is what a man thinks about God. I am prepared to accept that as correct definition, and yet I remind you that these two things are interdependent. A man's life is the outcome of his thought.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And it is important to Christian life and Christian service that we should understand what our underlying creed is.

In Christianity creed has always to do with Christ. The Church is Christocentric, and all the differences among theologians are, in the last analysis, Christological differences. The difference between Trinitarian and Unitarian is difference in conviction about Christ. The difference between Calvinist and Arminian is difference in interpretation of the meaning of Christ and His work. Yes, and if you will let me come to a matter which some may consider to be of minor importance, the difference between what is known as the premillennial view of the advent and the post-millennial is, finally, difference in opinion concerning the Christ. So that if you take the minor differences, or the great differences which divide Christendom at this hour, they are all differences concerning Him.

From the writings of the Apostle Paul a very few sentences might be gathered as setting forth his own personal relation to Christ. As to experience, you would naturally select his word, "To me to live is Christ." As to the perpetual burden of his exhortation to Christian souls you would select his word, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." As to his conception of Christian service, of its nearest and furthest application, you would select the words, "I am debtor... I am ready... I am not ashamed of the Gospel." And, similarly, his Christology is expressed in this text. All that Paul wrote about Jesus Christ, and all that he believed concerning Jesus Christ, and all

which he did in the name of Jesus Christ, finds here its simplest and sublimest expression.

This letter is the crowning one of his system so far as the glories of Christ are concerned, and it is co-related to the Ephesian letter, in which he shows the Church in all its ultimate beauty. But in this letter he is dealing with Christ, and in my text you have the profoundest thing he wrote, the gathering up into one brief statement of all his conviction concerning Christ. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This reveals his conception of Christ as to His purpose, as to his Person; and if we take it in connection with that which follows, we see what is his conviction concerning Christ as being the resource of His people: "and ye are made full in Him."

I propose an examination of the statement, an investigation as to its truth, and, finally, an application of it to ourselves and to our service.

Paul says: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; and the first question I ask is one concerning the Person. Of whom is Paul writing? Is he at this point speaking of some mythical person? Has he lost his view of the Divine-human Christ at this point? He is evidently speaking of that Person to Whom he refers in the opening of this letter as "the Lord Jesus Christ." Who was this? I go back to the early history of Paul, and I find it characterized by his opposition to One of Whom he spoke as "Jesus of Nazareth." Upon two occasions does he so describe Him. Once when he declared that he had thought he ought to do everything in his power against the name of "Jesus of Nazareth," and again when he affirmed that Jesus so named Himself out of the excellent glory. In answer to his inquiry, "Who art Thou?" the voice said: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest." So that in the earlier years of Paul he had known of One spoken of among men as Jesus of Nazareth. There had come into the life of this man a great change. How had the change come? It had come, according to his own testimony, on an occasion when there came to him a vision of this same Jesus and the sound of His voice. For him from that time this Person became infinitely more than he had dreamed. Saul of Tarsus had thought of this Man as of Nazareth. He may have thought of Him as perfectly sincere; but he certainly thought of Him as grossly mistaken, and he believed the things He taught were heresies, and that the claims He made could not be substantiated, and, consequently, that the men following Him were mistaken men. But that description of the Person dropped out of his vocabulary, and, instead of describing Him as Jesus of Nazareth, as the men of the age described Him, Paul came to describe Him as the "Lord Jesus," as "Christ Jesus," as "Jesus Christ."

Thus all this man's life and ministry after Damascus resulted from changed convictions about this Person. His opposition to the Person had been opposition to a Man Jesus, Who taught a new way, and Who had been put to death, and Who, His fanatical followers imagined, was alive again. His lifelong devotion was to the same Man Who had revealed Himself to him so as to change his entire conception of Him. What was the new conception that captured his heart, compelled his will, became the driving force in his life? We have it in my text. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Paul's yielding of himself to this Man, Paul's surrender of himself, intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, was not the surrender of a disciple to a human teacher. It was the surrender of a man to his God. He had discovered in this Person all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And when he made that discovery he saw the folly of his way, and ceased, with an abruptness that was volcanic, the whole of his antagonism to the followers of the Nazarene, dropped out of his vocabulary the purely human description, "Jesus of Nazareth," and spoke of

Him ever after in words that indicated His infinite superiority and dignity as the "Lord Jesus," "Christ Jesus," "Jesus the Christ." So that the Person to Whom my text refers is the Man of Nazareth. When Paul says here, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," he has not lost sight of the Man, he has not forgotten the One Whom he persecuted, Who revealed Himself to him on the Damascus road, the same and yet another. The eyes of the apostle are on that same Form which had appeared to him in glory upon the road, and his ear still hears in imagination that same human voice which, nevertheless, had in it the thunder of the infinite and all the accents of Deity. And of that One he says, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Let us look at these terms carefully. I begin with the word "Godhead." This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. We have in the Roman epistle, from the pen of the same writer, another word also translated "Godhead," where he speaks of that which man may discover of God by the light of nature. But the words differ in their etymology and in their use, and the difference is fairly accurately described in our own language by the difference between Divinity and Deity. The word in Romans may be translated Divinity; but the word here cannot be so translated. It has a deeper and profounder meaning, and we need most carefully to distinguish between these two terms, "Divinity," and "Deity." Divinitas was a common word in the Latin language. But the Latin Christian writers coined a new word—the word Deitas—from which our word Deity comes, and they coined that word to express the thought and meaning of this Greek word which occurs in my text. What, then, is the difference between the two? This particular word suggests absolute Godhead rather than manifestations of the attributes of Godhead. You find Divinity in every man, but you do not find Deity in every man. You can find Divinity through all Nature. There is not a blade of grass that has not something of Divinity in it; no flower that blossoms that has not some manifestation of Divine power, and Divine presence, and Divine beauty, and Divine glory. But you cannot take this word and use it in the same sense. There is not a single flower that blossoms, no fair tree that spreads itself in the forest, no mighty deep, in which you can discover absolute Deity. God can make nothing but that He puts something of Himself into it; and there are manifestations of God everywhere in Nature, but you do not find proper and absolute Deity anywhere in nature, nor in any human being. Now, mark what the apostle says here as to his conception of this Man of Nazareth. He says: "In Him dwelleth" not Deity merely, but "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of Deity."

That brings us to another word. The word "fulness" means the totality, the pleroma. Paul, in this Colossian letter, was dealing with the Gnostic heresy, and one of the favorite words of its exponents was pleroma, fulness. They were perpetually teaching the fulness of Deity, and that the fulness of Deity had its manifestations in a hundred ways. Said they, It is manifested through all men and all Nature, and the whole manifestation is the sum total of Deity. Paul takes their word and declares that the pleroma dwelleth in Him. He had seen the Man Jesus in the glorified form, had heard His voice. It was the same Man of Nazareth. Paul never dreamed that the One Who spoke to Him on the way to Damascus was any other than the One Who had spoken to men before. He had imagined Him to be a mere Man, child of His age, limited, ignorant, mistaken, blundering, murdered; but he found out that "in Him dwelleth the pleroma of essential Deity, the fulness of the Godhead." In the previous chapter, you remember those wonderful words in which Paul tells us of the three facts about this Lord Jesus Christ. He first indicates His relation to Deity.

To the Father He is "the Image of the invisible God," which does not mean something made like God, but the outshining into visibility of the actual and essential God. The only difference between Jesus and Deity was that Deity is invisible, and He was visible. Then he tells us the relation of this selfsame Person to creation. "In Him all things consist," hold together. He thus declares that the Man Who arrested him on the way to Damascus, Jesus of Nazareth, holds all created things together. He had found the Deity, Who spoke and it was done, and by Whose Almightyness the whole process of creation was held together, or was consistent. Finally, he declares the relation of this Person to the Church. By the way of the shedding of blood He had made reconciliation.

Jesus of Nazareth, the Image of the invisible God, Jesus of Nazareth, Creator of the whole universe and Sustainer thereof, Jesus of Nazareth, dying upon a rough Cross, God in passion for the salvation of a lost race. Everything brought down to the span of human observation, and yet "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Now mark, I pray you, the other two words of the declaration: "Dwelleth bodily." "Dwelleth." Notice carefully the present tense, that perpetual present tense by which the apostle teaches that in Him, this Person toward Whom he is always looking, and concerning Whom he is forever writing, and Whom he is always serving, that "in Him dwelleth," the eternal and essential fact, a fact before incarnation. But the word in my text that arrests us, and is of value to us, is that final word "bodily." Do not read it as though it meant wholly. The word literally means corporeally, that this essential fact of Deity has been wrought out into permanent manifestation, that "in Him" is "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Lord Jesus Christ, according to Paul, is God, essentially, absolutely, actively, corporeally; and the purpose of the bodily manifestation of Deity is that of intrusion into the consciousness of man. God came no nearer to humanity by the way of incarnation; but God did come into the consciousness of blind humanity by the way of incarnation.

Now, if you ask, How can this be? you will find no answer. It absolutely transcends explanation. But if you take away this corporeal Presence of Deity in the universe of created things, then what have you left? You do not explain the ineffable mystery of this Man's being and life. The fact is announced, and the mystery as it remains is the only satisfactory explanation of the great fact of the Christian religion.

That leads me to some words of investigation. I would that we could think of the Person of these records apart from many of the traditions in the midst of which we have grown up. We read the records, and we think of the Person as merely localized, and incidental, and of a past, and there results a subconscious impression which it is a little difficult to state in words, but which is incomplete, and therefore false.

Our need is the measure of our conception of God. It is by my lack that I have an idea of God. God is all that which I lack. By my emptiness I have a conception of the fulness of Deity. If I have no emptiness, if I am full and satisfied, then I lose my conception of what fulness means. Fulness is that which I have not. What are the things that man craves? First, life, and at the point where he knows he is limited, he thinks at once of the illimitable life, and he knows that is God. Man craves holiness, and at the point of his recognition of his own failure to realize holiness he thinks of the ineffable Holiness, of holiness, it may be, in the abstract, and yet as existing, and that is God. Strength man seeks after in every department, and at the point of his weakness he is conscious of the fact of strength that is not his, and that is God. Knowledge man is ever seeking; knocking at

doors, demanding answers, prying into secrets, and forevermore he is arrested. But he knows that knowledge exists, that there is a knowledge that he does not possess, and that knowledge is God. If I have no sense of limitation I have no sense of God. God is to me that which is beyond my limitation.

In this Person of the Gospels I find One Who lacked the sense of limitation by which I think of God. There is not a sigh after life in all His words; He possesses it. He declares that He possesses it. He declares that He so possesses it that He can lay it down, and take it up by his Father's decree. Holiness? His one perpetual claim was that of sinlessness. He is not seeking after holiness. It is His. "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" is His challenge to all the sinners of His age and every age. Strength? Throughout the whole of his life you see Him moving in conscious strength to the accomplishment of all the purposes of His Heart. Knowledge? He never asks questions; He never institutes inquiry. He is never learning. That was the supreme wonder of the men of His own age, not the wonder of the provincials of Nazareth, but the wonder of the metropolitans, of the scribes and Pharisees and rulers of Jerusalem. Listen: "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" He was never learning, but He knew. So that all of Deity, of which I am conscious through my limitation, I find realized in Him; and the very things for which I am seeking He possessed. Life, holiness, strength, knowledge, and a score of other things, for these are but illustrations taken almost at random, are all in Him. The things that make up Deity to me, the fulness of Deity, I find in Him.

Take a step further. What have been the results of the presence of this Person in the world? As the result of His presence in the world, the world has intellectually realized God as never before. God is holy, is loving, is self-sacrificing; but these conceptions of God had never been really understood until this Man lived amongst us. So also the world has had a new conception of man, as spiritual in essence, and as only able to realize the present life as his life has dealings with the infinite and the eternal.

But, practically, what has this presence in the world meant? Rest. "Come unto Me... and I will give you rest." This is the call of Deity to humanity, and humanity heard it, and has been coming to this Man ever since, and has been finding rest. And not only rest, but realization of all the forces of human life personally and relatively. These facts attest the truth of the doctrine which Paul teaches. Test the intellectual by all other teachers. Mohammed came to teach the world a great lesson, as Carlyle has shown in his book, *Heroes and Hero Worship*. Mohammed stood for two things about God which were absolutely true. First, Allah akbar—God is great; second, Islam—submission. And Buddha's idea of God, if one may venture to attempt in a sentence to state it, was the idea of God as Self-conscious; so that, as from His Being there emanated different castes according to whether men came from head, or hand, or feet, they went back into completion to Him, losing consciousness. What were the practical issues of these things? Look at Mohammedanism today. Look at India today. These men were prophets. I will grant that they were true men and sincere. But as human teachers about God, they took hold of thoughts of God and made them all the fact of God, and failed disastrously. But here came a Man into human life, a Man of wisdom, a Man of human friendship, a Man eating and drinking, and He so came into human life that, without enunciating great philosophies, speaking only simple things, He brought into the world's consciousness the conviction of God which is not a conviction of things about God, but a consciousness of God which lifts, and rests, and realizes, and puts upon the brow of every

man who hears and obeys, the very glory of God Himself. This is not Man merely. "In Him dwelleth all the pleroma of Deity," and through the veil of His flesh Divine there flamed out upon human life infinite and eternal light, and as men have come to it, and walked in it, they have found God, and have been healed and helped.

Then I submit to you that these are the findings. The results demonstrate the truth, and they are the realization of God and the resultant finding of life. Wherever there have been departures from these conceptions of Christ, they have lived only while they have retained results, which were the outcome of these conceptions. Put Jesus back again where He was in Paul's thinking before Paul's life was changed. Make Him Jesus of Nazareth, a sincere and blinded and failing Man among men, make Him that, make Him only that, burn your Pauline writings, sweep out the whole catholic conception of Him, and in half a century Christianity will have lost its power of moral uplift, and fail to bring men into union with God.

A final word by way of application. What effect should this doctrine have upon personal experience? That is the main argument of the letter, and if you will read the context you will see exactly what I mean. "Take heed lest there shall be anyone that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The first application is that I find in this Christ an absolute sufficiency. But I find in my relation to Him a great responsibility. What effect does this conception of Christ have upon our service as individuals and as a church? This is the deepest fact as basis for all our work. We are bringing men to God when we bring them to Christ. But the cosmic passion is the expression of that. As He is Creator, and in Him all these things consist, anything out of order will make the heart of those who are His hot and restless.

A serious word, which one would speak with all carefulness and sincerity, is that there must be separation on the part of those who hold this doctrine concerning Christ from all those who hold any other. They may be perfectly sincere. We must grant their sincerity. We are not to ascend any throne of judgment and pronounce our final verdict upon those who do not hold this view of Christ. But I say, in all kindness and all honesty, there can be no agreement, and no fellowship, and no co-operation between the man who makes Jesus Christ a child of His age, a Man among men, sharing Divinity in common with the rest, and in no other degree; and a man who looks into His face, and says, "My Lord and my God," believing that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

1 Thessalonians 1:8. Church Ideals: The Church At Work.

1 Thessalonians 1:8.

Church Ideals: The Church At Work.

From you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

This is the continuation and completion of the brief series of meditations on the subject of the Church of God according to the New Testament. We have considered the constitution of the Church, its government, its discipline, and now our final theme is that of its work. This is the necessary sequel to all that has gone before.

Given a Church, constituted by the life of Christ communicated in answer to faith by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, governed by the one supreme, final, lonely authority of the ever-present Lord Himself, and disciplined with all tenderness, and yet with all earnestness, the leaven put away, and we have found that which is at once a propagative society, an equipped army, and an instrument of Divine activity.

When we approach the subject of the work of the Church, we are not considering a privilege granted to the Church. We are hardly considering a responsibility devolving upon the Church. We are considering, rather, the necessary and inevitable activity of the Church. If there be failure in those matters which we are about to consider, the reason of such failure will be discovered in failure in some of those things which we have already considered. Either discipline is lax and loose, and the Church tolerates within her borders impure men or women, or continues to manifest the spirit of antichrist in bitterness; or we have sought mediation as between the government of our Lord and ourselves, and so have not perfectly understood His way or His will; or it may be that the Church is a mixed multitude, rather than an assembly of the saints, because, through some loose method of admitting to membership, we have included men and women who do not share the life Divine, even though they sing the songs of the sanctuary. If the Church is failing in her activity, it is in all probability due to some of these causes.

The declaration of my text, this word that Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, "from you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord," constitutes a revelation, and the Church referred to by the apostle an illustration of these great matters. In that word and in that particular Church great principles are focused as in camera obscura, or, perhaps, I should say in camera lucida. We see, as in a picture, the great mission of the Church.

Let us first, then, concentrate our attention for a few moments on the picture presented, and then, passing outside, attempt to see in broad outline the more spacious meaning of the service of the Christian Church. This letter was written to the Thessalonian Christians. Writing to this Church, which he describes not as the Church in Thessalonica—that was a later method of address when he wrote to Corinth—but to the Church of the Thessalonians, he deals with fundamental things,

both concerning life and service. Service is not dealt with at all fully, but in this passage service is very clearly seen in its relation to life. We read as our lesson the first chapter. Let that suffice for contextual interpretation. At the beginning he addresses these people, and he thanks God for three things, the "work of faith," the "labour of love," the "patience of hope"; and, when at the close of this particular chapter, he is at the end of the introductory portion of his letter, he says that they "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." These two descriptions are identical; that at the close of the introduction standing over against that at its commencement, and we have only just to look at them for a moment that we may see the Church, for in the opening and closing words we have the whole fact of Church life revealed to us. Between these opening and closing words is my text.

Take the opening words, "Your work of faith," which does not at all mean the work they were doing in Thessalonica as the result of faith, but that very work of faith whereby they became Christian men, "the work of faith." When men asked our Lord upon one occasion, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" His answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent"; and that is the thought embodied here, "the work of faith." That is the first fact. What is the work of faith? Turn to the concluding description of the introduction, "Ye turned unto God from idols." That is the work of faith.

And, secondly, the "labour of love"; that is the outcome of the work of faith, that which necessarily, inevitably follows it, for the work of faith on the part of man is answered by the gift of life on the part of God; and that life is His life, and that life is love; and therefore, immediately the life of love becomes the inspiration of labour. What is that labour of love? I go to the final description again, "to serve a living and true God"; that is the labour of love.

I turn back again to that first and introductory word, and the final phrase is the "patience of hope"; and that is explained by the final word, "to wait for His Son from heaven."

Thus, in the opening description, I see the inspirational things of the Christian life—faith, love, hope; and the expression of each; of faith, the work; of love, the labour; of hope, the patience. And then, in the final description, that is all stated again in another form.

Now, of course, that might be the whole theme of the morning, but it is not. Between these two descriptions comes my text, "from you"—that is, from the people of faith, and love, and hope, the people who have turned to God from idols, and serve the living and true God, and who are waiting for His Son from heaven, "from you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord"; and that is inevitable, and that is the whole theme of the morning. Given a church according to the pattern, then there is found the fulfilment of function according to the purpose.

"From you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord." "Sounded forth"; that is, quite literally, echoed forth. Chrysostom said, "sounded as a clear trumpet note." "Sounded forth." It is not that these people went everywhere preaching; but it is that these people, in their unity of life as a church, became an instrument through which the Word of the Lord was sounding forth. I would like to use another word than "sounded forth," another word than echoed forth. I would like to use this word: "from you the Word of the Lord reverberated"; through the valleys and over the mountains, and away through Macedonia and Achaia, the Word of the Lord reverberated. I learned the value of that word reverberated in this sense from my beloved friend, Dr. Pentecost. When speaking of

Moody's missions in this country, he described them as missions which reverberated. When Moody was preaching in Newcastle, the thrill was felt to the southern coast. From you reverberated the Word of the Lord.

Dr. Findlay says that the expression "the Word of the Lord" is the "designation for God's revealed will" in the history of the Old Testament, a fine and perfect definition of the meaning of the phrase there. In the New Testament the phrase means Christ Himself inclusively. Particularly it means, first, always an argument for the Lordship of Christ. The Word of the Lord is the argument for His Lordship, and that is supremely the Word of the resurrection of Christ; and then it is the fact itself of His Lordship; and then the Word of the Lord is the whole system of His ethical instruction, the laws of the Kingdom. The Word of the Lord is the argument that proves Him Lord, that resurrection wherein He was horizoned as the Son of God, and by the vision of which the disciples were born again unto a living hope; the fact that He is Lord of all, and all the laws which govern those who are underneath His Lordship, all that is within the Word of the Lord. That Word of the Lord sounded forth, reverberated through Macedonia and Achaia; and the instrument was that fellowship of man and woman who had turned to serve, to wait—in faith, in love, and in hope.

This, I repeat, is a picture in camera of the Church at work. Let us leave the passage, and take the wider outlook on New Testament teaching; first, concerning the place of the Church in the scheme and the work of God; secondly, the work of the Church in fulfilment of that intention; finally, the power of the Church in the doing of that work.

First, then, the place of the Church in the Divine scheme. Let us attempt to see that scheme by quotation of three well known but apparently separated passages. You will immediately detect the connection, and the purpose for which I bring them together.

"God is love."

"The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth."

"The Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

I now look back again at this particular passage in the Thessalonian letter, and I observe that in its very first verse the apostle writes: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace." We begin in that salutation with the final result, "the Church of the Thessalonians," "the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"; and then we see the sphere, "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus," the Church in Him Who is love, but in Him Who is love because in Him Who is the unveiling of the love, the revealing of the love.

"God is love." That is a fact altogether too great for human speech or understanding, out of which all the movements for man's uplifting have sprung. I quarrel entirely with the theologian who talks of love as an attribute. Love is essence; and if you would understand it, you must take all the attributes, and see them in their interdependence and mutual inter-relationships. It is the final word. If you at all object to it, it is because you do not understand love. If you are a little afraid that in the saying of a thing like that we are robbing God of the awful fact of His holiness and righteousness, it is because you do not understand love. Yes, but love is love; and "Love is not

love that alters when it alteration finds." Love is strong as death, mightier than the grave; love will pause at nothing to make possible the recovery and restoration of the sinner. That is a height I cannot climb; it is a depth I cannot fathom; it is a spaciousness that defies me; but you know it, and I know it. The supreme, the ultimate fact is that God is love, and out of the being, God is love, proceeds the doing, "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

And so naturally, we pass to the next of these three declarations: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth." Christ was first the Revealer of the love in its attitude toward man in his need; but he was more, and we fail sadly if we use only the word Revealer about our Lord.

Christ was the instrument of that love, the One through Whom it operated in the activity of redemption. He was the Revealer of an attitude, and the instrument of an activity. The Word was made flesh, pitching His tent among us, by the side of the place where our tents are pitched, in the same campus. May God the Holy Spirit make these things real to us. He pitched His tent among us, by the side of man as Man, not by the side of a Jew as a Jew, or of an Anglo-Saxon as an Anglo-Saxon. By the side of a Jew, yes, thank God; by the side of an Anglo-Saxon, yes, thank God; and in each case because by the side of man as Man. What for? To unveil an attitude and to accomplish an activity.

Thus, finally, we have the last of the three declarations: "The Church, which is His Body"—His instrument, as He is the Instrument of God—"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," as it pleased the Father "that in Him should all the fulness dwell." The Church is the Body of the Christ, that through which Christ is still active, that through which God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

The Church, being the Body, at the disposal of the Lord, the Word of the Lord will reverberate in the thunders of an infinite music over all nations and continents and peoples.

What, then, is the inclusive and complete work of the Church? It is that of the proclamation of the Word of the Lord. From you hath sounded forth the proclamation of the Word, the fact of the Lordship of Christ. Is not this the need, the supreme need, the differentiating need, that which distinguishes itself from all others? Yes, it is perfectly true, thank God, and we are coming to see it more clearly; that He has left no nation or kindred or class absolutely without light; that there are gleams of light wherever man is found, and we are coming to understand that the message of the missionary is fulfilment of the gleam by correction of the surrounding darkness, and by presentation of the final Light. All that is true. Yet there is a distinction, a separating quality, that makes our evangel the one and only evangel; it is that of the Lordship of Christ. Christ is Lord by virtue of His absolute supremacy in human life; but Christ is Lord by a victory won in the tragedy of His overwhelming passion, and Christ is Lord supremely by the triumph of His resurrection from among the dead. Is not that what the Church is in the world to proclaim? When the Lord Christ is thus known and proclaimed, the laws of His Kingship and the value of His supremacy are revealed. Our minds are dwelling upon all the ends of the earth; but let us come back for a moment to a narrower outlook. Mr. Gladstone once said that the severest malady threatening England was its loss of the sense of sin; and every preacher knows that to be true, if he be a preacher of the Word. Is not the reason partly to be found in the fact that we have not with

sufficient emphasis and intelligence preached Jesus as Lord? We have assumed His Lordship, but have we preached His Lordship? I do not know that I am making clear the thing in my mind. I will try again. I believe there are thousands of young people in our land today who will never tremble when you preach the Ten Commandments. The reason is not now to be discussed; I state the fact. I do not think you can find man or woman of intelligence, if you can but bring them into the actual presence of this Lord Christ, but that they will say, "If that be the meaning of human life, then, oh God, how have I failed!" I am talking out of my own experience. I have to repeat some things; I will repeat this. I never trembled under Mount Sinai in my life; but oh, when I measure my life by His life, and listen to the words that pass His lips, and see the central inspiration of the life of my Lord and Christ, then I put my hand upon my lips and cry, I am unclean. The proclamation of His Lordship is needed in England, where the Gospel is stultified, because men think they know it, and where preachers are afraid to preach it in its simplicity, because they imagine congregations know it; it is needed also for the ends of the earth. He is Master of all the forces destroying, He Who death by dying slew, He Who hell in hell laid low is the great Victor over all the forces that destroy. That is the Word of the Lord.

But the Word of the Lord is not only to be proclaimed as a theory by the Church; and it will never reverberate in thunder by such proclamation as a theory. It must be vindicated within the Church. The life of the Church must witness to the truth of the Gospel the Church preaches, in service definitely and positively rendered, and finally in sacrifice.

"In His feet and hands are woundprints, and His side"; and, my brethren and sisters in Christ, whether it be here or there, we only begin to preach the Word of the Lord, to proclaim it with power, as there enter into our work the elements of travail and sacrifice.

Finally, a word concerning the power of the Church for her work. What is the Church's power for service? I want to begin and state it thus, passing, presently, perhaps to a deeper note. I do not know that it is deeper, but I will put first something which is not always put first. What is the power of the Christian Church? The spirituality of her own life. Not the power of the Spirit bestowed, but the Spirit, the power, working through. I make the distinction carefully. I might, if I were sitting down quietly with some of you, admit that there is actually very little distinction; but I think we make a great distinction, because we put it in the wrong way. Not the power of the Spirit bestowed, but the Spirit, the one Power, working through the Church; the Church thus becoming, not the Medium only, but in her very life the operative power, and in that sense the Medium of His work. Not the power of the Spirit bestowed, as though the Spirit bestowed some power apart from Himself, and gave it to us, a stored dynamic force that we take and use until it runs out; but the Spirit Himself, resident within, molding, fashioning, shining out, moving through; that is the power of the Church.

Yes, but how shall we know whether we have that power or not? The Church is constituted by the Spirit. It is by the Spirit's baptism into life that men come into the Church. The Church is governed by Christ, Who interprets His will through the ministry of the Spirit. The Church can only be disciplined when the Church is living in that Spirit, Who is at once the Spirit of love and of light.

So I go back to my position, and abide by it. The power in itself is the true spiritual life of the Church. Give me a church anywhere, two or three, units, tens, hundreds, thousands—which matters nothing, for in the mathematics of heaven one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight—but give me a little company of men and women, who have seen the one

Lord, and have exercised in Him the one faith, and have received the one baptism of the Spirit, and are now living in answer to the inspiration of that life, and obeying its impulse. There is God's instrument, and from that Church will sound forth the Word of God. The power in itself is that of the spiritual life of the Church, and the Church is only spiritual as the Holy Spirit unresisted, unquenched, ungrieved, has His own highway through all its membership.

And yet again, if that be the power in itself, observe the power in its working. I have nothing other to do than to go back to those descriptive phrases that we dwelt upon by way of introduction.

How does this power of the Spirit operate for the sounding forth of the Word of the Lord? In obedience, in service, and in perfect confidence. Obedience—the work of faith, ye turned to God. Service—the labor of love, ye serve the living God. Confidence—the patience of hope, ye wait for the Son from heaven. There is the threefold inspiration of faith and love and hope; and waiting for the Son. Where the expression is lacking, it is because the inspiration is absent; and where the inspiration is absent, the expression is lacking.

What, then, is the law of power in the Church for the accomplishment of her work? First, that of passivity, the cessation of all self-controlled effort; secondly, an entire yielding to the interpretations and energies of the Spirit of God; finally, activity going, speaking, doing.

First, passivity, the cessation of all self-centered effort. A man may deal with theory, and miss the whole impact of the truth. I am convinced, brethren, that during the past five and twenty years one of the greatest hindrances to the Church's progress has been her ceaseless fussiness in attempting to devise new methods for doing God's work. We are always trying by our own wit and wisdom to find some new method. Let us be done with it. What shall we do? Yield ourselves to the interpretation of the Spirit of God and to the energies of the Spirit. Let the Spirit of God have His way. That is where we fail. The Spirit is the Spirit of light; He flings a light upon our pathway, and indicates that which is God's will for us in service; and we are afraid, the Cross lies there; we draw back. The Spirit is the Spirit of love. He touches us with a sacred impulse to help that degraded man or woman whom we see on the highway, an impulse to give up the quietness and the comfort of the home life, and the home worship for the dark and desolate places of the earth; and we shrink back—the Cross is there. And because we have not yielded to the Spirit in passivity, we fail; and we attempt to make up for our failure in devotion, by finding out new methods of helping God. If we will only let the Spirit have His way with us, if we will walk where He indicates, and do what He says, counting no cost, holding back no alabaster box of ointment for ourselves, then, in the rush of the fire and the sweeping of the new force, far more than half of our mechanical activities will be burned up; but we shall be out upon the highway of God's great enterprises in the world, going because we are driven by this great Spirit indwelling, speaking, perchance, not with the education and the elegance and eloquence of old, but in power, which matters far more, doing—yes, I am bound to say it, though it hits my heart—not half so many things, but a few things better. And then—ah, then—the Word of God will reverberate, will sound forth.

My brethren, the Church of God thus at work is safeguarded against heresy. I am not going to describe any particular heresy; but the Church, obedient to the Spirit, answering the Spirit's interpretation of the Christ, cannot go far astray; and a Church thus at work is safeguarded against false motive in service, false initiations, false methods, false aims; safeguarded against all fear and panic, against all weakness. The Church thus constituted, thus governed, thus disciplined,

and thus at work, is a Church to which three great things are forever guaranteed: first, vision, and then virtue, and finally victory. She will see; she will have strength to move on to the doing of the thing seen, and victory will follow wherever she goes.

I close this brief series of four meditations on the Church with this word. After all is said and done, the individual responsibility is the only one for each individual man or woman; and, therefore, why should I say any more to you? Nay, rather let me get away somewhere from human eyes, and have this out with my Lord.

Am I of this Church? Have I been born anew from above? Do I know the life of God in my own soul by the touch of the Holy Spirit? If not, however much I admire the ethic, however readily I agree to the beauty of the example, I am not of this Church. I may be on the borders, but I am not in; though I may have had clean water sprinkled upon my brow, or been plunged beneath the water, though I may have had hands placed upon my head, or my name passed by solemn church meeting, I am not of the Church, I am not of the Christ.

And as to government, am I under the Lordship of Christ? No, I am not going to make confession here; but I must ask the question. I must ask it anew. A man is bound to go back at times to searching, to wonderment as to why there has been failure, and why not greater success.

Discipline, have I been eager to discipline the man with a mote in his eye, while there is a beam in mine? God help me.

Am I an instrument so ready to the Lord, that from me the Word of God is not simply heard—sounding brass, tinkling cymbal, a clang, and a clash, and a clatter, God deliver us—but as reverberating music is sounding, bidding lonely watchers look up and hope, and wounded souls listen, and stricken men crowd up and hope, and wounded souls listen, and stricken men crowd to my Lord? So may we investigate along, somewhere ere the sun set, as to whether we are fulfilling our responsibility in the Church of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2 Sanctification.

2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

Sanctification.

In sanctification of the Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

The two outstanding figures in the book of the acts of the Apostles are Peter and Paul. Each in his respective sphere was a pioneer in the great Christian campaign springing from the Pentecostal effusion. The phrase which suggests the line of our evening meditation is found in the writings of each of these men. Peter employed it in writing to Christian Jews of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Paul made use of it writing to Gentile Christians of Thessalonica. The phrase refers to a great purpose of God in the life of men, sanctification. Moreover, the phrase reveals to us the fact that this purpose is possible of fulfilment in the life of men through the ministry of the Holy Spirit: "in sanctification of the Spirit."

I am perfectly well aware that this is not a sentence; it is not a statement. I am equally well aware that I take it from its context, but I trust that in our meditation on the things that it suggests we shall do no violence to that context. When, perchance, at your leisure you turn again to the paragraph read in your hearing by way of lesson, you will discover that the great theme of Peter and of Paul was salvation, and in this connection, dealing with the subject in different ways and from different standpoints, but with one purpose, each of these outstanding figures in the book of the Acts of the Apostles makes use of the phrase, "in sanctification of the Spirit."

There are two phases, then, of consideration that I propose to you. First, sanctification in regeneration; second, sanctification in experience. Let me immediately say that these must not be separated from each other as though they were distinct. They may be separated, however, for the purpose of teaching. There is a sense in which they cannot be separated from each other, for that sanctification which is provided for us in regeneration is potentially what we need for the final perfecting of our lives according to the great and gracious will of God. Apart from that regeneration, there can be no final sanctification. On the other hand, I think we may grant immediately that to which I shall refer again, that there are multitudes of men and women who without any hesitation would claim to have received the gift of life, who can rejoice in the fact that they have been born from above, who, nevertheless, would hardly claim to know the experience of sanctification. Consequently, I think I am justified in dividing our meditation into these two parts: sanctification in regeneration, and sanctification in experience.

In dealing with the first of these, let me immediately say that this word "sanctification" is undoubtedly one of the great words of the New Testament, and, at the same time, it is a word singularly feared by Christian men and women today. Indeed, not only is this particular word feared by Christian men and women, but all its cognate words, terms which have relationship to

the idea that it presents, are feared. Its equivalent holiness, or the phrase, Christian perfection, are avoided by thousands of Christian men and women in our churches today; they are afraid of the terms. I am not at all surprised that multitudes of Christian people are afraid of these terms. So many insane things have been done in the name of sanctification, so many unrighteous things have been practiced by people who profess holiness, and so much appalling imperfection has been witness in the lives of those claiming Christian perfection, that one is not surprised that many Christian people are afraid of the terminology. I believe that often the fear is born of true sanctity of life; in many cases it is a protest against an altogether unwarranted narrowness of interpretation, against a mechanical, ritualistic ideal of sanctification which excludes from the experience of Christian men and women whole areas of life which they ought to capture and consecrate rather than abandon. But it is not fair to abandon a great New Testament word or a great New Testament doctrine because the word has had evil associations and because the doctrine has been misinterpreted. It is surely rather the duty of those who desire to enter into the real meaning of their life in Christ to inquire what God means by sanctification. He has left us in no doubt; in this New Testament the teaching is quite clear as to what His purpose is. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." If that be true, then it is my business to find out what that will is. I ought not to be satisfied with anything in my life that falls short of that will. Moreover, I ought to set myself resolutely to enter into that will, even if in so doing I have to act in opposition to a great many who are speaking to me of sanctification in terms other than those of the New Testament, or calling me to something to which the New Testament never calls me.

I trust these preliminary words do not suggest an air of controversy. Nothing is further from my purpose. I have spoken them that I may capture those who are afraid of this great theme.

What, then, is sanctification? The root idea of the word so translated in the New Testament signifies something which is awful, that which fills the soul with awe, not necessarily with dread, for there is a vital difference between dread and awe. Dread is of the nature of slavish fear; awe is of the nature of reverence. There should be no dread in the soul of man when he draws near to God. No man ought to draw near to God save with a sense of awe. The thought of the word is that of something awful, filling the soul with awe. Its use in the New Testament is always of separation to God, and therefore of holiness. The vessels of the sanctuary in the old economy were holy, they were sanctified; they were set apart to sacred uses, and, consequently, they were necessarily maintained in cleanliness by ceremonial ablutions, and that because they were dedicated and consecrated to the service of God alone. In the word "sanctification," then, both as to its root intention and its common use in the New Testament, we have these simple ideas. Sanctification is entire separation of the life to God; consequently, it is the cleansing of the life to the condition of holiness or spiritual health.

Every new-born soul is sanctified. Every believer is a saint. Christian people will often say, the sincerest of them, those who are most truly and really attempting to follow their Lord: We do not profess to be saints. That saying is born of that fear of the doctrine of sanctification to which I have made reference. Let me repeat, therefore, that which I have already said, but in another form. If you are a Christian man you are a saint. If you are a believer in Christ Jesus you are already sanctified. Perhaps the speediest way in which to emphasize the truth is to remember that Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, commenced his first letter—almost wholly a letter of correction—by describing those to whom he wrote as "saints," and yet, within a few paragraphs,

after having so described them, he said, "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." Yet they were saints, they were sanctified. It is quite evident that the apostolic reference in the opening of that letter was to the Divine purpose, and not to the perfected experience of these people. They were saints, they were sanctified; but they were not living as became saints, they had not entered into the full experience of sanctification. In that we have at once a distinction and a difference which it is important that we should recognize. To call men to sanctification who are already Christians as though they were not sanctified is to lose the most powerful argument for sanctification possible. It is when we realize that the man who had yielded himself to God by one volitional act of faith has become a saint that we have the right to appeal to him to enter into the experience of sanctification, because by failing to do so he is robbing God of that which is God's by sovereign and redeeming right. Sanctification is not a privilege offered to the few within the Christian economy. It is a privilege, but it is also a responsibility devolving on every soul who has yielded to Christ. Saints within the Christian Church are not an aristocracy of spiritual souls; they are the whole commonwealth of the new-born. We owe a persistent and pernicious misinterpretation of the great doctrine of sanctification to the Roman Church, with its calendar of saints. We all are familiar with the phrase, counsel of perfection; men in business use it, men in the ordinary life of every day use it; the meaning of the phrase is that the idea referred to is a fine one but that it cannot be realized. This phrase comes from the Roman Church. Counsels of perfection are laws and instructions for those who desire to enter into the life of saintship. They teach that no man can live the saintly life unless he withdraw himself, not from actual sin alone, but from all the ordinary activities of every day life. They declare that no man can be a saint save as he retires from the highway to the cloister, and to seclusion and the loneliness of meditation and prayer, and by these methods perfect himself into saintship. The New Testament teaches that men can be saints in fishing boats, in varying places in the midst of travail and toil, in all the turmoil of life, or else they can be saints nowhere. Sanctification is a condition of life enabling men to enter into the common vocations of all the days and irradiate them so that they themselves shall become God's means of revealing Himself to others on the dusty highway of life.

Sanctification, I repeat, is not the privilege of the few; it is the birthright and responsibility of the whole commonwealth of Christian men and women.

In what sense, then, can we affirm that sanctification comes to men in regeneration? Regeneration is that act of the Holy Spirit in which He supplies the life necessary to carrying out a covenant with God. The first word of the message of Jesus to the world in the days of His preaching, and until this hour, is, "Repent." When a man hears that word, and in obedience thereto thinks again and changes his conception of life, he will immediately become conscious of his own shortcoming, not merely of his past sin, but of his present incapacity for godliness; and to that new-born sense of incapacity Christ will present Himself with the second word of His message, which is, Believe on the Son of God and thou shalt have life. When a man obeys the word, "repent," and yields himself in confidence to the Saviour Christ, he is entering into a new covenant with God. All that is but the human side of the great transaction that makes a man a Christian, and it is immediately responded to on the Divine side by the birth from above, the communication of new life, the filling of the life with the Spirit, changing the outlook, changing the desires, changing the whole set of the life, as it is placed in living, vital, actual relationship with God Himself. This covenant between God and man is the covenant of restoration.

It is a covenant of will. God wills the good of man and man wills the glory of God, and they enter into a sacred covenant, God to secure man's good, and man to seek for God's glory.

It is a covenant of emotion. God loves man, and enters into a covenant to work on his behalf and seek for him the highest and the best; and man finds his heart responsive to the love of God, for "we love Him because He first loved us," and enters into a covenant to love and serve Him. God covenants in love, to care for man; and man covenants in love that he will endeavor so to live as to give no sorrow to the heart of God.

It is, moreover, a covenant of intelligence. God, as God perfectly knowing man, covenants with man to place all His infinite wisdom at the disposal of man; on his part, man, knowing something of God, gives himself to ever-increasing study of God that he may know Him perfectly.

Let any man make that covenant with God; let me make it with Him as though I had never made it before. Conscious of my past of sin, and conscious of my need for repentance and of my own incapacity for all high and holy things, and yet earnestly desiring those things by His illumination, I desire to enter into a covenant with God through Christ—a covenant of will, a covenant of love, a covenant of knowledge. Therefore I stand, turned to God with a strong and true desire, but utterly unable to fulfil my desire. Men will never get beyond that unless there be for them some supernatural bestowment of power from on high.

This, then, is the Christian evangel, that now the Spirit is given through that Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who in the past eternity emptied Himself in order that He might fill men with the Spirit. With the incoming of that Spirit there is bestowed on the man who makes his covenant with God the life that shall enable him to fulfil that covenant; new strength of will, new passion of love, new illumination of knowledge, that in the power of that life communicated, he may keep his covenant with God. That takes place in the hour when a man yields himself to God to obey, and by that covenant, ratified and rendered dynamic by the Holy Spirit of God, a man becomes separated to God, holy to God, a saint of God. Whether in the sight of men I know not and care little, but in the sight of angels that man becomes an awful being. Suppose—and why not?—that even already, while I have been trying to speak by way of teaching, some man, all unknown to friend or neighbor, has made his covenant with God, even though no tongue of fire has appeared to these eyes of sense, no sound as of a mighty rushing wind has been heard, yet the Spirit of God has baptized that man into life, and he has become a saint of God, and immediately all orders of angels view him as an awful being in the universe of God, a man separated to God, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?"

Speaking from my own conviction, it is when I have seen this thing that I have discovered the profoundest argument for a life of true sanctification. Let me therefore now speak of sanctification in experience. We may be sanctified ideally, potentially, but not empirically, or experientially. That is the story of thousands of us. We were perfectly sincere as we turned our back on sin and our faces to God, perfectly sincere as we cried out for salvation and yielded ourselves in faith to the perfect Saviour. In that hour of our sincerity we were made children of God, sons of God, we were sanctified; but we have never entered into the experience of sanctification. The experience of sanctification is a positive event, it is a progressive exercise, and, finally, it will be a perfecting excellence.

I speak of it first as a positive event. When may a man enter into sanctification experientially, positively? That experience may be coincident with regeneration. I am compelled to say, speaking now from experience, my own and that of those whom I have known in the Christian life, that it is not often coincident with regeneration. The fact is always coincident with regeneration, ideally, potentially, but not experientially. It was so in the case of Paul. I cannot find anywhere that Paul had a second blessing, and I cannot find any warrant for the doctrine of a second blessing as absolutely necessary in the teaching of the New Testament.

What, then, is this experience which I describe as a positive event? On the human side it is comprehension of the real meaning of the relationship which I entered into with Christ when I gave myself to Him. That is the first thing. I remember a generation ago hearing Dwight Lyman Moody say, "Christ is as great a Saviour as you make Him. What you ask He gives. If in your first coming you ask forgiveness, you receive it." That is quite true within limitations. He always gives me more than I ask, but I can appropriate only that which I ask or understand. I think one reason why a great many Christian people do not enter into the experience of sanctification in the hour of conscious regeneration is that we have not preached sanctification as we ought to have preached it, we have not presented to men all the truth concerning their relationship to Christ. There comes to the child of God, if not in the first hour of yielding, or of regeneration, yet sooner or later, by this ministry or that, this method or that, the comprehension of the real meaning of the relationship into which they entered with God. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works." That is the program of the Christ-life. That is the full meaning of the covenant we make with God in Christ. When there breaks on the soul of the truly Christian man, the man truly born again and hitherto not having fully apprehended the meaning of his relationship to Christ, the meaning of that covenant, that God saved him, not from hell alone, but in order that he might be in himself a vessel meet for the Master's use, a vessel clean and pure and strong, an instrument of righteousness in the world, then he comes to the hour in which the event of sanctification is possible.

But the event on the human side is more than comprehension of the real meaning of the covenant; it is consent thereto. That is the point of struggle, if struggle there be; and I think there is always struggle. Oh, the spiritual tragedy of some men and women, who at some moment—it may be under the preaching of the Word, it may be in the quietness of their own meditation thereupon, it may be in a thousand ways to which I cannot refer—come to see what God really means, and then turn their backs on it, refusing to consent to the terms of the covenant, and withholding themselves from that abandonment to the will of God which is the secret of all sanctified life. Such men and women still gather in the sanctuary of God, still utter the shibboleths of the Kingdom. That is the tragedy of the Christian Church. We waste our time discussing statistics and attempting to galvanize dead men into activity, when what we supremely need is revival within the Church in order that there may be revival within the nation. Revival within the Church means going back to the point of disobedience in order that there may be obedience, a going back of saints to saintship, a going back that there may be confession, contrition, and that life may be given to God in all its fulness.

Wherever, on the human side, there is comprehension of the meaning of the covenant and true consent thereto, then immediately on the Divine side there is cleansing of the nature and the consecration of the soul of man to God. If in this hour—and let me speak with you rather than to

you on such a theme as this—there shall come to me some fuller meaning of the covenant and I dare to consent, then in that moment the answer to my consent will be the cleansing of my nature by His Spirit and the consecration of my personality to Him. Then His Spirit will possess it to illuminate it, empower it, fill it with new and tender emotion.

Sanctification, experientially, is a progressive relation, for not by an event of light and conscious cleansing and consecration does any man come to maturity in the Christian character. All that is the condition for growth, not its ultimate perfection. Consequently, sanctification is a progressive exercise, it is gradual as well as sudden, that which is gradual resulting from that which is sudden; that which is sudden being the adjustment of the life to God and the immediate reception of the power; that which is gradual being the administration of the territory yielded, and appropriation of the blessings bestowed. So we go from strength to strength, from height to height, from light to light, from experience to experience. This is the work of the Spirit also, and that in two ways. First, the Christ revelation to the soul of the saint is a progressive revelation. The Spirit is always bringing the child of God some new vision of Christ. Then, whenever a new vision is presented to the trusting soul a new crisis is created for that soul, and the soul will either obey and march into larger life, or disobey and turn backward. The man or woman who has the largest, fullest knowledge of Christ is the man or woman who is most conscious that he or she has hardly yet begun to see His glory. The Spirit of God, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, with infinite patience, is forevermore unveiling to the eyes of faithful, watching souls the glory of the Christ; and as each new glory is revealed it calls the soul to some new adventure, to some new exercise, to some new sacrifice; and wherever there is response to the revelation, realization follows. So by this process of illumination and instruction we grow up in all things into Him Who is the Head, even Christ Jesus.

Every response to light means fuller understanding and enlarged capacity for further revelation. The true Christian life is a growth, which finds no maturity in this world; the ultimate is never reached in this land of shadows. There is no exhausting of the light and glory and beauty of Christ, and if He has not startled and shamed me recently it is because somewhere in the past I disobeyed and have lost my power to see. Sanctification is progressive, the Spirit of God patiently leading us from point to point in the life of faith and light and love, and forevermore astonishing us with new unveilings of the glory of our Master.

At last sanctification will prove itself to be a perfecting excellence. There will come to those who follow on to know the Lord an hour of full and final realization. John said, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are... and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." That is the final fact of sanctification, the perfect, absolute, and ultimate surrender of the life to Him and His surrender of Himself to the surrendered life. The God Who said of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," will ultimately say of all the saints He brings to glory, "These are My beloved children, in whom also I am well pleased. The last fact in the new creation is like the last fact in the first creation. When God had made man He rested from His labors, finding His rest in man in the perfection of his manhood. Jesus said amid the weariness and woes and wounds of humanity, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God and Christ together will find their eternal rest in the sanctified sons of men, perfectly conformed to the image of Christ.

What is our present position if we are Christian men and women? We are "called saints" "in sanctification of the Spirit." What, then, is our present responsibility? That we should walk "as becometh saints" "in santification of the Spirit." That we should avail ourselves of the resources at our disposal. That we should refuse to be content with anything less than that which brings satisfaction to the heart of God our Father. That we should have done forever with comparing ourselves among ourselves. That we should have done forever with being at rest because men are satisfied with our Christian attainment. That we should press ever resolutely with new determination into the light of the Divine thought and the Divine requirement of our Father's will and purpose, always remembering that He has no high purpose for the soul of man but that He has provided power sufficient for the realization of that high purpose.

Let us make our covenant with God, and the Holy Spirit will give us life sufficient to enable us to fulfil it; or if we have already done so, then let us say, to no man but to our own hearts, as in the presence of God, We will be satisfied with nothing less than the comprehension of His meaning. In the measure in which we know that meaning, let us consent thereto, and that with perfect confidence that "He will perfect that which concerneth us."

1 Timothy 3:15. The Church The Pillar And Ground Of The Truth.

1 Timothy 3:15.

The Church The Pillar And Ground Of The Truth.

The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

This is a text. It is not a statement. It makes no definite declaration. It is, nevertheless, full of light and suggestiveness. The words constitute an arresting figure of speech, setting forth inclusively the function of the Christian Church in the world. Paul was writing to Timothy concerning his responsibilities in the city of Ephesus. He had exhorted Timothy to tarry there for a very definite purpose. This purpose is found in the opening of the letter in these words: "As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, the which minister questionings rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith."

The passage from which the text is taken contains Paul's statement of the reason of his writing yet more particularly: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly, but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

Let us glance at that paragraph in reverse order. It concludes with a declaration of the whole content of Christian truth: "Great is the mystery of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

The mystery of godliness is the truth of which the Church is the pillar and the ground.

I have said that this is an arresting figure. Let us, first, then, briefly but carefully consider the figure in itself, in order that we may proceed to examine the function of the Church as it is set forth by the figure.

It may be that when Paul wrote these words, he was looking out on the monuments of some city. It is almost certain that when Timothy read it, it would be easy for him to look out on Ephesus. Here and there in the city in the day of its wealth, great memorial columns were to be seen. Let us have the structure clearly in mind. The word "pillar" describes an elevated column, sometimes one solid block of masonry, as for instance, Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment; very often one column built of many parts, of different stones or bricks. The idea is that of an upright column giving elevation.

The word "ground" simply refers to that on which the column rests—what an architect would probably describe as the plinth. It may be well to say that the foundation is never the final thing in a building. The Church is not built on a rock foundation, in spite of all our hymns and our expositions. The Church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, and that foundation is based on rock, which is the eternal underlying strength. Paul was dealing here with the foundation, and not with that on which the foundation rests. Such is the structure.

Given any such structure, what is its purpose? It is always the instrument by which some object or truth is elevated in order that it may be clearly seen, in order that the attention of men may be drawn to it. Sometimes what is to be seen is a statue, as, for instance, in Trafalgar Square, where the great column is the pillar and the plinth, elevating Nelson.

Sometimes it is not the statue of a person that is to be seen, but a light. Those of you who have passed along our southern shores in the dark and seen the flashing light of Eddystone will have an illustration. The building is a pillar, erected on a foundation, resting finally on the rock; but the purpose of elevation is the flashing of a light. Sometimes both ideas are combined. Those who have sailed up the Hudson into New York City have looked at the Statue of Liberty facing out toward the ocean. It was some very unkind Englishman who said that Liberty had turned its back on America and was looking homeward again. As you looked at that statue, two things arrested your attention. First, the figure of Liberty; and when the night came, lo, from the brow flashed an electric light. There we have the two things, the elevation of a person, the flashing of a light. Sometimes the purpose is the proclamation of a truth, a historic truth, as in the weird and wonderful Cleopatra's Needle to which I have already made reference, whereupon is written the history of ancient kings and dynasties and deeds of prowess. The idea is always that of the elevation of a person, of a light, of a truth, that these things may be seen.

Mark, then, I pray you, still thinking of the structure in all simplicity, the interrelationship. First, the pillar and the ground are of no value apart from what they reveal. Second, the statue, the light, the word, need the pillar, the ground, in order that they may be seen. A column built for a statue is a laughingstock if the statue is not placed on it, and seen. When Eddystone ceases to flash its light across the waters for the sake of mariners it may be destroyed. When the writing of the pillar is obliterated, though out of sentiment we may still keep it there, it will have no real value. But it is also true that the statue cannot be seen unless it be elevated. Place it on the level, and only a few can see it. It must be lifted up, if it is to utter its message. The light on the ground flings no radiance to the distance, and the mariner will not be helped. It must be elevated, if the light is to be seen. The word simply written is of no value. It must be proclaimed, published.

Such is the figure in itself, and I am inclined to think that this simple and childlike examination of the figure has already preached the sermon. "The Church of the Living God, which is the pillar and the ground of the truth." Immediately, we see how the figure illustrates, in consonance with other Scriptures, one phase of the function of the Church.

The first mention of the Church in the New Testament is found in those inclusive words of Jesus, so brief and yet so full of meaning, spoken at Caesarea Philippi: "I will build My Church." A structure which the Lord Himself builds is suggested. When, later on, Paul came to write of the Church he made use of the same figure: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Chief Corner Stone." Here he speaks of that structure, as the pillar

and the ground of the truth. The Church is the medium by which the truth is to be proclaimed, to be elevated to a height that men may see it, to be published to the city, to the nation, to the world at large. In the Christian Faith we have centrally a Person, resultantly a Light, finally a Word. If the Person is to be seen He must be lifted up; if the light is to flash across the darkness it must have height; if the word is to be proclaimed it must have an instrument for its proclamation; and the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth; its one business is to reveal the Person, to flash the light, to proclaim the word.

Passing from the figure to the fact, mark the interrelation between these matters. The Church of God apart from the Person of Christ is a useless structure. However ornate it may be in its organization, however perfect in all its arrangements, however rich and increased with goods, if the Church is not revealing the Person, lifting Him to the height where all men can see Him, then the Church becomes an impertinence and a sham, a blasphemy and a fraud, and the sooner the world is rid of it, the better. The Church, apart from the shining of a light, is a lampstand, dark, valueless, effete. The Church that fails to proclaim the Word is a sound, a voice without articulation, sounding brass and a clanging cymbal; of no value.

With all reverence, let me state the other side, which is to my own heart full of grave solemnity. That supernal Person, apart from the Church, is hidden. Jesus Christ has no means of showing Himself save through His Church. The light that flashes from His eyes cannot be seen save as it beams and shines and burns and flashes and flames from the eyes of His people. The tenderness and strength of His teaching can be felt only as the Church becomes the instrument through which He speaks to humanity to direct, instruct, and bless it. The great central Person is hidden unless the Church reveals Him. The Light that lighteth every man, and which came into the world, and was focused, centralized for a brief period in a Person, has passed out of human sight, and is no longer shining save through the Church. The Word of God today has no voice apart from the Christian Church.

Now, from these more general statements let us come to particular considerations. The moment we do so it is necessary that we remember that, finally, the figure must be interpreted by the fact. A fact is always greater than the figure that represents it. We may take it as an axiom that whenever we have a figure it is because a fact is so fine that there is no apprehending it apart from the figure. Consequently, the figure presently must vanish away in the presence of the fact.

In this case it is pre-eminently so. This is seen in Paul's use of the figure. He had already defined what is the pillar and the ground of the Truth by two words: "House" and "Church." In each case, moreover, he had qualified his definition: "The House of God," "the Church of the living God."

Paul first called it "The House of God." This word "House" means, first, a dwelling place; then, a family; then, a householder; and, finally, a dynasty; the word is employed in all these senses in the New Testament. It is God's dwelling place, family, household, and Kingdom. That is the pillar and ground of the Truth. Paul also called it the Church of the living God. The Church is the theocracy, the whole company of souls governed by God; and, consequently, it is God's governing body in the midst of human history, that through which He makes known His will, enunciates His law, reveals His purpose, communicates His life, marches ever onward toward the ultimate goal of His determined purpose. Paul, in his last letter concerning the Church, the letter to the Colossians, speaks of a mystery, the Church; and, a few sentences later, refers to "the mystery of Christ in

you, the hope of glory"; and yet a few sentences later, speaks of "the mystery which is Christ." To reverse the order. First, there is the unfathomable and infinite mystery of Christ Himself, God manifest in the flesh, the One in Whom all the fulness of Godhead dwelt corporeally. Then follows the mystery of Christ formed in the heart of individual souls. Multiply the number of such units and we have the mystery of the Church; and that is the pillar and ground of the truth. The Person can be seen only through that company of men and women; the light can flash only through them; the Word of God can be proclaimed only through them. Their one responsibility in the world, then—individually and in their corporate capacity—is the revelation of the Person, the shining of the Light, the proclamation of the Word. When we pass into our New Testament and breathe its rare and spacious atmosphere, the trivialities that divide us perish, and we gain the sense of God's great Church of all souls that are born anew, that share the Life Divine, in whom Christ is formed, the very hope of glory; upon that multitude of every tongue and kindred and nation rests one supreme responsibility; that Church of the Living God is the pillar and the ground of the Truth.

How is the Church to fulfil that responsibility? The Church is to fulfil the responsibility of revealing a Person, flashing a light, proclaiming a word, by Incarnation, and by proclamation. In considering these we must remember the Divine order: that the whole Church is called to the ministry; and that within the Church there is a ministry, the business of which is to perfect the whole Church that it may fulfil its ministry.

First, the Church of God is to fulfil its obligation by Incarnation. In one of the very last conversations I had with D. L. Moody, in his own beautiful home in the Connecticut Valley, we were talking of the Bible, of its importance in the life of the nation, and in the life of the world; and with that short, sharp, quick manner in which he often said great things, he said this: "Never forget that the Christian man is the world's Bible, and in the majority of cases a Revised Version is needed." I am not proposing now to discuss the second part of his declaration. I am afraid it is too true, but I leave it. I am interested in the first part of his declaration. The Christian man is the world's Bible. How is this nation of ours to know this Bible? The printing of it, and the scattering of it is not enough. That is most important, most valuable; but the letter killeth; it is the spirit that maketh alive. The spirit of the Bible is never revealed to the unregenerate man until it is incarnate in the lives of men and women who believe it. That is the perpetual principle of God's methods with men. God might have adopted some other method; but God has chosen this method, and I believe that His choice is based upon infinite wisdom. Man hears the Word of God through man. That tremendous truth underlies the central mystery of our holy faith, that of the Incarnation. God had spoken to the fathers in times past through their prophets in divers portions, by divers methods; but there was no final, prevailing and pervasive power in the Word of God until He spoke in His Son. It was when the Word became flesh and tabernacled among men, and men beheld His glory, that the Word of God became prevailing. There is a sense in which that great Incarnation of God and of the Word of God in Jesus of Nazareth was central and final and inclusive; but the principle obtains, and persists. Ere He left the little group of men that had gathered about Him, He said to them, Ye shall be My witnesses. By this, He did not mean merely, Ye shall be men who talk about Me; but ye shall be My evidences, My credentials, My examples. The early victories of the Church were won by men who believed the story of Jesus, by men telling the story of Jesus; but also by men illustrating the story that they told in what they were in themselves. In proportion as the Word was incarnate, the Word ran and had free course and was glorified. This is persistently so. It is so

today. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. Through her, the Person is to be seen, the Light is to shine, the Word is to be proclaimed; but she can fulfil her sacred duty only as the word which she hears, the light which is granted her, the Person known to her, is revealed in her individual members. The Church is in the world to proclaim a great Evangel. The Church is in the world to make protest against all things that are unlike God. The Church is in the world to be the instrument of the Divine philanthropy. The Church is in the world to pronounce the ethic of heaven and to insist that men shall hear it and obey it.

How is the Church to proclaim her evangel? She will send her evangelists; but the evangelists have no power in their message save as that message is backed by the testimony of men and women who are pardoned. It is the pardoned man who preaches the Gospel, the man who lives in the power of God's forgiveness; the man who is forever humble, never forgetting the hole of the pit from which he was digged, marching to the end of life's journey with the subdued and reverent demeanor of a man who owes everything to the Divine grace; and yet, marching with his head erect, knowing the forgiveness of his own sins. That man is proclaiming the Word, is flashing the Light, is revealing the Saviour. That man is preaching the Gospel, and it is by that preaching that the evangel is to be proclaimed.

The church is in the world to make eternal protest against all the things that spoil humanity. How is she to do it? By preaching? God has chosen the foolishness of preaching for the accomplishment of His great and infinite purpose; but preaching is powerless save as it is reinforced by the lives of men and women whose lives are a perpetual protest against evil things. God's Church sends out to every Pool of Bethesda where are gathered the withered and the maimed, men and women who are against the things that wither, that maim, that spoil; Crusaders that have lifted their hands in the sight of heaven, and sworn beneath the Cross of Calvary, that they will make no truce with evil. As the Church sends these men and women out, she is making her protest.

The Church is in the world, a great instrument of Divine Philanthropy. There is a great word of the Church that we Protestants have nearly lost: Mother Church! She is, or ought to be, the great Mother, picking up the crippled child and nursing it back to life, finding the starved and feeding them, taking hold of the imbecile and saying: We will see to it that you are guarded while life's lamp still burns. That is the Church's business, and, thank God, she has done wonderful work. All the great philanthropies that care for the unfit have resulted from the incarnation of the Love of God in the Christian Church.

The Church is in the world to proclaim the great ethic of God. How shall she do it? By enunciating moral codes? No, they have been enunciated once and forever, and we can add nothing to the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. The Church is to proclaim the ethic by sending into the highways and byways, into the places of commerce, and the places of professional life, men and women who themselves observe the Divine Law, and reveal to men the infinite love that has inspired it.

But there is also a corporate revelation by incarnation. By her fellowship with God and by the consequent fellowship within her borders the Church of God ought to speak to the whole world of the realization of the Divine ideal. The Church ought to be revealing to the world the Kingdom of God and the will of God for humanity. In order to do this, the Christian Church has a ministry, a ministry of those on whom God has bestowed His great gifts. "He gave some apostles,... some

pastors and teachers." The business of those within the Church is to teach the word of truth in such form and fashion that the Church will be able to incarnate the Word, and flash the light on the world's darkness. The apostolic function, which, technically is expressing truth in its balanced form and proportion, is always to that end. The pastoral function is breaking the Bread of Life, feeding the flock of God, leading individual souls to new appreciation, in order that by obedience thereto they may proclaim the truth. These gifts within the Church are bestowed in order that the Church may fulfil her function of being the pillar and the ground of the truth.

The Church must not only fulfil its function by incarnation, she must do it also by proclamation. In order to do this, she has her prophets and evangelists. The function of the prophet is to proclaim the evangel, call men to repentance and faith. The prophet and the evangelist must speak on behalf of the Church, explaining the secrets of the Church's experience. If there be no experience to explain, the declaration of a theory is of no avail. For one brief moment let us go back to the Day of Pentecost. Think of the significant and important fact, that Peter's preaching was made possible by the Church's enthusiasm. What attracted the crowd? A Church with its eyes aflame with light and its lips filled with song! All Jerusalem gathered together, and they were amazed, and they were perplexed, and they said, What meaneth this? The Church attracted the crowd by its enthusiasm, and so the opportunity of the preacher was created. This is the supreme work of the Christian Church, and it is only as she does her work that men and nations and the world will live by the Bible.

In the midst of the chaos and the uncertainty and the perplexity there is nothing at this moment more important, than that the Church of God should proclaim the Word of God to the nation. This she must do by life in harmony with the Word, by the messages of her apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. The message lacks all force, unless it have behind it the witness of the souls that have proved its power.

The Church of the Living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. If the Church is to do this work she must know the Word of God for herself. If the men appointed to minister within her borders are to assist the Church to the fulfilment of her function, they must know the Word of God themselves.

There is a Person the world needs to see. Am I helping to show Him to the world? There are dark and troubled and storm-tossed waters on which mariners are being wrecked, and there is a Light for them. Am I helping to flash the light across the dark waters? There is famine for the Word of God everywhere, and men are wandering away and dying, and there is a Word of God that meets the need of such hungry souls. Am I doing anything to make it known?

1 Timothy 6:5-6. Godliness And Gain.

1 Timothy 6:5-6.

Godliness And Gain.

Supposing that godliness is a way of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

1 Timothy 6:5-6

The arresting word of the text is "godliness," for it is twice repeated. The word becomes more arresting when this letter is read through in close relation and connection, and it is discovered that it occurs therein no less than ten times.

What is godliness? is a question preliminary to our meditation. The word "godliness" in my text and throughout the whole of the letter to Timothy is not really a translation of the Greek word, but it is a fine interpretation of the value of that word. Yet I think we cannot rightly understand its value save as we take a little time to consider the word of which it is a translation. The Greek word, literally translated into our common speech, would be good reverence. One is immediately conscious of the insufficiency of that translation to convey any particularly illuminative idea to our minds. It comes from a word meaning well reverent, and that again comes from a root which means to revere, to worship. In our word godliness the first syllable is our supreme word for the Almighty, God. That particular word is not suggested by any part of the Greek word, but it is suggested by the whole fact of the Greek word, for it describes that attitude of reverence which is born of the consciousness of God. The godly man is the reverent man, the revering man, the worshipping man. Godliness is that poise of the spirit, that attitude of the soul which is the true outcome of a perpetual recognition of God, and realization of His presence.

There are those, then, who suppose that the attitude of reverence toward God is a way of gain. That it not so, it is a heresy, it is a false conception. Nevertheless, reverence toward God in the true, deep sense of the word is in itself a gain that makes man independent of all other gain or loss. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. So much for the word itself, and the general thought it conveys.

The letter to Timothy was written to him during the period in which, in obedience to apostolic instruction, he was exercising the oversight of the church in Ephesus. We have to remember the condition of Ephesus at this time; it was the center of abounding commerce; its citizens were mastered by a passion for wealth. The supreme ambition in the activities of the city was that of getting gain. There was, moreover, a strange religious aspect of all this, using the word religious in its lowest sense, speaking not of the Christian fact within the city, but of the pagan fact. It was the place where the temple of Diana stood, and that temple had become to the merchantmen of the city both sanctuary and bank; it was the place of their worship, and it was the place where they deposited their gains. Thus, the worship of Diana not merely permitted, but had become in itself

the very essence of devotion to the getting of gain. Ephesus was in the grip of what today we would describe as the lust for gold. In that city of Ephesus there was a church of Christ. You will remember how, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, a letter written some time before this one to Timothy, a letter written during his first imprisonment, as this was written during the period of his last imprisonment, he charged the Christian people in Ephesus that they should buy up the opportunities, seeing that the days were evil, and in that description of the days he revealed the fact that the spirit of Ephesus was a peril to the church of God in the city. We find constantly in these apostolic writings that Christian men and women in the Greek cities were affected by the spirit of the age, and were therefore in peril. The church of God is always in peril when it allows itself to be affected by the spirit of the age. There is no heresy more subtle and dangerous than the somewhat widespread one which charges us that the church of God should catch the spirit of the age. The business of the church is not to catch the spirit of the age; but to correct the spirit of the age, and bring the spirit of the age into harmony with the mind and will of God. It is quite evident as we read carefully this letter written to Timothy exercising the oversight of this church that the peril to which I have referred had affected certain teachers of the Christian religion as well as members of the church. It is with this fact that Paul was dealing in this particular paragraph. "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth." He then touched on the inspiration of such false teaching in the case of the men of Ephesus, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain." It is a very severe paragraph, a terrible indictment, an awful condemnation of the men who were in the mind of the Apostle as he wrote to Timothy. They were teaching some other doctrine than the form of sound words, the words of Jesus Christ, and there was biting satire as he described them as "doting about questionings and disputes of words"; he then described the effect produced, disputations, "wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth"; finally, he touched the inner secret of the whole thing, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain," and immediately proceeded to correct their heresy by enunciating the truth that godliness in itself with contentment is great gain. So much for the word, and so much for its setting.

Now I leave the context and the peculiar application which Paul made to the Christian teacher, in order that we may consider together the proposition involved in our text, and make the broader application which it warrants.

First of all, I shall ask you to think with me of the atmosphere in which a warning such as this and a declaration such as this became necessary. Our text presupposes that the main passion characterizing the age was a desire for gain. I shall ask you, in the second place, to consider with me the heresy which is suggested by my text, "Godliness is a way of gain." Finally, we shall observe the truth declared in my text, that godliness in itself with contentment is great gain.

In my introductory words I have referred to Ephesus, and by so doing I believe have brought this congregation face to face with the fact that the conditions in the midst of which we live are very similar to those that obtained at Ephesus. While there is a very remarkable contrast between all that was merely local and incidental in Ephesus and in our own cities and our own age, the essential matters, the attitudes of mind, and the master inspirations of human life are identical. I think that the man must be wilfully and blindly optimistic who will deny that the master passion of

our own age, in this our own land, is a passion for possession. I am prepared to admit every exception that may suggest itself to your minds at the moment, and yet admitting all the exceptions, I affirm that the great inspiration of activity in our age is not that of conquest, is not that of discovery, is not that of learning, but that of gain. We can look back in the history of our own land, to hours in which the master passion of the people was conquest. I am not discussing its worthiness or unworthiness. But that is not so today. There was a time when the spirit of the age, expressing itself, not in the voice of the multitude, but in the sympathy of the multitude with certain outstanding men, was a passion for discovery. There was a wonderful period, short though perhaps it was, in the history of our own people in the last century, when a consuming passion for learning took possession of the nation. But I very much fear that in the day in which we live these things master men only as they may contribute to that more subtle passion for gain. I find that policies and governments are inspired by markets. I discover that even until this hour we are still as a nation in the presence of great national and international complications because of revenue. You hardly need that I illustrate. If I do, I shall give you the old illustration which has passed my lips so often in this place: we are still dallying with opium because of revenue. If I read that there is some kind of threatened international crisis which I do not profess to understand, and the interpretation of which I decline to take from yellow journalism, I nevertheless find, whatever paper I read, that the main thing involved is the protection of interests, and when I analyze the revealing words I find that the interests are those of markets, methods of getting gain. We are appallingly mastered today by the passion for gain. I should not mention these things if I had not higher business on hand, that of reminding you that subtly, yet surely, this master passion has commandeered religion, and that today there are many people—I will not say teachers, I am not dealing with teachers, I am making the broader application—living and acting under the impulse suggested by these apostolic words, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain."

I pass from that attempt to speak of the atmosphere which makes the warning necessary, to the warning itself. What is this mental attitude which the Apostle describes in the words, "Supposing that godliness is a way of gain"? Here, let me say in parenthesis, is one of the supreme cases in which the Revised Version has delivered us from one of the most serious blunders. I pray you, mark carefully this translation and the way in which the word is put. "Supposing that gain is godliness" is the old form. No man ever imagined that gain is godliness; that is not the trouble, the peril, the heresy, but something far subtler. "Supposing that godliness is a way of gain." I sometimes think an idea like this is best illustrated by a concrete case. You will at this point understand my reason for taking you back to Genesis, and reading that very brief paragraph in the history of the dealing of Laban with Jacob, in which, in passionate protest, Jacob referred to the methods of Laban for twenty years. I am not going back to the paragraph. In returning to the story I am trusting to your perfect familiarity with it, for, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, Laban stands out as a man who looked on godliness as a way of gain. Laban was perfectly willing to use Jacob because of Jacob's godliness, to make use of him because of his belief in the God of Abraham and of Isaac, to squeeze out of him everything to his own advantage and then to fling him away. That is the supreme concrete illustration I find in the Old Testament. I am not going to deal with Laban, but I ask you to consider this type of character as it exists in our midst today. This is not the man who despises religion, and sets himself in opposition to religion. This man will never try to undermine the faith of another man. This is the man who appreciates to the full the social values of Christianity, who is perfectly well aware that the Christian, the truly godly man, is a true

man, a temperate man, faithful in all his duties and in the fulfilment of his obligations. The man to whom I am referring is the man who will carefully select those with whom transactions are to be had upon the basis of their religion. He will be very eager to know that the man he appoints to a place of trust in his office is a godly man. He is not himself a godly man, in any sense of the word, sees no good in prayer, worships never, in his inner soul he may even scoff at the thought of godliness, but he knows the moral, social, commercial value of godliness, and he will be very careful, so far as possible, to realize on the godliness of others.

Let me be concrete; he will let his house to godly people rather than to ungodly people. Why? Because he knows they are far more likely to care for his property than ungodly people. A man who looks on godliness as a way of gain is, in municipal and parliamentary matters, Christian in sentiment, he will take his stand on the side of everything that is in the nature of truth and righteousness; but when you touch the personal note, when you come to deal with the man himself, when you come to see the man under the awful searchlight of the Divine thought of him, or see him weighed in the infinitely just balances of the sanctuary, you will find that his godliness is nothing more than something which he practices in the hope of gain. This apostolic description is the most searching and the most appalling to be found in the whole revelation of the New Testament. The peril described is at once the most subtle and the most blighting and blasting of any. That man is almost beyond hope who will maintain external rites, and traffic with the principles and practices of godliness while the motive is gain. That is the heresy of all heresies the most terrible. A man who will employ the language of the sanctuary, wear the livery of the temple, pronounce the creeds of the church, to maintain a position in society and commercial life that will enable him to satisfy his lust for gain is of all men most hopeless.

I turn from that consideration to the corrective truth, for after all is said and done, there is an element of truth in the idea that godliness is a way of gain. There is an element of truth in it, while it is a heresy. Just as there is an element of truth in that phrase that some of us remember having seen at the head of our copybooks when we were learning to write, "Honesty is the best policy." The man, however, who is honest only because it is the best policy is a rogue. That is the very heart and center of this business. The man who is godly only because godliness is a way of gain is ungodly at his heart, and is rejected of heaven.

Yet, in order that we may understand the subtlety of this peril it is necessary that we should dwell for a few moments on the truth. We notice with what immediateness the apostle proceeded from graphic description of the peril to enunciation of positive truth, "godliness with contentment is great gain."

Now, the ultimate definition of godliness is found in the first great chant or anthem of the Christian Church, which the Apostle either wrote for the first time, or which he quoted.

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

According to that revelation, godliness with contentment is indeed great gain. "Great is the mystery of godliness," which I understand to mean: Great is the mystery which is the final inspiration of godliness. Then that mystery is described: "He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the

spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." We are at once conscious that the Apostle had in his mind the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Leaving the descriptive phrases, and speaking only of the Person Who was described by the Apostle, let us put the statement thus: Great is the mystery of Him, Who in Himself was the incarnation of godliness, and Who in the fulfilment of His mission is the inspiration of true godliness in others. We immediately see the reason for another passage, which we read as lesson, the one in Colossians, that great passage in which this same Apostle deals with the mystery. There he first spoke of the mystery of the Church, further on of the mystery which lies within the mystery of the Church, "Christ in you the hope of glory," and still a little further on, of the final mystery, which is Christ Himself. As in that Colossian epistle he traced the secret back into its innermost marvel, let us take it in the other order: the first mystery is Christ; the consequent mystery is Christ formed, fashioned, in the life of a man; the final mystery is the whole Church, consisting of all such as are indwelt by this Christ. Great is the mystery of that Christ and all those in whom He is formed, and ultimately of that Church in which the glory of the revelation shall be included and revealed.

This seems to wander a great way from the text! Not a hairsbreadth. In this light the unworthiness of the former conception is immediately seen, "supposing that godliness," the attitude and externality of reverence, "is a way of gain." "But godliness"—and we must still think of the spaciousness of godliness—let it be understood according to the interpretation of the sacred writings, let it be recognized in its marvel, in its light, love, life, liberty, glory; godliness, as revealed in the incarnation of the Son, as realized in the soul, of a man who has been brought into relationship with Christ; that godliness which is infinitely more than a pose or attitude of external reverence; that godliness which is the perpetual attitude of external life, after the pattern of spiritual worship, that godliness is great gain.

Mark carefully the juxtaposition of the terms, "Godliness with contentment." Contentment is an essential concomitant of godliness. Where there is real godliness, the attitude of the life well reverent, there is perpetual contentment. I venture with reverence, and may I say with some reticence, to appeal again to the supreme example of godliness received in the revelation of Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament revelation of Him, do you know of a more radiant revelation of perfect contentment than that of Jesus Christ, perfectly at peace, perfectly quiet and at rest, never disturbed, always calm and dignified? Why? Because His spirit was adjusted to the will of God, the poise of His life was well reverent toward God, meeting the stress and strain, even of the last darkling hours of the final tragedy, in a calm, contented manner.

The man who makes godliness an appearance of his life in order to gain, is forevermore characterized by lack of peace and by unrest. The man who has seen the vision, and whose soul has answered it; the man who has found God, and who has forevermore a sense of His glory, and is submissive to the call of His will, that man is quiet. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

I find in this same letter another statement: "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." I pray you do not minimize that, do not attempt to qualify it. Let it sing its own song in your heart, "Godliness is profitable for all things." Godliness is profitable for physical life. It is enough to say that surely, now; I need not argue it. Godliness is profitable for mental life; true godliness never blunts the intellect or stifles the voice of reason; it

creates the atmosphere in which it is possible for a man to prosecute investigation; it gives him the right to ask questions, says to him in infinite wisdom, Secret things belong unto God, but revealed things are for you and your children; admits the right of inquiry, quickens the intellect, makes keen, alert, alive the mental powers. When I pass beyond the physical which I do not argue, and the mental on which I have uttered some few sentences, to the spiritual, again, argument is unnecessary.

Godliness is profitable in every human obligation, in social life, in political life, in all human interrelationships. Let two godly men deal with each other in business, it is a profitable transaction. Let a godly man stand by his godliness six days a week in the market place, it is a profitable thing. I am not so sure, you say. I have a business man listening to me who says, I am not so sure. I have attempted during the past week to live the life of godliness, and if I could have sacrificed it I would have been a wealthier man tonight! Would you? Would you change the wealth of a clear conscience for the gain of gold? You know you would not. Godliness is profitable for all commercial transactions.

Godliness is gain in wealth, for the man whose wealth has been gained in a godly fashion, and who is living a godly life, will always understand that he is but a steward of the God Who has prospered him, and he will make to himself friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail they will receive him into the everlasting habitations.

Godliness is gain in poverty. I am not defending poverty. It is a very long time since I have been guilty of declaring that poverty is a blessing. God overrules it, and makes it a blessing; but poverty is outside the economy of God. It is not His will that a man or woman should feel in the rush of human life the grind of poverty. Let us understand that God in His provision for humanity has provided for humanity; if man has lost the key to the situation, and does not know how to manage the gifts of God, the blame is on man. While that is so, and while the conditions in which men live today are conditions which bring poverty to some, I still bring you to the poor man or woman in this city, fine in character, godly in poise of spirit, who is struggling for bread; and I will let you talk to that man or woman, and you will find that he or she knows the gain of godliness: all the sackcloth is transfigured, and loneliness is canceled, and the bare and frugal meal becomes a sacrament of heaven when the soul is truly godly.

"Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." I need not argue Paul's final words, the life which is to come, all the afterward of revelation, explanation, compensation; that richer life we are sure of if we are godly.

Make the comparison between these two things. One man says that godliness is a way of gain, and one man knows that godliness in itself is great gain. They use identical words when they are talking, they recite similar creeds, they are not like the people in the Old Testament, one party saying shibboleth and the other saying sibboleth. They both say shibboleth. You cannot tell the difference between these two men by looking at them or listening to them. How shall we find it? It is in one quantity; contentment, rest, quietness, peace. Are you making godliness a way of gain? It is revealed by the feverish unrest of your life that you are. Are you finding godliness gain? It is revealed by the quiet dignity of your life that you are.

Let us try to feel our way into the heart of this. What is the supreme heresy in the first case? That this man puts gain first. What is the essential truth in the second case? That this other man puts godliness first. The master passion in the one case is gain, and godliness is looked on as a means to an end. That is heresy. The master passion in the other case is godliness at all costs, and that godliness is gain in itself. That is the way of God. Remember that to say that godliness is a way of gain is essential godlessness. Christ will not allow us to crown Him, because He feeds us with material bread. The multitudes would fain make Him King. Why? Because He had fed them. He would not take the crown on those conditions. Godliness is in itself essential wealth. Here were other men, who crowned Him, not because of gain, but because of the supreme necessity of the case, because He had captured them; then He became to them all they needed in things material and moral, and spiritual and eternal. That is infinite wealth!

Which is your conception? May I urge the question? Are you simply religious because it is respectable so to be, because by observing the externalities of religion you gain some advantage in society? That is, of all blasphemies, the worst. On the other hand, do you desire to be godly as the deepest passion of your life? Knowing, as you do, that you are full of failure, do you desire that you may be well reverent, submitted to this God, under His will? Then you are already possessed of undying wealth.

Let the last note of this message be that of the gain of godliness. Be right with God, and you will be right with every other personality in the universe, right with every other relationship of human life. Be right with God, and you will be right with the devil, you will master him, and be safe in the hour of temptation! Be right with God, and you will be right with your fellow man, loving him, and expressing your love in integrity, justice, honesty, mercy, benevolence. Be right with God, and you will be right with your possessions, you will not say that anything you have is your own, but that it is His, and you are His steward. Be right with God, and you will be right with the powers of your being; be they what they may, they will be realized, fulfilled. Be right with God, and you will be right with death, enabled to face the hour of dissolution with a song and a shout of triumph, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory."

Godliness is indeed great gain.

1 Timothy 6:12 The Fight Of Faith

1 Timothy 6:12

The Fight Of Faith

Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal.

1 Timothy 6:12

We are accustomed to speak of the Christian life under different figures. Sometimes it is described as a pilgrimage in which, staff in hand and equipped for long and continuous marches, the pilgrim sets his face toward the country where he fain would be. Sometimes it is described as a voyage over seas in which today the blue of the sky is mirrored, and which tomorrow are swept by storm. Sometimes it is described as a race, to run in which the competitor must strip himself, lay aside every weight and set his face toward the goal, perpetually forgetting the things behind. In all these figures of the Christian life there is the suggestion of effort and of difficulty. I know there are those who speak of this Christian life as though it were easy, soft, weak. As a matter of fact, it is indeed, as the text suggests, a fight, fierce and terrible oftentimes, a constant warfare from beginning to end. It is a fight which requires all a man's grit and force if he hopes to win. It is in that way I desire to represent it to you, my brothers, to whom principally I speak this evening.

The words of the text constitute a part of the final advice of the aged Paul to his young friend and fellow minister, Timothy.

The text is really a part of a threefold injunction which may be expressed by the three words which indicate it, "Flee," "Follow," "Fight." The first of these three words indicates what Timothy's attitude should be toward the evils which the apostle had been rebuking. The second affirms the true ambition of his ministry; the third indicates at once the strenuousness of his life, and by its connection with the latter part of the text, "lay hold on the life eternal," indicates the strength in which he will be able to fight his fight as he follows after righteousness and flees evil things.

I take the text away from its setting, and I do it no violence thereby, for while this is the word of the apostle to one who is called into the sacred and special work of the ministry, it has to do with life, and every man who is a Christian is in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Every man who has yielded himself to the King is called upon to fight the battles of the King in his own life and wherever he may be. Turning aside, then, from all its immediate and local application, I bring the text to you tonight as indicating this fact of the strenuousness of the Christian life.

What, then, is the fight to which men are called who follow Jesus Christ? Two forces are at work in the world. The force which gathers to the center and the force which drives from the center. First of all, the gathering force brings a man within his own personality into consistent life, and then brings man to man, heals the breaches and the wounds, and makes for a society which is pure, noble, self-sacrificing. The scattering force breaks a man up within his own personality, and drives men apart, severing man from man, brother from brother, the wide world over. The force of right and

the force of evil are in array against each other. If I may express the warfare in another way I would say that there is a perpetual battle in the world between faith and fear. If, for a moment, you do not follow me in the antithesis, I pray you think that at the center of all evil as its inspiration is fear, at the center of all right as its inspiration is faith. If you take the Bible and trace your way through from beginning to end you will find these two principles are forever revealed as in opposition. You find men attempting to combine on the basis of fear, fear of each other, of some ultimate evil; and also men combining on the basis of faith in the unseen and eternal. Faith and fear are in perpetual opposition. All that which drives men to evil courses, and all that which divides man from man is based upon fear. All selfishness expressing itself in harm to other men grows out of the heart's fear. All self-sacrifice expressing itself in helpfulness to other men grows out of the heart's strong, firm courage and faith. In the world these two forces stand opposed. Every man is ranged on one side or the other. Every man's life is either a part of the force which scatters, or a part of the force which gathers. Every man's effort in every day of his life is a contribution toward the victory of evil at some point, or else it is a contribution toward the victory of good. I grant you that at the back of all expenditure of human effort by which we are surrounded, and of which we ourselves contribute a part, there is an infinite hunger and craving after God. The difference between faith and fear is the difference between attempting to satisfy this deep craving and hunger in the right and true way and in the wrong way. The wrong way is the way of evil. The right way is the way of good. These two forces are opposed even in a man's own life. A young man facing life sees before him some goal to which he desires to come; some ambition inspires him, prompts him, drives him. This in itself is not wrong. It is as it should be. God has made every young man capable of seeing lights in the eastern sky which lure him to endeavor. It is of human life, according to the plan of God, that young men should dream dreams and see visions, and build castles in the air, and aim at success. Every man who is a man has such visions and such desires. How are you going to gain your goal? By what way are you traveling toward your mountain height? How do you propose to translate your castle in the air into a solid piece of work squarely set on the earth? That is the question of importance. The suggestion that is made to the young man facing life is, on the one hand, a suggestion that he should take short cuts devoid of principle toward the goal he desires to reach. The other suggestion is that he shall find the one highway of stern duty and true principle and tramp it at all costs. The battle begins in his heart between the allurements and enticements of the short and easy method—as it appears to be—of evil; and the long, stern, and arduous method—as it appears to be—of good. In this great city at this hour the two forces are at work. The battle is set in array. Whoever may lead the hosts on the side of evil, the fact remains that through this city there are forces of evil waiting to lure men into ways of evil on the basis of fear, and other forces drawing men into the paths of righteousness on the basis of faith.

Whether it be in a profession or in business, here or there, the deepest thing in all your life story will be the contribution you make toward this great battle between evil and good, fear and faith. This battle is not one which is fought by preachers or teachers only. It is not a battle fought only by men who are openly vulgar, and are attempting definitely to demoralize human life—would God there were none such, but there are such! The battle is not one between the leaders merely. Every man in this house is in this great fight. You are fighting the battle in every hour and every moment of your life, as your life's force is being exerted on the side of good or of evil, according to whether the underlying inspiration is that of fear, which attempts to save self, or faith, which attempts to glorify God. That is why the apostle charges Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith."

The leader of the forces of faith is Jesus Christ Himself. In the letter to the Hebrews the writer describes the heroes and heroines of faith through the ages. At last, passing from the eleventh chapter into the twelfth, you read these words which describe the One who is "The Author"—and now allow me to offer you a more literal and immediate translation of the Greek word—"the File-leader of faith." That is to say, the writer of this letter to the Hebrews puts Jesus Christ at the very forefront of the army that fights the good fight of the faith. Although in point of time and in appearance in human life He came long after the men already mentioned, Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest, yet Jesus Christ is the File-leader, the one moving first. The whole life story of Jesus, on the human side, is the life story of One who lived by faith. He saw the ultimate victory. He believed in the triumph of righteousness. He wrought with God along the mysterious way of human life and by victory gained over all temptation, and testimony borne in His own age, and at last by the infinite revelation and mystery of His passion, fought "the good fight of the faith." He it is who leads the armies of the faithful.

If a man is to fight this fight of the faith where is he to begin? He must begin with definite and personal submission to the great Leader of the army of the faithful. Every soldier in this fight must be enlisted of his own will and must yield his will to the will of the Commander. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." The personal application of that is that if a man would gather he must be with the Christ, and that if he is not with the Christ he is therefore scattering. You cannot "fight the good fight of the faith" until you have crowned the Christ. The first thing, then, in Christian warfare is enlistment under the leadership of the One who stands in front of us, the File-leader of faithful souls.

Then follows a statement of the all-inclusive equipment for the fight. The charge of the apostle here is not that a man shall fight to lay hold on eternal life, but that a man shall lay hold on life eternal in order to fight. I am afraid that has not always been the interpretation of this passage. We have very often read it as though the apostle meant that a man is to fight the good fight of the faith and presently to lay hold on eternal life. If that has been our interpretation it is because of a common mistake which postpones the possession of eternal life to the ages beyond. Eternal life is something for today.

What is eternal life? Some recent translators have, as I think, very beautifully expressed the thought in the words "age-abiding life," or the "life of the ages." Eternal life is not a condition to which a man comes after death. Eternal life is that mystic and wonderful life which is in all the ages, past, present, and to come. It is the infinite force at the back of everything. Now, says the apostle, in the midst of things present, in the midst of the battle against evil, in all the fierceness of the conflict, fight, laying hold on eternal life. The force in which man is to fight against fear and on the side of faith is that of the appropriation of this eternal life. Let me express this in a slightly different form. Eternal life is not merely a quantity. It is a quality. A man can live eternal life here in London just as well as in heaven. Unless he live it here how can he live it there? It is the life which defies change, the life which abides when all its varied expressions pass away. "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal." Take hold on this principle of life and in its power fight the fight of the faith.

How shall I find eternal life? The answers are as familiar to you as is the Book of God. You have heard them from childhood. Hear the words of Jesus, "This is life eternal, that they should know

Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." Yes, but how am I to know the only true God and Him whom He has sent? Hear another of the statements of the New Testament, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them which believe on his name: which were born"—there is the beginning of eternal life in the soul—"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." When a man sees Jesus Christ and obeys Him, yields to Him, in that moment he has taken hold on eternal life. He has put his own life in all its meaning into immediate connection with the life which abides, the life of the ages, and in that strength he is called on to go forth to this warfare.

What is to be the soldier's spirit? First of all, the man who fights after having crowned Christ fights in perfect confidence because he knows His leader and is convinced of the ultimate issue. In the letter to the Hebrews the writer says, "We see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold... Jesus." The victory is not won. The final crowning of Christ Himself has not come. He is still waiting in the hidden mystery of the heaven until "his enemies be made the footstool of his feet"; but we have seen Him and to have seen Him is to be perfectly assured that He must win. It is impossible once to have looked into the face of the Son of God, to have seen Him in all the radiant beauty of His purity, the matchless majesty of His victory over sin, and believe that at last He can be defeated. If I am in the fight against evil in my own life and in the fight against evil in the world as a soldier of Jesus Christ, I fight in perfect confidence.

The man who fights under the direction of Jesus Christ fights not only in confidence but in cautiousness. The great word of one of the Old Testament writers is forever true in his experience, "Happy is the man that feareth alway." There is a foolhardiness which names itself courage, but is not courage. There is a species of pious blasphemy very much abroad in the world today about the power of the grace of God. I have heard men say that if they have once given themselves to Jesus Christ the grace of God is able to keep them in all sorts of places and conditions. It is not. The grace of God is able to keep a man in any place into which God brings him, however grave and perilous; but the grace of God is not sufficient to keep a man when a man deliberately puts himself into a place of peril outside the pathway of the Divine will for him. I have heard men say with regard to strong drink that the grace of God is sufficient to keep a man. So it is, if that man will obey the law of God and abstain absolutely and utterly from the thing that has marred him. If a man plays with fire he will be burned, notwithstanding his relationship to Jesus Christ. If a man attempts to try his courage by putting himself into a place of temptation he will fall, notwithstanding the fact that he has crowned Christ in his life by some act of submission in the past. The soldier who is to fight the good fight of faith is to "flee" from all evil. I pray you remember that there are moments in this great conflict of faith as against evil when you will demonstrate your courage more surely by using your spurs than by using your sword. There are places to which no man can go who is to fight this fight. The place of peculiar peril is to be avoided. The good soldier of Jesus Christ is the man who fears, and fears always. Not confidence merely, but caution also.

The good soldier of Jesus Christ is one, moreover, who understands that there must be conflict unto victory. That the victory is possible he believes. Then if it be possible, however stern, however strenuous, however terrible the conflict, he is to press right through until the end. You have heard the story of the Spartan son who returned home and said to his aged father, scarred by many a battle, "My sword is just a little too short for me." Said the old man, "Add a step to it."

You tell me your sword is just a little too short for you to win. One step more, and one thrust harder. The last five minutes win the fight, not the hours that have preceded them. Some man here has been fighting his fight for weeks and months. You tell me you are just giving up. In God's name I charge you, fight through. It is the last five minutes that mean victory. There must be perseverance.

The soldier of Jesus Christ is not only a man having confidence and caution, and determined perseverance which issues in victory. He is a man who will endure hardness and so himself become hard, in that sense of the word hard. Hardness is a quality which comes only through enduring hardness. By hardness we mean not that hardness against which we are warned in the New Testament, the hardness of conscience and heart, but the toughness which enables a man to "stand... to withstand... and having done all, to stand." Hear one word as an aside. Some man says, "I lack that hardness. That is where I fail." I say to you, "Once more out upon the field, one more campaign, and you will be harder. Another victory and the fiber of your moral courage will be tougher." It is by fighting on until the victory is won by strong endeavor that man gains the hardness which makes him at last a valiant and victorious soldier of Jesus Christ. All these things are necessary if we are to "fight the good fight of the faith."

Where is the fight to be fought? In the first place, in secret. You will never be able to fight the good fight of the faith in London until you have fought it, and are fighting it, in your own heart and life. There are many ways of stating that truth. It is an old, a commonplace truth, yet one which I feel needs to be restated. There are so many men who desire to have something to do in the general moral uplifting of society who have never yet enlisted to fight against evil in their own hearts and lives. The first battle is the battle within, against wrong in the heart and life. Yet remember, as I have already said, this battle also, first and fundamental, can be fought only under the leadership of Christ. My trouble in dealing with young men is that so many of them misunderstand Christianity. They imagine that all they have to do is to make some confession of loyalty to Jesus Christ and that He will nurse them over all the way. Nothing of the kind. Crown Him. Follow Him. Fight under Him. The severest battles of a man's life are fought out in secret and in his own individual soul. Temptation to evil in its varied forms comes far more subtly to a man when he is alone than when he is with others. I begin my fight inside; in the secret recesses of my inner life, in the hall of the imagination, in the chamber of the affections, there the fight must first be fought. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." I am not anxious to make any appeal to young men to fight the fight in the city. I am perfectly convinced you will be bound to do that if once you have fought in the fight in your own life. Your whole life, if that life be homed in the will of Christ winning His victory, will be part of the force by which He lifts and purifies the city. The fiercest battles of the individual life, the longest, the most strenuous, are the battles fought in absolute loneliness. May I, with all reverence, illustrate what I am thinking from the life story of Jesus? Do not forget that in the will and economy and purpose of God He lived longer in private than in public. Think you there was no significance in that? Three years of public life, and, reckoning from twelve years of age, when He was a boy coming up to the Hebrew confirmation, eighteen years in quietness, hidden away. Where do you suppose, so far as the manhood of Jesus is concerned, the fiercest battles were fought, in the presence of the crowd or in Nazareth? I tell you, in Nazareth. There were battles to be fought in the presence of the crowd.

It is not particularly heroic to do right when you are in the midst of people who applaud you. It is easy for the men of this brotherhood to be pure on Sunday when they are in the brotherhood, and I am not at all sure that it is particularly difficult to be good in the midst of opposition. I tell you frankly, I have never quite understood the young fellow who does not love to put up a stiff fight for God when men are against him. It calls out the fiber that is in him. But, ah, me, my masters, when the comrades in the Christian war are not with me, when the soldiers who would oppose me and make me fight are away and I am alone, then the fiercest fight of my life is fought. There are curious notions abroad in the world as to ministers of the Word of God. Some people seem to imagine we are free from temptation on account of our calling. I tell you we are the special objects of the devil's attack. In the loneliness and seclusion of the study, with only books of religion about a man, oh, the temptation to sloth, to indolence, to pride, to fear, to traffic with the Word of God for some subtle motive. It is there, when I am alone, that the fight is fiercest. Unless a man wins there he will never win anywhere.

How shall I win there? By laying hold on eternal life. This Son of God who is the Leader of the hosts laid down His life in the light and the darkness of the cross—and let no man tell me there is no mystery in the cross. In that infinite hour of His agony He made it possible for me to lay hold on life, and if a man will lay hold on life by crowning Him, he can fight alone and win, he can fight with his comrades in arms and win, and he can fight against opposition and win. The first battle is ever in loneliness. That is the thought I desire more than any other to impress on you.

What is to be the final issue of this fight to which we are called? The triumph of right in our own lives and in the world. On that I am not going to dwell.

How are you fighting? Take the week that is gone. You have spent so much of thought, so much of energy. On which side has it all been exerted? Have you helped, by thinking and speaking and working, the victory of evil? Did you think and speak and work last week so that God Almighty got some help out of you toward the ultimate victory?

I call you in the name of the great Leader of faithful souls to fight the good fight of the faith, and I say to you tonight, you can fight that fight only as you lay hold on eternal life. I say to you finally, eternal life is yours here and now if you are His. It may come silently, gently, so much so that you hardly know the moment of its coming. When you take your life and hand it over to the great Captain of Salvation, you lay hold on eternal life, and in the power of that life you may begin your fight and win in secret and in public, in your own life and in every endeavor for the Kingdom of God.

2 Timothy 1:10. Death Abolished.

2 Timothy 1:10.

Death Abolished.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who abolished death.

2 Timothy 1:10

We come to Easter morning with joy and gladness, and with a great sense of triumph filling our hearts. We have been treading the shadowed way that led to Calvary, and standing in awe and amazement in the presence of the infinite mystery of the passion of our Lord. This morning in our hearts there is the assurance that the winter is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come. The storm has spent itself, the great Master Mariner is triumphant, and the Ark rides upon the waves of a sunlit sea. Egypt is behind, the exodus is accomplished. Death is abolished, life and incorruption are brought to light.

It was the brilliant German critic of Christianity, Strauss, who declared that of the Christian faith the resurrection is the center of the center, and that is true. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain... ye are yet in your sins... if in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable," for our hope has been the greatest of hopes, and our despair must be the most unutterable of despairs.

Christ is risen; and His resurrection was first of all, as to His own mission, perfect vindication of Himself, the proof, in the cosmic order, of His sinlessness. It was also the vindication of all His teaching; He had affirmed through the days of His public ministry—and men had listened to the affirmation and had refused to believe it and had crucified Him eventually for making it—that the supreme thing in human life is the spirit, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and have no more than they can do"; speaking out of His own essential spirit life He said, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again," "I will go up to that which men call death, and you shall see Me die, but I, the essential spirit will take hold of My body, and bring it back again that you may behold it." When He was laid by loving hands in the grave, His enemies said, "We remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I rise again' "—and if He never rose they were quite right, He was a deceiver; but the resurrection demonstrates the truth of His own teaching, that in the economy of God the spirit life is independent of the body, is able again at the time appointed to reclothe itself with the body, because it is the dominant factor in personality. The value of the resurrection in the mission of Christ is that of its perfect vindication of Himself, of His teaching, of His power.

The value of the resurrection to the sons of men is, therefore, necessarily that of demonstration. By that resurrection I know that my sins are forgiven. Blot out that historic resurrection and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is a sigh of hope without foundation in fact upon which faith can fasten. By that resurrection I know that the Cross is the means by which my sins may be forgiven.

That resurrection is the demonstration of the possibility of a holy life, for He Who said, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again," said "I lay down My life for the sheep." In the energy of that communicated life we live that we may become holy. If He rose not, it is a false dream. By that resurrection there is assurance of the life beyond, and illumination thereof for all time. It is to that last thought that we turn this morning.

The text appears in a paragraph, the burden of which is Paul's appeal to Timothy to be brave and true in the testimony of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole paragraph makes perfectly clear that the central fact of the gospel, that which indeed is the gospel, is the fact of the appearing, or the epiphany of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is the gospel which Paul preached, the gospel committed to Timothy, the gospel of the Church.

The central fact of that manifestation or appearing is that of the resurrection. Here the apostle describes the resurrection as the abolition of death, victory over death. He moreover declares that, by the way of the resurrection, life and incorruption were brought to light in the gospel.

Death is abolished by that illumination. That illumination results from that abolition.

Let us remind ourselves briefly, and with all patience and sympathy, of the fact that the fear of death is not only widespread but it may be described as universal. Man does fear death. You remember the words in which Shakespeare describes death:

Death is a fearful thing.

The weariest and most loathed earthly life,

That age, ache, penury and imprisonment

Can lay on nature, is a paradise

To what men fear of death.

Or the words in which Young describes it,

The Vale of Death! that hushed Cimmerian vale,

Where darkness, brooding o'er unfinished fates

With raven wing incumbent, waits the day,

(Dread day!) that interdicts all future change.

Or to go back to literature more ancient than either, more sublime than either, the literature of our own Bible. Listen to the voice of perhaps the oldest book in the Bible, and hear how Job in the midst of his agony thus describes death:

... The land of darkness, and of the shadow of death;

A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself;

A land of the shadow of death without any order,

And where the light is as darkness.

I quote these not as illustrating the lower manifestations of fear, but the higher; they are records of this universal fear, from the highest of men.

This fear of death still abides very largely, even among the children of God, the children of light. Perchance it is the last fear to be overcome in the heart of the trusting saint, as death is the last enemy to be overcome. We are conscious of the chill of it even though we live in the warmth of the risen Sun of righteousness. There is a sense in which this fear haunts us and abides even after we have seen life and immortality brought to light in the gospel.

May we reverently ask the reasons of the fear? What fills the heart with fear in the presence of death, either our own death or that of our loved ones? First of all, let us remember that even if we believe man is immortal, it is still true that death is the passage from the familiar into the unfamiliar. We do not know what lies beyond; it is the bourn whence no traveler returneth. We have all felt the terror of that as we have stood by the side of the loved one about to cross over. It is the leaving of the familiar and the reaching of the unfamiliar. It is the severing of associations, and the ending of fellowships. It is the interruption of plans and purposes, and the cessation of endeavor. These are things against which men find themselves in revolt. These are the things which make men afraid. These are the reasons why man does so perpetually and so persistently fight against death.

What is the reason of these reasons? What lies behind all this? How are we to account for it? This same apostle in his Corinthian letter dealing with the subject of resurrection, makes this affirmation, "the sting of death is sin." The fear of death is the last activity of conscience. Conscience, deadened, hardened, seared, acts in the presence of death. Conscience asserts continuity, and in a moment fear takes possession of the soul. Do not misunderstand me at this point. I do not say that fear of death is the fear of punishment for sin in the next world. That is not my argument now. Conscience asserts continuity, and when the spirit contemplates continuity after this strange dividing line of death, and believes that death is but the passing on from the familiar into the unfamiliar, the severing of old associations, the ending of old fellowships, the interruption of plans and purposes, the cessation of endeavor, then the soul is in revolt, the emotions are stirred with fear, but why? Because through sin man has lost his vision of himself, of the meaning of his life, and of the things that lie beyond; because man looking out at death is blind and cannot see death as it really is in the economy and purpose of God. All the reasons which I have assigned for fear, which are true reasons, are, nevertheless, false as in themselves. Death need not be, nor ought to be, the passage from the familiar to the unfamiliar; Death is not the severing of association, the ending of fellowship; it is not the interruption of plan and purpose, and the cessation of endeavor; unless all these things are out of harmony with the ages and with the God of the ages, and the purpose of the ages. If a man shall live out his life of three-score years and ten simply in the realm of the dust, or even if a child, or a youth shall so live, as the result of faulty teaching of fathers, mothers, teachers, all these reasons for fear are there.

Now the declaration of this text is not that Christ destroyed death, but that He abolished it. The declaration is that He made death idle by bringing life and incorruption to light through the gospel. This Greek word is translated in other places in the New Testament, "made of no effect." That is the true thought here. He has made death of no effect. He has made death void, empty. He has emptied death of all that which filled the heart with fear.

Let us see how this has been done. What was the way of His victory? First of all, in His own personal resurrection He abolished death. I am not dealing at all with that infinite mystery of the Cross which preceded resurrection. It was not in the hour of resurrection that He made atonement. It was in the act and article of death that He atoned. In His resurrection, He, the permanent, the continuous, the spirit, the essential, took His body out of the tomb, leaving the graveclothes absolutely undisturbed, and leaving the stone still in its place. The graveclothes were not, as we have sometimes interpreted the story, folded up tidily in one place; they were in the actual wrappings in which they had been about His body; the napkin was not with the graveclothes, but in a place by itself, apart, exactly where it had been about His sacred head. He had left the graveclothes unmoved, every fold as it was around His body; and the stone still there. It was when John and Peter saw those undisturbed graveclothes that they believed He had risen. If they had seen the graveclothes carefully folded and smoothed, they would have thought someone had stolen the body; but when they saw them wrapped as they had been about the body, still there and the body gone, they believed. An angel rolled back that revolving stone that men might see that He was not there. In that article of resurrection He, the permanent, persistent spirit, the essential Jesus as Man, took again that body, and by the touch of His spirit so transformed it that it was no longer subject to the laws which are only of the material, but became the spiritual body of which Paul speaks in his great Corinthian letter. Thus in resurrection He abolished death, made it null and void, made it of no effect. He demonstrated for all time the fact that there is a life that can and will master death eventually, even on the physical plane.

He tarried for forty days, showing Himself as alive from the dead. Have you studied the brief story of those forty days? It is a wonderful unveiling of life and incorruption. He merged the familiar and the unfamiliar. We are afraid of death because we are leaving familiar things and going to unfamiliar; and for forty days He merged them in each other, perpetually comforting, startling, satisfying, and surprising. The doors are locked for fear of the Jews, no bolt is shot back, and He is there, and you can put your finger in the print of the nails. He merged the familiar with the unfamiliar.

He demonstrated identity, continuity, mastery over death. They had seen Him die, they knew He was dead upon the Cross, but He is alive. There He is, and in His feet and hands are woundprints, and His side; but doors cannot retain Him. He can walk by their side, so close to them that they can listen to Him but do not know Him, all the way to Emmaus; then He will break bread and they will see Him, and just as they would hold Him, He is gone. Do not try to get rid of these last two chapters of John. The light is never clearer than in these two chapters. He is merging the familiar with the unfamiliar. He is saying to us, "You speak of going to unfamiliar things, just over the line they are there, all the old things, but there are other things you cannot quite understand, I will give you glimpses of them that you will never forget when your loved ones go; strange mysteries of being you cannot understand, but they are the same; even the woundprints are there."

He demonstrated the continuity of association and fellowship: There are things I dare not try to say, as I think He said them; I have to say them roughly, for imitation would be sacrilege. I can always hear how He uttered that woman's name that morning, "Mary." She knew Him then. "Rabboni, Master, it is Thou! Yes, you have not lost Me." She would have clutched Him, but He said, "No, Mary, you will have to learn to depend not upon the touch of flesh, but upon communion of spirit. The associations are not broken, My Father and your Father, My God and your God. You

will have to learn to do without the touch of the flesh, Mary; that is all."

He revealed the unity of plan and purpose here and beyond. What was the passion of His heart while here? The Kingdom of God, the salvation of men. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." He stayed long enough to say to His disciples, The plan is the same, the purpose is the same, the endeavor is the same; I out of sight, you in sight, are going into partnership. "Ye shall be My witnesses... to the uttermost part of the earth."

If that was the personal action in the abolition of death, what was the relative action? Again I quote from the Corinthian letter, for in these words the whole argument is stated more briefly and forcefully than I can hope to state it, "The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In the darkness and mystery of His Cross He so dealt with sin as to be able to whisper to my sinful soul the word of absolution and the word of peace, so as to give me a conscience void of offence toward God. Directly, you have a conscience void of offence toward God; you have a new vision of God, a new vision of yourself and a new vision of the hereafter; and death who had stood before you stern, hard, iron, brutal, cold, is as you look transfigured into an angel of mercy whose kiss is the kiss of love, the porter forevermore at the gate of life, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory."

What is this victory in our outlook on death? Christ put Himself where death had been standing. This is His word to the Christian, "Till I come." This is His word to the Christian through His servant and by inspiration, "Absent from the body, at home with the Lord." We looked for death, but we are not looking for death today, we are looking for Him, and even if, presently, by the weakening of this mortal tent in which I dwell, the loosening of its bands, my body becomes, to use the magnificent description of Longfellow when he wrote of the slave, "the worn-out fetter which the soul had broken and flung away," I shall meet my Lord. Never was finer thing written about death than that. The spirit conscious of the worn-out fetter, breaks it, flings it away, and then is at home with the Lord. So Christ stands there, where, I know not and care not, whether near or far, just over the borderline of this service, perhaps ere it is done the flaming glory of His advent feet, or perchance after a long, hard day's work, there stands, not death, king of terrors, but Christ, the King of love, and He has abolished death. Death is unemployed, idle. Christ has taken his place.

Mark the effect of this upon fear. Again you may express it in words not usually used in this connection, but I think accurately used in this connection, "Perfect love casteth our fear." The reason of the reasons of fear is gone.

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought,

My sin, not in part, but the whole,

Was nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Oh my soul.

"The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

With the passing of the reason of the reasons, the reasons also go. Men fear death because the beyond is unfamiliar; but the beyond is not unfamiliar to us. We know the country well to which the

loved ones go. But you say, that is the difficulty, we do not. Think again. I am afraid the Church of God is losing that great and gracious art of contemplating the country beyond. I know that it is out of fashion to teach even children to sing about a heaven beyond the blue. It is certainly quite out of fashion for Christian people to talk about heaven. We are told to make heaven here. I believe that with all my heart. We need have no anxiety about the heaven beyond, but it is good sometimes to contemplate it. As the saintly Rutherford said, "it is good to climb and look in advance upon the home of the soul forever; to observe its buildings, its furnishings; the country, the hills and valleys." We do it all too little. This is the thing I want to say. We know the country for we argue of the country from the country's King. If you really want to know what heaven is like, get any little bit of earth where Jesus is King, and you will see it. Do not be afraid of your imagination. Flowers? Oh yes, immortals, Asphodel, never fading. Birds and animals? Surely yes; armies of white horses for the saints to ride upon. You say, "You are talking figures of speech." Quite probably so, but figures are used to help people to see facts that are too brilliant for their seeing. Facts are always finer than figures. I argue the country from the country's King. No, the country beyond is not unfamiliar. I not only know it, I am learning its language, I am gradually coming to understand its very accent. I know men and women, saints of God, who have walked and talked with Him for fifty years or more, and their accent is so much the accent of the other side that men call them foreigners. We know the country to which the loved ones have gone because we know the country's King.

We were afraid of death because death meant severing of associations and the ending of fellowships. I bring you back to this great word of the catholic Church, and I use the word in its true sense, the universal Church, the peculiar word of an older day, the communion of saints, which does not merely include the fellowship of the saints who are in the Church on earth, but the communion of all saints who have entered into rest and are beyond the vision of the senses. The communion abides; we are not divided. We are waiting, so are they. We are not yet perfected, neither are they. They are in the Paradise of God where the vision is clearer and temptations are over, and the battle is won, but they are not yet perfected. "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." We are united in our waiting. They are waiting for that for which I am waiting, the resurrection. We cannot visit them. They cannot talk to us, and we violate the whole order of revelation when we try to do it. They cannot revisit us, I do not know that they can watch us, except perchance now and then by some special permission of heaven. There is a unity and affinity which defies and laughs at absence of articulate speech and the vision of the senses. I pass no day that I am not conscious of the nearness of at least one who entered within the veil sixteen years ago, my first lassie; but I never try to bring her up to mutter to me. I never insult the high and holy revelation of God by making use of some fleshly medium that I may hear a whisper that is from hell and not from heaven. But I know the touch of her spirit upon mine, for the spirit life cannot be measured by the dimensions of the material. I know though she cannot come to me, I shall go to her.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;

For when with raptures wild

In our embraces we again enfold her,

She will not be a child;

But a fair maiden in her Father's mansion,
Clothed in celestial grace;
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion
Shall we behold her face.

I have not lost my child, she is mine as she never was before.

Did we say that death interferes with plans and purposes, and endeavor? No, there is continuity of service. They are not idle. It is death that is idle. What are they doing? I only know one thing, they are praying; what else I do not know, I will not pretend to say. This I know, They rest from their labours, but their works have gone out with them; and while the heart of their Lord is restless because His work is not completed, their hearts are restless with His restlessness. They are in perfect fellowship with Him. They have not grown callous about this world of ours, they pray. Oh, it is a great theme, I cannot exhaust it. The Lord is risen indeed, Hallelujah.

This is not the gospel of callousness. We still miss our loved ones, and we still shed tears. Our sense of loss is the result of what God made us emotionally, and we should be less like God if we did not miss them. Our tears He never rebukes. I miss the loved one who is leaving my home and crossing the ocean for a little while, and I have even known tears shed on such occasions. The sense of loss is not wrong when the loved one passes on, and I know I shall never again touch that dear hand until the morning of resurrection. This is not the gospel of callousness. Christ does not rebuke your tears. It is the gospel of comfort. The boy you have let go far away across the ocean, you miss him yet, but he is not as safe as the child Jesus took to be with Himself, not nearly as safe. Tears there are, but the rain of our tears in the light of the resurrection creates the rainbow which arches all the sky and is the perpetual witness to the ultimate victory.

But if Christ did not rise, all this is unutterable nonsense. Do not imagine you can retain this verse if you deny the historic Christ and the historic resurrection. It is a miracle in the midst of the ages, not natural evolution. That is not resurrection. It was triumph over tragedy, mastery over death by life in the supreme act of God for man. Deny it and you have no comfort—the thud of the clod upon the coffin and that is all. But blessed be God, He is risen, we know He is risen.

There is no song before Calvary. That is, there is no Easter song for me without Calvary. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished," that is before Calvary. Let me say this other thing. There is always the Easter song after Calvary. You cannot prevent it. You may have Pilate's mandate, and Herod's soldiers, and all hell's opposition; but the song will laugh at your opposition.

What was true in history is true of your life. You will never sing the resurrection song until you know Calvary; but to know Calvary is to know resurrection and the Easter song.

May God, the God of all comfort, send you home, especially you my beloved who are bereaved, not to be callous or indifferent, but to know that He gilds the teardrop with His smile and makes the desert garden bloom awhile; to know that He has your loved ones safe, and that when God comes, He will bring them with Him.

2 Timothy 2:8. The Supreme Inspiration Of Faith.

2 Timothy 2:8.

The Supreme Inspiration Of Faith.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead....

2 Timothy 2:8

This is an hour peculiarly trying to the young people of our church. The child, thank God, has no consciousness either of the suffering of the hour or of the problems by which we are confronted. It is wonderful how God fashions the heart and does not allow a little child to apprehend agony until it is strong enough to face and bear it. A sweet little girl this week said to her uncle when he came into the house, "How many Germans have you killed?" He, wise man, understanding the child-heart, said, "Not more than twelve!" She hugged him and kissed him! Dear child-heart, knowing nothing of the agony, knowing nothing of the problems. God help us to guard our children from understanding.

In all probability, those who are older have had to face these very problems before in some other guise, and they are affected, chiefly, by the tragedy of the suffering.

To the young, that is, to those who believe and who think, this is a critical hour. The problems they are called upon to face concern the goodness of God and the government of God. Believing and thinking young life is compelled today irresistibly and in spite of desire to ask whether God can be good, whether God is really governing at all. How can belief in the goodness and government of God be reconciled with all that is going on in Europe today? That is peculiarly the problem of believing and thinking young life. The difficulty is created because the facts remain too well authenticated to be doubted. The fact of the goodness of God and the fact of the government of God as well as the appalling facts of the suffering and wrong of the hour are certain.

I have selected this text because it reveals a principle of life and action, steadying, inspiring, strengthening. It does not solve problems. Indeed, it brings some of them yet more acutely to mind. It does, however, remind us of a fact in history, stupendous, mysterious, assuring, which makes it possible for us to wait for the hour of solution in the sure confidence that there are explanations. How it does this I think we shall see as we proceed.

First, let us give ourselves quite simply to the text itself without any further reference now to the problems of the hour. To these we will return briefly in conclusion.

These words are found in the last writing of Paul preserved for us. When he wrote them, he was in prison and facing death. He was charged with crime; mark the significance of his own words, "... in bonds as a malefactor." What the charge was specifically we are not told. Different conjectures have been made; that he was arrested and imprisoned on a charge of sedition, on a charge of having complicity in the burning of Rome, on a charge of treason. Most probably it was this latter

charge of treason which was preferred against him on the ground of his preaching of the Kingdom of God and the Kingship of Jesus. In Thessalonica they charged him with acting "... contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." His trial had two stages. The first was over when he wrote this letter. In it he had been deserted. Listen to his pathetic words, "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me...." He seems to have expected some delay before the second stage of the trial for he urged Timothy to hasten to him bringing Mark with him. He charged him also to bring a cloak, a suggestive revelation of his physical suffering in the chilliness of the dungeon, and also some precious parchments. The probability is that there was not the delay he expected and that Timothy never again saw him alive. Mark it well, in those days of loneliness, in the grip of a hostile world-power, forsaken by his friends, suffering the chill of the dungeon, and anticipating the end, he wrote, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David...."

Timothy almost certainly received this letter in Ephesus. The first letter was sent to him there, and the probability is that he remained there having the care of the churches. Tradition has it that he was martyred in Ephesus. Ephesus was the capital of Pro-Consular Asia. It was the child of Athens with its culture, and Asiatic paganism; a strange mixture. It was the center of the worship of Artemis or Diana, and it was also a commercial center. Wealthy, superstitious and corrupt, it was a place of grave peril to the infant church. The man in oversight of that church held a position of peculiar responsibility and subtle peril. The struggle against almost overwhelming odds must have been fierce, and to that man in those circumstances these words came: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David...."

It was the charge of an old man in the darkest hour when all the reward of fidelity to Christ seemed to be the dungeon and death. It was a charge to a young man called upon to live and exercise his Christian service in a city where the forces opposed were mighty, subtle, and apparently overwhelming; "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David...."

Let us, then, consider these words in the simplest way; observing in turn, first, the meaning of the injunction; second, the reason of its giving; and third, how it may be practiced and what is the value of such practice.

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...." In the Authorized Version the text reads thus: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead...." When we put the two versions together, we recognize the fact that they both say the same thing in different ways. The Authorized Version is strictly accurate in interpretation in that it fixes attention upon the main thought of the apostle. The main thought of the apostle here was that Jesus Christ rose from among the dead. The Authorized Version is faulty in that it deflects attention too much from the Person. It need not do so; when once we have begun to think, it will not do so; but the first sense of the soul in a natural reading of the text in the Authorized Version is to have the attention fixed only upon the Resurrection. That is the ultimate value, but it is not all the value. The Revised Version rendering is far more literal and direct, and I venture to say far more helpful and accurate.

There are two possible mistakes that we may make in the reading of our text. We may over-emphasize the abstract idea of resurrection, as though all the apostle charged Timothy to remember was the Resurrection. We may over-emphasize the fact of the Person, making Jesus Christ supreme apart from the fact of the Resurrection.

There is a twofold thought here; first, remember the actual Man, and remember that He was an actual Man. Mark the balance of the apostolic writing for there is great care evidenced in it; "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...." That is the central thing, there the light is focused, from there it flashes, but that there might be no mistake, he added, "... of the seed of David." Let me miss out the central thought—to which I am bound to come back. "Remember Jesus the Messiah... of the seed of David." Immediately we are brought back to recognition of Christ's actual, positive humanity. He was "... of the seed of David"; a Man descended from and related to humanity and knowing all human experience.

We must keep this fact central to our thinking of Him. "... risen from the dead...." Necessarily that involves the actuality of His death. It has been asserted that He never really died but swooned and was resuscitated. The actual Man of our humanity did most actually die, but we are to remember Him as risen from the dead, not "raised from the dead," but "risen from the dead." The apostle was fixing attention not upon the act but upon the fact. Paul said in effect: "Let your last thought about Jesus Christ, and your perpetual remembrance of Him, fasten Him upon your mind as alive, though having been dead." That is Paul's more logical way of saying that which John said more poetically, quoting the words of Jesus as he heard them in the Isle washed by the sea, "... I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David...."

Having realized the importance of the central note of the injunction, we may fasten our attention upon the Person. Necessarily we think of more than the Resurrection, but in the process of remembering Jesus Christ, we shall qualify everything by the final fact of the Resurrection. So let us think of Him, of His Person, of His teaching, of His Cross.

Think of His Person. John the Apostle of love said concerning Jesus: "... we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." "Remember Jesus Christ..."; and in so doing we think of incarnate grace and truth. There are no better words than these, and if for a moment I borrow other words, it is only that we may catch some of the splendors focused within them. "Remember Jesus Christ..." and remembering the Person of Jesus Christ, we remember sweetness and strength; light and love; justice and compassion; righteousness and mercy; the merging in a personality of those qualities and quantities which sometimes seem to be in antagonism but when perfectly blended are seen to present the true man. "Remember Jesus Christ..." Yes, but He was murdered; those hands that were ever doing good were nailed to the Cross; those feet that were ever hurrying upon errands of mercy were transfixed with brutal and bloody nails; He was mauled, spit upon, done to death! I remember Him! Then remember Him risen! Grace and truth cannot be finally crucified, it must rise again. All the high things that make humanity beautiful cannot forever be laid in the dust spattered with blood. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...."

Remember Him again in order to listen to His teaching. How shall I summarize the teaching of Jesus? I will do it by the use of three words; righteousness, peace, joy. I wonder if I have put them in the right order. It is the apostolic order, yet listen to the teaching of Jesus; remember the keynote of His great Manifesto, the first note. Presently, as you read that Manifesto through, you hear the deep and awful tones of stern denunciation, and you hear again and again the infinite music of perfect tenderness, each marvelous strain blending and merging into the ultimate and

final harmony; but the first note of the Sermon on the Mount is "Happy!" "Blessed" as we read it, but it is far more accurately, "Happy!" Before He is through with that great ethical enunciation, He will make you shake and tremble and shiver with fear if you are a man at all. He will probe the innermost recesses of your soul and bring to bear upon the secret things of your life the white light of the eternal throne; but the keynote is "Happy." That is the ultimate purpose, but happiness must be based upon righteousness. So He went about teaching.

Have you ever taken time in your busy lives to write out for yourselves all the words of Jesus? When you do it some day—and it is a good exercise, only do not in God's name buy that red-letter Testament to do it by, that is laziness—get a small practice book; you will not want more, the recorded words of Jesus will not fill an ordinary practice book. Having thus written them, read them through, forgetting the context just for once and the occasion on which they were spoken. Read them again and again. Ponder them and you will find three notes running through them: righteousness, peace, joy. Yes, but they silenced Him; they buffeted the mouth that had uttered the words; they murdered Him so that the dear, sweet lips could say nothing else. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead..."! You may for a while silence the voice, but you cannot silence the Word of the living God. After the drear, deep, dense darkness of those days and nights in which the world and heaven were without Christ, His body in the grave, His spirit descending to Hades, behold Him risen! Now He will speak not with one human mouth, but with twelve, with five hundred, with ten thousand, until today the speech of the risen Son of God is being proclaimed by all the sacramental host who are born again of His Holy Spirit. "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead...."

When I remember His Person, I see Him murdered. When I remember His teaching, I find His voice silenced, so that the central, awful, appalling thing I remember is the Cross. Dare to look at it, dare to face it! Here is one perfect example of humanity, of beauty, of strength, of tenderness, of compassion, of clarity of intellect, of marvel of emotion, of balance of volition; dead at the hands of lawless men. Where is God? You have never seen the Cross if you have never been driven to ask that question. When modern philosophers take the Resurrection away from me and leave me only the Cross of such a Man as this, they leave me an infidel in revolt against God, declining therefore to believe that there is a God, or if there is, that He is good. The Cross alone is the place where all hope goes out in hellish darkness, and all faith is eclipsed forever. You tell me the Cross is vulgar! So it is and with a vulgarity too terrific for words. The vulgarity that mauls and puts to death the most beautiful things the world has ever seen. The Cross; oh the brutality, the scandal of it!

"Remember Jesus Christ, risen..."! Then I must look at the Cross again; I must think about the Cross again; I must find some other explanation for it. Now I find that if He was slain by the hands of lawless men, encompassing the men in their lawlessness was the "... determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God..." and the very things I was made to doubt in the presence of the Cross—His government and His goodness—flame out with new meaning. Here is the government of God. Here is the goodness of God. This is a mystery for which you will find no solution in your heart, which the wise men of the world never understood nor do they today. It is the mystery of God, Whose highest exercise of government and authority is put forth for the saving and making again of the men who smote Him in the face and trampled Him underfoot.

Let us now go further and inquire why Paul charged Timothy to "Remember Jesus Christ, risen...." Timothy had been ordained to a life and service which were extremely difficult. There are two notes in this letter which are of supreme importance. The first is: "Be not ashamed of me, and be not ashamed of the gospel." The other is: "Suffer hardship."

Be not ashamed. By that first charge we are imaginatively in Ephesus, cultured Ephesus, and there Timothy was to preach a crucified and risen Christ. It was not easy, or popular. Christ crucified to the Greek was foolishness, and the shame of the Cross was in front of the young evangelist. The apostle knew it, he also had felt it, the shame of the gospel!

"Suffer hardship." The word has in it the actual thought of privation and suffering, pain and agony. Because he had to exercise a ministry and live a life in which these notes were necessary, the apostle said to him, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen...."

Paul used three illustrations in this connection; those of the soldier, the athlete, the husbandman. "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life... if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully... the husbandman that laboreth...."

This is no mere piece of rhetoric; mark the suggestive selection. First the soldier, whose sphere of service is conspicuous, heroic, magnificent; then suddenly, the athlete, who walk in life was one of discipline and training in order to crowning; finally, the husbandman, the notes of whose work are patience and obscurity. The soldier, conspicuous, dashing, daring; the athlete, carefully training himself, contesting for crowns and reward; the husbandman quietly going on from day to day with regular duties. Note the different emphases. The soldier, called to conflict in order to win the approval of him who enrolled him; that is an ancient method of saying a soldier serving king, fatherland, and country. The athlete, contending for the crowning that shall be just and true and honorable. The husbandman, toiling for the fruits without which the soldier and the athlete are no use.

Once again, look at these illustrations, in order to come to the supreme thing that was in the apostolic mind. All this has been incidental; there is a unifying principle, something that is common to each of these illustrations. You may express it in the old way—no cross, no crown; no pains, no gains. It is true of the soldier, of the athlete, and of the husbandman. Did you ever understand this verse so well as you understand it today? "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life..."! That does not mean that the soldier will not waste time playing; it means that nearer and dearer to the soldier is the call of duty, than mother, wife, sweetheart, child. No cross, no crown! No pains, no gains! The athlete must contend lawfully. Again it is the same principle. No cross, no crown! No pains, no gains! No sloughing off of things unnecessary, no restraint put upon the forces of the physical and mental life; then no crowning, no garland, no winning! Most wonderful of all, and I do not say that carelessly, the husbandman laboreth. We must read into that word laboreth all its full significance. The Greek word means the toil which reduces strength, the toil that brings fatigue, the work that brings the weariness which is the touch of death. That man away back in the country today who ploughs and watches is laboring; putting down into dear old mother earth his own vitality and strength, and if he does not, then there will be no reaping of the harvest and no golden fruitage.

Those are the illustrations. Paul said in effect to Timothy, the young evangelist called to the Christian service and ministry: "You are called to a service and ministry so difficult that you will need the quality of the soldier with its touch of heroism, the severance of every tie that binds to this life; the quality of the athlete, the careful training which refuses the things that hinder and contends lawfully; the toil, the labor, the fatigue of the husbandman." Who is sufficient for these things? Where is there sufficient inspiration to enable a man so to serve, so to live? "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead..."

So we pass to the final word, the injunction itself. We have now reached the point where we are very likely to say, "How can we remember Jesus Christ risen?" The word remembrance is very accurate and beautiful, yet unless we are careful we may miss its meaning. Strictly the word does not mean remembrance, recollection; it means fixity, having in mind, keeping it there. The memory is not being referred to as something which works spasmodically, but as a faculty of the soul which is to be charged forevermore with this wonderful image of the risen Christ. How can that be? Bear in mind the memory is not moral, it is not immoral, it is non-moral. Memory has no relation to the right or wrong of a thing. You tell me it is more easy to remember an evil thing than a good thing. No, it is not. That is your fault. The result of the low level on which you have trained your mind! There is no such thing as a cultured memory. Neither is memory automatic, self-acting. As Professor James once said, "Never forget, memory does not act by itself. If I say to you, Remember; you will say, What? Memory will be of no use until I tell you what to remember." It is well to have these things in mind, for by doing so we shall get rid of a good deal of false thinking about memory.

The exercise of memory is scientific, philosophic, pragmatic. It is scientific. The basis of memory is knowledge. You cannot remember anything you do not know. It is philosophic. The activity of memory is thought. You have to think upon the thing you know, to set your mind on it. Finally, it is pragmatic, that is practical. There must be application of the thing you know or memory will become atrophied, paralyzed. I will take three other words. The activity of memory may be defined thus: association, imagination, inspiration. We must know Jesus Christ risen from the dead. That is the basis of association. Then we must think upon Jesus Christ risen from the dead and that imaginatively and not merely logically, allowing our imagination to work and have full play. Finally, let association interpreted by imagination become inspiration. That is to remember Jesus Christ.

Mark the value of that exercise. I go back quite hurriedly to the things I have suggested. In the difficult, unpopular, severe service, "Remember Jesus Christ risen...." Put it in another way, I will borrow from another New Testament writing probably by the same man: "... consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself... Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Is your service difficult, must you endure hardness? Consider Him Who endured the Cross, the ultimate hardness. Is your service difficult, must you be careful not to be ashamed? Consider Him Who despised shame. Never forget the rest, "... and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Remember Jesus Christ, risen..."!

"Remember Jesus Christ risen..." in the hour of darkness and mystery. Goodness and truth are violated, they are trampled in the streets; goodness and truth are wronged in reeking tube and iron shard and smoking cathedral; "Remember Jesus Christ risen,..." and be perfectly sure that

goodness and truth are not buried beneath the ruins of Rheims, but that they will rise again and their victories will be mightier for the baptism of blackness and blood. Righteousness, peace, joy, are destroyed. "Remember Jesus Christ risen,..." and know that righteousness marches to its last throne trampling down the hosts of wickedness, and that peace finds its final realization as death is slain in death, and hell in hell laid low, and that joy will come at last even though it finds its way to the ultimate anthem through sighing and groaning and tears.

Where is God? "Remember Jesus Christ risen...." Why does God permit war today? "Remember Jesus Christ risen..."! Why did God permit the Cross? In that Cross His government and goodness were challenged. In that Cross His government and goodness were vindicated. "Remember Jesus Christ risen..."! But Christianity has failed; all its precepts are trampled in the dust! What then? "Remember Jesus Christ risen...." Did He fail? Through suffering and weakness and all that made Him contemptible, He won His victory. That is the story to the end.

I would say to every Christian man today who enlists in his country's service and boldly faces death: "Remember Jesus Christ risen..."!

I would say to every Christian man today who remains at home true to duty's call, in some cases a more difficult thing to do than to go to the front: "Brother, 'Remember Jesus Christ risen....'"

But there is no comfort in this for those who fool in such an hour as this. To the men who are neither going to the front nor doing anything at home there is no comfort. Remember it was Jesus Christ who rose—not Judas, not Herod, not Pilate, not Caiaphas! It is a curious thing that when I searched my New Testament to find some man in the days of Jesus who was a diletant, fooling, I could not find one. When Jesus passes by in any guise or garb, He forces superlativeness, and there is no man in all the story who was fooling! Men today who do not see that the day of the Lord is at hand and drop into line somewhere ready to suffer and die, for them there is no comfort in this.

But to the man, the woman, who faces the problem, the distress, the darkness, and then buckles on the armor and goes by way of the Cross; I say to such: "Remember Jesus Christ risen...."

2 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5. The Kingdom: Traitors.

2 Timothy 3:2, 4, 5.

The Kingdom: Traitors.

Men shall be... traitors... from these also turn away.

2 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:4-5

We have in this letter in all probability, the last words of the great apostle. It is very largely a personal letter. One illustration of that will be discovered in the fact that there are twenty-three proper names found in its four brief chapters. It is the letter of an old man to a young man. It is a letter of an old minister of Jesus Christ to a young man commencing his work in the ministry of the Word. It is the letter of one who has borne the burden and heat of the day to one who stands facing the battle. It is the letter of one who has been careful to lay the foundations, and who charges men to beware how they build thereupon, to a man who is to continue to build. It is impossible to read this letter naturally, as a letter—that is, at one sitting, forgetting those false divisions of chapters and verses—without becoming conscious that the heart of the writer is full of conflicting emotions; full of sorrow, and yet full of joy; full of anxiety, and yet full of courage. He is perfectly conscious, as the time of his departure approaches, of the dangers that lie ahead. The peculiar message committed to him has been the doctrine of the Church; but he has never forgotten the Kingdom. Whereas it has been his work in the course of his constructive and educative ministry among the churches, to declare the truth concerning the Church of God; the passion in his heart has ever burned with vehemence for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

All about him are evidences of the foes, the forces that are against Christ and the Gospel of Christ. In his own personal experience he is conscious of the forsaking of friends. He bears in his body the scars, the stigmata that tell of his own buffeting. He sees ahead of the Church and of the enterprises of the Kingdom of God in the world, great and grave perils; and all these things make him anxious about Timothy, this young man—so dear to his heart, his own child in the faith, the fruit of his own preaching—as he recognizes that the ministry which awaits him will in many particulars be a more difficult one than his own has been. His letter, therefore, is a letter of warning. He says that in the last days perilous times—or, as the Revised Version has it, "grievous times," or as I venture to suggest even more literally, "difficult times"—shall come. Then follows a dark catalogue of evil things. I think I may be allowed to say that a hush of awe, of fear, fell upon this congregation as I read them tonight; one was conscious of it in the very reading—"Men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof."

The one word that I have chosen from the dark and awful list is the word "Traitors." I take it because it suggests peril to the Kingdom. I have already said that this man was specifically, as far

as doctrine is concerned, the apostle of the Church. I have also said that there ever burned in his heart the passion for the Kingdom. This man, looking ahead, saw perilous days, days in which evil men would become increasingly evil; days in which evil men and impostors shall "wax worse and worse." This does not mean that the world is to wax worse and worse, but that evil in itself will be worse and worse, as good will be better and better. The two elements are noticeable in their development in all the centuries, and in the day in which we live. Good is better than it ever was. Evil is worse than it ever was. The wheat and tares will grow together until the harvest, the full development of both good and evil; and then will come God's crisis and God's settlement.

Paul saw the development of evil things, and as he described the conditions of evil, one word passed his lips which reveals the truth of the thing I have already affirmed, that the passion for the Kingdom was still burning in his heart, "traitors." This is peculiarly a word of Kingdom relationship, a word indicating a peril threatening the work of the Kingdom.

This is the last in our series of meditations on the Kingdom. We spoke first of the King, the One upon Whose vesture and upon Whose thigh the great name is written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; of the Kingly character, the Kingly qualifications, and the Kingly authority of God's anointed King. In our second study we spoke of the Kingdom over which He is assuredly King, even though at the moment there may be rebellion therein; He is King in the material, mental, moral realms; and all because fundamentally, essentially, He is King in the spiritual realm.

We spoke next of the character of all such as are in His Kingdom; we heard the King standing at the wicket gate, saying, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven." And then we listened to the King, speaking to men in the Kingdom, indicating to them what must be their sacramentum, or oath of allegiance, if they would be His helpers in building and in battle, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

I ask you tonight to think with me of the peril to the Kingdom, indicated in the words, "men shall be... traitors." In advance of our consideration let me say what I shall repeat at the close; that this is the gravest peril that threatens the Kingdom of God. The word indicates an appalling kind of resistance; that which postpones the Kingdom most successfully. "Men shall be... traitors." These are not the men outside, arrayed in battle against the King; but the men and women inside, who are untrue to the King.

"Men shall be... traitors." First, let us solemnly ask ourselves what does this word suggest to us. What is treachery? Let us, secondly, notice the concomitants of treachery; the companionships of treachery, which the apostle describes in these very words that surround the one word of my text. Thirdly, let us attempt to see the root of treachery as the apostle here in passing, and yet, quite clearly, indicates it for us. Then let us consider the punishment of treachery. Finally, let us take our way into the secret place and ask the King to show us whether we are traitors.

What is treachery? The word here translated "traitors" occurs only three times in the New Testament; in this passage, once in the Gospel of Luke, where Luke, giving the list of the men who were about Jesus in the days of His public ministry, writes this very remarkable and appalling word, "Judas the traitor"; and once in the Acts of the Apostles in that magnificent address of Stephen, when charging the men to whom he spoke with sin, he described them as betrayers,

using exactly the same word. These are the only occasions where the awe-inspiring word is to be found in the pages of the New Testament. It is a somewhat interesting thing to discover the simple, root intention of the word. A traitor is one who goes before. That, of course, does not express its full significance. We must find, not only the root meaning, but the common use of the word if we are to understand it. There seems to be no suggestion of evil in the word if we simply take its root intention; but when we observe its use, we find that it was always used in this sense; a traitor is one who goes before the enemy, one who leads the enemy, one who surrenders a position before the enemy can capture it. The traitor is one who unlocks the gate of a city and lets the enemy in; one who gives away a secret of the State, and so leaves the State at the mercy of its foes. Thus the use of the word is always an evil use, or rather, a use that always suggests an evil attitude and action; a traitor is one who surrenders a position to the enemy.

In its bearing upon the Christian fact, and in its relation to the great business of Jesus, that of bringing in the Kingdom of God, which He made the very inspiration of prayer when He taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and which He indicated as the master passion of life when He said to men, "Seek ye first His Kingdom"; this word describes one who names the name of Christ, but does not share His nature; one who recites the creed of the Church, but does not manifest the conduct of saintship; one who may be, and in all probability is, absolutely orthodox in doctrine intellectually, and absolutely heterodox in attitude volitionally; one who wears the livery of the Kingdom, but is disobedient to its government; one who hiding among the soldiers of the King becomes the vantage ground for the enemy; and, therefore, one upon whom the enemy can most perfectly depend, because he has a false position within; one, therefore, upon whom the King can not only not depend, but one who postpones, hinders, paralyzes the effort of the King most successfully, that effort that moves toward the bringing in of the Kingdom. The traitor is one who breaks the oath of allegiance, who takes the sacramentum in words, but not in deeds.

Said Jesus at Caesarea Philippi, immediately after telling His disciples that He would build His Church, and that He would give to His Church the keys of the Kingdom—mark the intimate relation of Church and Kingdom—"If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." The traitor is one within the company of those who are supposed to be obedient; but who reverses the whole process; denies the Cross, asserts himself, and refuses to follow Christ.

You say to me, that that is what the man outside is doing. But mark well the difference. The man inside sings of the Cross and refuses to be crucified; professes to be abandoned to Jesus, and asserts his own will, and his own self-life; lives a life self-centered, and sings a song as though he were God-centered. Traitors are men and women who are in league with the enemy, while to all human appearances they are marching with the soldiers of the King. I need not tarry now to survey human history so far as it has been written, to show how humanity in its deepest instinct hates the traitor. I suppose I am correct in saying that there are names in the history of almost all nations, not very many, but some, that are held in everlasting contempt. We forevermore hold in respect—I am now speaking along the line of broad human illustration—the foes of our national life who have fought us fairly, and whether we won or they matters little as the years go on. On the other hand, we hold in everlasting contempt the men in our ranks who gave away some secret to the enemy. There is no graver, greater peril to the Kingdom of God than that created by traitors in the camp. What then is a traitor? One who tolerates the evil against which the King is making battle; one who

hinders the King in His building, refuses to help Him in the building, or pulls down what Jesus builds. He said, I came to build. His mission is destructive. The men within the ranks, those supposed to follow Him who never help in the building, the men who tolerate in their own lives and hearts the evil against which the King is fighting, these are traitors. The men who never help in the building—and I do not propose to speak of the men who attempt to pull down that which Christ is building, I content myself with the other statement, the men who do not help.

There is the great ideal of the Kingdom flaming like a vision before us, the great Kingdom of God for which He taught us to pray, for which we do perpetually pray with more or less intelligence, the one great Kingdom in which one law shall govern all human life, the law of perfect love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is the ideal—call it what you will, call it Utopia, speak of it as though it were a dream that can never be translated into actuality, I care not. Christ came to realize that dream. He came to build. Here are men and women who name His name and make His sign, and sing His songs, but they are doing no building; men and women who have never lifted a hand to hasten the coming of the Kingdom in the world. Their very neutrality—I am not yet touching the deepest note of treachery—hinders and postpones the coming of the Kingdom. You remember that fine, majestic Hebrew song, the song of Deborah, in which she let loose the splendid scorn of her angry womanhood: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof." Why? Because they fought against the Lord? No! But "because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Read the whole song at your leisure. It is a song of infinite sarcasm, of satire—hear me very carefully for there is a very pertinent application of all this to our own age—satire poured upon those sitting by the watercourses of Reuben discussing the situation with great searchings of heart! Conventions, conferences, discussions, resolutions, but no building, nothing done! That is treachery of the worst kind; and every sanctified Deborah will sing her song of satire in the presence of it.

Or, will you come from the stately and almost tragic splendour of the song of Deborah, and listen to the quieter, calmer, more intensive word of Jesus, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth"? Mark Christ's implied claim for Himself, He is a Gatherer; to gather in the children of God who were scattered abroad, to heal the breaches, to bring humanity back into a common brotherhood around the Fatherhood of God; to end the strife of nations and of men by restoring them to the beneficence of the Divine government; to gather together; that was His mission. In view of that He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me," and if we are not helping Him to gather we are scattering. If we wear His livery and do not help Him in the building, we are traitors.

There is another form of treachery. He came not merely for building—that ultimately, finally, for that is the purpose and passion of His mission—He came also for battle. No word of inspired Scripture tells the whole truth with more graphic phrasing than this, "He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." Am I helping Him in that battle? There are things that no preacher can say. There are searchings of heart that cannot find expression in the voice of a man. Am I tolerating—let me speak of myself and of no other—in my inner heart and life, in my thinking, in my living, something against which the King's face is set, against which He makes war; something of impurity, of unloveliness, something of greed? Then am I a traitor! I may sing all the songs of the sanctuary and recite all its creeds, and believe all its doctrines; and yet, if in some chamber of

Mansoul, whether it be the chamber of the imagination, or the hall of the affection, or the palace of the intellect, I find house-room and hiding for some evil thing; I am a traitor. Such evil work is always done for a price—for thirty pieces of silver; and often for far less!

Traitors; not the man outside, the rascal on Piccadilly; not the poor, sinning thief that we ought to rescue; but the man inside, who listens to the word Sunday after Sunday, and nought that it says touches him or makes him disgorge his ill-gotten gain, or cleanses his heart of lust. That man is a traitor. That man postpones the coming of the Kingdom, as all the forces of hell massed outside the Church can never do.

Look for a moment, now, at the things which surround treachery, the awful companions of treachery. The first two phrases describe the character of such; self-lovers; money-lovers; and immediately following there is a threefold description of the conduct that grows out of that character, "boastful, haughty, railers." Once more Paul describes character, "unfilial, unthankful, unholy," and immediately again the conduct that issues from that character, "unloving, implacable, slanderers." A third time he deals with character, "uncontrolled, fierce, no lovers of good," and a third time describes the conduct resulting, "traitors, headstrong, puffed up."

Or take the list in another way. First we have the personal manifestations of godlessness; "self-lovers, money-lovers, unfilial, unthankful, unholy, uncontrolled, fierce, no lovers of good"; and then the social manifestations of godlessness, "boastful, haughty, railers, unloving, implacable, slanderers, traitors, headstrong, puffed up."

Then at last he touches the deep, underlying root, the very wellspring out of which the streams flow, "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Personal character is ruined, the social virtues are destroyed, because religion is dead. The form of godliness is ritual without religion; and this results in all the things that are unlike the Kingdom.

Now let us inquire, what harm traitors can do to the great Kingdom of which we have been speaking. First of all let me say this; our treachery cannot dethrone the King. It is well that we be reminded of that. What visions of God we have in this great and wonderful literature! Among them all one now comes back to me, that in the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah had never known another king than Uzziah. There came a day when Uzziah died, and Isaiah saw the empty throne and felt the sense of desolation. Then he came to the realization of the one great Throne, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." The empty throne; and the Throne that is never empty! So let us remember, in the midst of this solemn evening consideration, that our treachery cannot dethrone the King; but our treachery can postpone the Kingdom. As God is my witness, I speak to my own heart as well as to yours. The Kingdom of God can be hindered by treachery. Here is the heinousness of treachery; here is the diabolical nature of wearing the livery of the King while playing false to His purpose; we postpone the Kingdom. The sob and cry of creation is a sob and cry for a King. The measure in which I am playing traitor is the measure in which the agony of creation continues; or to put it from the positive side, the measure in which I am loyal to the King is the measure in which He is brought nigh to the suffering creation. I cannot dethrone the King, I cannot finally prevent the winning of His victory; but I can make the road longer and rougher for God and for humanity by my treachery.

Once again, what is the punishment of treachery? Suicide, spiritual suicide! Stephen charged the Hebrew people with treachery. He was speaking to the people of the covenant, to the children of promise, and in his great address, he revealed to them their privileges, tracked the way of God's dealings with them through the centuries, until he came to the Deliverer Whom he described as "My righteous One"; and he said, "You murdered Him." But that was not the first thing; the first charge was, "You betrayed Him," and the word is identical in meaning with the word "traitor." You are murderers: but before that, and this is the deeper matter, you are traitors. Though Roman hands drove the nails, Hebrew inspiration moved the Roman hands to the deed. Roman hands were the hands of lawless men, men who were without the law; but you were men who had the law, and had light, and had the covenant and the word of revelation. You were traitors. You named the name of Jehovah, and when the ultimate Messenger of Jehovah came, you were betrayers, murderers. With what result? By that act the Hebrew nation as a nation committed suicide. I find the selfsame fact of suicide in the case of Judas. How did it all end? You know the tragic story. Thirty pieces of silver! Have you ever noticed the solemn fact that he never spent one of them? He carried them back and flung them at the feet of the men from whom he had received them. There is no purchasing power in the price of disloyalty. What then? By his own act he ended his life. This is a principle of perpetual application. It is not merely the story of the Bible; you may read it in all history. I go back to the history of Rome. You have read "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Have you ever pondered the spiritual and moral teaching of it? Have you ever discovered the fact that the nation that disobeys law dies by its own hand? All the King's enemies are their own executioners. By the act of my treachery, I strangle my own life. I go down into the darkness which I myself have made. By the act of disloyalty to the King I erect the scaffold for my own destruction.

Our final word is, "Behold the King!" Here once again I see the great ideal. Lift your eyes and behold the city of God, not yet built, the work not yet completed. Then know this, that the men and women inside the Church who name His name and do not help Him build, who tolerate the things against which He is at war; these are the men who postpone the Kingdom. Consequently, my brethren, the thing I have to say to my heart and to yours is this, in the name of God and for the sake of the world; quit the form of religion, or cease to deny its power. Infinitely better to have done with the singing of the song, and the reciting of the creed, and the profession of faith if the life is not in harmony therewith.

My last word is to the man who says, "I have played the fool. I have been a traitor, is there hope for me?" Back to the Cross. The Cross was the outcome of treachery, and is the only remedy for you. Share its deep significance and abandon yourself to its death. If I will but go back to that Cross and take anew the oath of allegiance, by handing myself over entirely; then with infinite pity and in that meek mercy that lies at the heart of His majesty, the King will forgive me, and take me back again, and allow me to build with Him and battle with Him. Oh, Simon Peter, thou didst curse and swear that thou didst not know Him, by the flickering light of the fire His enemies had built; but by the Galilean lake in the dawn of the morning, with the flush of hope upon the sky, He will take thee back and give thee all thy work. Oh, the comfort of it!

The King of love my Shepherd is

Whose goodness faileth never.

Even though I have been a traitor He will take me back. Let us gather about His feet, and from this day be true to Him, and so hasten the Kingdom.

2 Timothy 4:22; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 22:1 Final Words.

2 Timothy 4:22; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 22:1

Final Words.

The Lord be with thy spirit. Grace be with you.

2 Timothy 4:22

Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

Revelation 22:21

Let me say immediately that the texts are chosen for a definite purpose, which has only a secondary association with what they say. It is not my intention to deal with them from the standpoint of their particular teaching. My interest is rather in the fact that in each case they are the last recorded words of the men who wrote them: of Paul, of Peter, and of John. The systematic history of the New Testament ends with the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. That history gathers round a company of witnesses, martyrs, confessors of Jesus Christ the Lord. It covers a period probably of about three and thirty years, and gives some account of the journeyings, doings, and teachings of these persons. Among them, the three outstanding personalities are those of Peter, John, and Paul. John does not appear often in the Acts, and only in association with Peter. The last definite reference to him therein has to do with his journey through Samaria with Peter. It is possible that he was at the Council called to consider the Gentile question about fifteen years later, but it is not definitely so stated. Peter is the most prominent figure in all the earlier part of that history, but he passes completely out of sight after the Council. Paul is the central figure in all the later part of that history, which is occupied with his missionary journeyings up to the time of his first imprisonment in Rome.

Beyond that, we have no authentic history. There are many traditions and legends of the Church, some of them undoubtedly well founded, but many of them quite unreliable. In the group of writings which complete the New Testament we have certain references which carry us a little further than the Book of Acts. These, however, are by no means connected, and are not enough to enable us to follow the story consecutively. It is interesting to observe that all these subsequent historic references are from the pens of these three men, John, Peter and Paul.

Paul, before his first imprisonment, had written of his desire to visit Spain. Writing from prison, he declared his expectation that he would be set at liberty, and would see Philippi again. In his latest letters, he spoke of visits made to Crete, to Macedonia, to Miletus, to Troas, and described himself in the very last letter as a prisoner, evidently again in Rome. Peter makes one historic allusion. He

writes his first letter as from Babylon. John tells us the fact that he was a prisoner in Patmos.

The last historic glimpses of these men which the New Testament affords then are these: Paul was a prisoner in Rome; Peter was at Babylon, perhaps the new Babylon built on the Euphrates, perhaps Rome itself. John was exiled in Patmos. Here, then, we have the historic background for their last written words. Paul, from his Roman dungeon, wrote: "The Lord be with thy spirit. Grace be with you." Peter, from Babylon, wrote: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the Glory both now and forever. Amen." John, possibly from Ephesus, but with Patmos as his supreme consciousness, wrote: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints."

Let us think about all this. As I do so, I am impressed with three things. First, with the circumstances in which we last see these men; second, with the one thought that was evidently uppermost in the mind of each of them, that of grace; and finally, with the effect which grace had upon them, as it is revealed by these final words.

We begin with the circumstances. The discussion of differences of opinion as to dates here is unnecessary. I shall proceed upon the assumption of the accuracy of Sir William Ramsay's view as to Paul and Peter; that Paul died in 65, and Peter in 80. I am among the number of those who resolutely put the death of John latest of all, somewhere about the year 96.

Paul was in Rome, expecting his death shortly and violently. Said he in this letter: "I am already being offered." He was tragically alone. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present age." "Crescens is gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me." He was conscious of the grave perils that were threatening the infant Church, as witness the whole of that second letter to Timothy.

Peter was in Babylon. There are those that believe his reference was actually to Babylon on the Euphrates, the new Babylon that had been built upon the site of the old. There are those who believe that when he used the word Babylon he used it mystically and was referring to Rome. I have no care to discuss the question. Either in Babylon upon the Euphrates or in Babylon upon the Tiber, Peter was expecting a violent death, for in his letter he said, "The putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me." He was far removed from his own land, and from his own people. He also was keenly conscious of the perils that were threatening the Church, for his last letter is full of warnings concerning them.

John, as I have said, when he wrote the Revelation was probably in Ephesus, but the whole temper and tone of it was created by Patmos, the island in the Mediterranean, where he was a prisoner, and severed by the surrounding waters from his own land and all his own people. He also saw the failure of the Churches, as witness the seven letters in the Apocalypse.

From such somber surroundings these men wrote their last words, and each wrote about grace.

Peter was the elemental man; always stumbling; always climbing a little higher as the result of his failure; coming out at last to strong rock character and confirming the faith of his brethren. The last thing he wrote was this: "Grow in grace."

John was the mystic, seeing the unseen, hearing the inarticulate, sensing the infinite. He ended everything by saying: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints."

Paul was the theologian, the philosopher, the mystic, the statesman. He concluded his message almost abruptly, in one blunt, brief sentence: "Grace be with you."

In each case the pen was laid down, for the last thing was said. All these men, the great human Peter; the mystic dreamer, John; the profound thinker, Paul; when they came to the end had one supreme consciousness. It was the consciousness of grace.

It is first interesting to notice how these men employed the term. It is pre-eminently Paul's word. Does that surprise you? Shall I confess that it surprised me? If I had been asked which of these men was the most likely to talk most about grace, I should have said John. It is not so. He mentioned it least. It was the great word of Paul. It abounds in every letter. We cannot read many sentences without coming across it. Peter, when he wrote his first letter, wrote it under the mastery of grace. In every section of the letter the word occurs. In his second letter, he opened with it, and he closed with it. John's use of the word is very rare. He was very reticent in his use of it. He seems to have reserved it for special use, for special occasions; and then to have left it to shed its own radiance over reaches in which he was always thinking in its atmosphere. We find it at the beginning of his Gospel:

We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.... And of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

He never used it again in that writing, but the whole of it shines and shimmers in the light of it. In his first letter, grace is not mentioned. In his second letter, he employed it in greeting the elect lady. In the Apocalypse, the word is at the portal. He greeted those to whom he writes by using it. It is never mentioned again through all the mystic movements of the visions, until he has done, and then he wrote: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints."

Paul, thinker, dialectician, theologian, statesman, must use the word perpetually to keep his spirit right, to reveal to those who should read his writings how he reveled in the glory of the infinite grace. Peter used it as the average man will use it. He is the typical human. John, who, I think, knew more about it than any of them, reserved it, was reticent about it, put it in here and there, so that the light of it flashes everywhere.

In order to gain an impression of what they meant by grace, we will take three passages, one from each of their writings, passages which I think are supreme in the revelation of what each understood by grace.

Let us begin with Paul.

"The grace of God has had its epiphany, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the end that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly... looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

That is Paul's central word about grace. He first declared that grace hath appeared, has had its epiphany. Then he declared three things about the activity of grace, and they are all indicated by participles. The grace of God hath appeared; bringing, instructing, looking! Bringing salvation to men; instructing those who receive salvation, to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly

lusts they should live soberly, righteously, godly; looking for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is Paul's concept of the activities of Grace. It brings salvation to men; it patiently instructs saved men through life; it looks for its issue to the second advent, the epiphany of the glory when God's victory shall be won.

Peter's central word is a phrase: "The manifold grace of God!" That may be literally translated, "The many-coloured grace of God." This fisherman, this practical soul, this man who stood in perpetual contrast to the dreamers, said one of the most poetic things about grace. The practical man became a poet. Grace made him a poet. When I read this, the word arrested me, and I thought that I remembered that Peter had used it before. At the beginning of the letter I found it. Many-coloured temptations. Over against that, at the close of the letter, he put many-coloured grace. Now where are my artist friends? I want them to think that out, and tell us all it means. I have seen some wonderful colours shining in and through it. Many-coloured temptations. The yellow temptation of jealousy. The red temptation of passion. Many-coloured grace. Heavenly blue shining down upon the yellow. Now, let the artists tell us what happens. When the blue falls upon the yellow we have the green of perfect earthly peace. When the heavenly blue shines on the red of earthly passion, what happens? Then appears the purple of priesthood and of royalty. Many-coloured grace falling upon many-coloured temptations; transmuting the yellow and the red into the green and the purple by the infinite mystic witchery of heaven's transfiguring love. Grace is the eternal rainbow of hope across all the arching blackness of the dark-Vest day.

John, being a poet and a true mystic, wrote so simply, that it is difficult at first to grasp the infinitude that lies within the compass of his simple language. John's great passage about grace is found in the prologue to his Gospel:

"The Word became flesh, and pitched His tent among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

That is so simple that if we are not careful, we read it hurriedly and miss its sublimity. It is the simplicity of perfect poetry and the uttermost mysticism. John says in effect: Do you want to know what grace means? Look at Jesus! Behold Him, handle Him, listen to Him; and whether it be in the tears and tenderness of His eyes, or in the tones of His voice, or the vibrant holy anger of His accent, you are seeing grace! The grace of God was manifested in the Son of God.

Tell me, Paul, what is grace? Grace is the activity that saves, and instructs, and lights the dark horizon with the victory of the ultimate glory. Tell me, Peter, what is grace? The manifold colours of God, by which in mystic alchemy He transmutes the manifold colours of passion, and makes them contribute to the making of a man. Tell me, John, what is grace? Jesus! There is nothing more to be said.

From all these statements let us attempt to understand what grace really is. Grace is the activity of God. First, it is the activity which is of His very nature, which He cannot help or prevent because of what He is. Grace is love desiring to realize in every life the beauty of holiness, because in the realization of the beauty of holiness life finds its ultimate beauty and joy. Grace is not a quality in God which makes Him want to excuse sin. Grace is that love of His heart that intensely desires the highest, the best, the most glorious for men. Grace, therefore, is that which inspires and dominates His will. His will is inspired by His nature, and, therefore, "He willeth not the death of a sinner but

rather that all should turn to Him and live." Therefore, grace proceeds to the accomplishment of its high purpose at all costs, and that means the cross. Oh simple words, so often said; yet what they mean no tongue can tell: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "He," the Son of God, "loved me and gave Himself for me." That is grace bringing salvation to men; instructing them patiently through the days in which they blunder, fall and fail; all the while lighting the distant sky with the promise of the advent, and the victory of glory.

That is grace, and it is manifold grace. There are colours breaking out from it perpetually. Grace is the rainbow, singing in tones of silent beauty its eternal anthem of final restoration.

Let us conclude by thinking of the effect that grace had upon these three men, as this is revealed in the fact that they wrote, these words under such circumstances. Observe first their perfect personal satisfaction. Paul was in prison. Death was coming, and he wrote about it. "I am already being offered." But that is not all he wrote. He added, "The time of my departure is at hand." Departure is a nautical word. The time of my putting out to sea is at hand! But surely that was a mistake! He surely meant that he was approaching the harbour! He meant nothing of the kind. The Christian view of death is not that of reaching port. It is that of putting out to sea. Do you know Kipling's "Ship That Found Itself"? When did the ship find itself? In harbour? No, but upon the mighty deep. Departure is not running into harbour away from storms. It is going out into all the splendour of life. Is not there a hymn that opens something like this?

Safe home, safe home in port!

and continues about:

Rent cordage, tattered sails,

And only not a wreck.

Miserable hymn! Terrible idea of dying! That is not the way. Paul thought of the end. Said he: "I am already being offered. The time of my putting out to the deep is at hand."

Paul, how are you going to finish this letter? I shall finish on the note of grace! Nothing else matters. But you are in prison? Grace is painting pictures upon the walls of the prison that make it more beautiful than the palace of a king. I am departing and the crown awaits me. I am perfectly content with grace! "Grace be with you!"

Peter also was going. He knew that he was about to die a violent death. Tradition has it that he requested that he might be crucified head downward because he did not feel himself worthy to be crucified as his Lord was crucified. That may be true or not, I do not know. But this I know. Looking on, he said that he was going, and then he added this significant word: "As the Lord signified unto me." When he wrote that, in memory he was back by the sea of Galilee. He was remembering the early morning after the bad night of fishing; and he was listening to his Master saying to him: "Peter, when you were young you girded yourself, and you chose the way which pleased you; but when you are old someone else will gird you, and lead you where you do not desire to go!" John tells us He spoke signifying what death he should die. But the last thing Jesus had said was, "Follow Me!" Therefore, when Peter looked to the end, and saw it coming, he knew he would be crucified, but he knew that his Master had said it, that grace had arranged it! The colours playing out of the rainbow of grace made all the dark and the drab, purple with the promise of the day. He

was perfectly content.

John wrote about tribulation. He said: "I am your brother; I am your companion in tribulation." But in that word there was not one note of complaint. To tribulation he added another word—And kingdom! And then another—And endurance in Jesus Christ.

These men had no personal anxieties! They knew the future: a dungeon, and loneliness, and death. But these things did not matter. The dungeon was made beautiful with the light of everlasting grace. Loneliness was canceled by the comradeship of the Lord of Grace. Death was transfigured with the glory of the manifold grace of God.

But again. I see the abounding confidence of all these men in the sufficiency of grace for the people of God.

Paul was writing to one man, a man who was in a place of peril, taking oversight of the church in Ephesus. He was giving him very careful instructions as to how he was to behave; and concerning his work, his church, and his responsibility as pastor. Now he knew that he must leave him in Ephesus, but there was no need to be anxious. "The grace of God be with you." Paul knew that grace was all that Timothy needed in Ephesus.

Peter was thinking in his writing, of the people of God in the time of their trial and difficulty, and his last word to them was this: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." There was nothing else that mattered. He knew that nothing could harm them if they grew in that grace. Peter did not mean that they were to grow more gracious, though that would certainly result. He meant that, being in the grace, they were to grow. They were in grace; now, being in it, they were to grow in answer to it, they were to develop in response to its suggestiveness; they were to walk in its many-coloured light, and they were to do all that, by getting to know more and yet more perfectly Christ Jesus. Peter was perfectly content to leave them there.

John was thinking of all the saints. Grace is at the portal of the Apocalypse, and grace is its closing word. I go through that strange and wonderful book, and I think of the saints, waiting, watching, working, amid the terrific and bestial forces of evil in their dire and devilish conflicts. "John, tell me, how can they endure?" "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints." John is perfectly at rest about the saints if that be so.

If these men had personal satisfaction, and abounding confidence in the sufficiency of grace for the people of God, they were all intensely desirous for the people of God, that grace might be with them, and that being therein, they might respond to its influence, and grow in its power.

And so, the historic references of the New Testament end in prevailing clouds and darkness, but all of them are illuminated by the light of grace. Thus it will ever be, until this period, ushered in by the epiphany of grace, shall triumphantly merge into that new period which will be inaugurated by the epiphany of glory. Therefore, we conclude once more with the wonderful words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Spirit, be with us now, and forevermore. Amen."

Hebrews 2:3. The Responsibilities Of Salvation.

Hebrews 2:3.

The Responsibilities Of Salvation.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Hebrews 2:3

There are moods and tenses in the practical conjugation of the verb to live in which this may be said to be the central and supreme question of the New Testament. They are the moods in which the soul is acute in its consciousness of spiritual things, and they are the times in which it stands between the appeal and aspiration of salvation on the one hand and the lure and lust of meaner things on the other.

Indeed, so incisively arresting is the question that to read it, or to hear it, is, for the moment at least, to be compelled to think of life in the imperative, and to apply to the present tense the values of the future.

There are three quantities in the question which combine to create this arresting power. Two of these are immediately recognized; the third is, I am inclined to think, not so obvious, but when it is once discovered it becomes the most potent of the three.

The two to which I refer are those of the salvation which is referred to, and the neglect which is suggested. The salvation is described as "so great salvation," and the term in its very simplicity is eloquent of the sublimity of the theme. It is smitten through and through with the glory of the grace of God. It is of the highest height, for it comes from the heaven of heavens. It is profound, for it descends to the lowest depths. It is so vast, so wonderful, that the only final adverb possible for the illumination of its greatness is "so," "so great salvation," the "so" which laughs at logic, defies mathematical exactness, and finds its own best explanation in the equally comprehensive declaration that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." When we can place our final measurement on the "so loved the world" we shall be able to express in final terms the greatness of the "so great salvation."

This conception of the greatness of the salvation gives urgency to the conception of neglect. To neglect is not to deny, it is hardly to ignore; it is rather to recognize, but to postpone; or to know, and to fail to do; or, yet again, to admit, and to fail to administer.

The third quantity is discovered by emphasizing the personal pronouns, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Without any doubt that was the mental emphasis of the writer, for he was comparing the responsibilities of Christian believers with those of the Hebrews under the Mosaic economy.

We may omit that particular comparison as irrelevant to our case, but we cannot escape the fact that the question in its first application is not asked of sinful men, but of Christian men.

That is the quantity in the text which is not obvious, but which being recognized gives startling, searching power to the question. If we, who are subsequently described as "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling," neglect so great salvation, which is already ours in the provision of grace and through faith, then how shall we escape?

In considering the inquiry as addressed to Christian souls we shall first consider the implication of the question as to the responsibility of saved men in regard to their own salvation, and, second, the suggestion of the inquiry as to the peril of neglecting that responsibility.

First, then, as to this matter of the responsibility of such as are saved with regard to their own salvation, let us first of all inquire, What is the spiritual content of the word "salvation"? What does it represent? This word "salvation" is amongst the most familiar that pass the lips of Christian men and women. It is, indeed, central to Christianity. It has a dark background, its presupposition being that of peril, danger, lack of safety. It is a word which, save with reference to such a world as this, and to such men as I am, is without meaning; it would have no place in the language of the heavenly dwellings. The word "salvation" is rich in meaning in the presence of human sin and failure and degradation. Therefore it is the central word of the Church. The mission of Christ in the world was not that of presenting an ideal to perfect men, copying which they might maintain their perfection. If that may seem a dogmatic statement, it is but an attempted interpretation of the truth which found far more emphatic and dogmatic statement in the word of Jesus Himself, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." The presupposition of the word "salvation" is of a race of men and women who have failed, who have not realized the meaning of their own life, who have come short of their own glory. When once that presupposition is recognized, then we may pass to the inquiry, What does the word represent positively?

The New Testament is the literature of perfected salvation. It tells the story of the One through Whom salvation came. It reveals the conditions on which salvation may be obtained. It lays down instructions for such as having obtained salvation are now walking in its power until that salvation be completed, in the glory of the Advent.

This salvation originates in God. Its sources are the love of God, and the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Therein at once is stated that which is peculiar to the Christian religion, that which differentiates it from all other religions. However high and noble they may be in certain respects, they stand distinct from it in this regard. All other religions, the highest and noblest of them, having in them light, walking in which men will surely be acceptable to God, all of them are attempts by man to find God, humanity climbing toward Him. The Christian religion declares that God has come to find man, that He bows and stoops toward man, offering him not an ideal of life to which if he shall conform he shall be admitted to the dwellings of light; but bringing to him salvation, recognizing his degradation and failure, from whatsoever cause arising, and offering him everything he needs in order that he may realize his own life. The teaching of the New Testament is that this salvation has its origin in the love of God, that it has been provided by the wisdom of God, that it is operative in the power of God. It was this conviction that made the great Apostle to the Gentiles, the pioneer missionary of the Cross, declare in his letter to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It was this that made him declare that the Cross is the wisdom of God and the power of God, these

operating under the impulse of the love of God. It is, indeed, "so great salvation," for it is of God, proceeding from His love, conceived in His wisdom, and operating in His power.

In the experience of men this salvation has negative and positive values. The negative values are found in the fact that salvation comes to man in his sin, and deals with the whole fact and experience of sin. It brings man forgiveness of sin, cleansing from sin, and power over sin.

Salvation creates within the soul of man a consciousness of forgiveness, which expresses itself in a new passion against sin and a new endeavor to master that which hitherto has mastered. Forgiveness of sins in the Biblical sense of the word is not merely the passing over of sin, declaring that it shall be mentioned no more; it is loosing from sin, setting free from sin. The man who is forgiven, in the Biblical sense of the word, is the man who is set free from sin; he walks out from it, and escapes from it as to penalty and as to pollution and as to power. Not as to penalty alone, for I do affirm out of my own consciousness, and I believe I express the deep conviction of all who have pondered this subject, that if forgiveness is merely salvation from hell it is not enough; if it is merely that I am loosed from some penalty while I am still left polluted and in the power and grip of sin it does not meet my profoundest need. The more I ponder this question of the spiritual life in the light of Holy Scripture and in the light of my own experience, the more I come to this profound conviction, that the horror of all horrors to the human soul is the pollution of sin. Not the stroke caused by sin that falls on me, but the pollution that remains with me, contaminating me, that, when the spirit has once waked to the consciousness of it, is the final agony of sin. Conviction of sin is not fear that I am going to be punished. There are awful moments in the experience of the soul conscious of sin when the fires of perdition would be welcome if but the soul might hope that they were purgatorial fires, that so it might be cleansed from pollution. This salvation deals with the whole fact of the human consciousness of sin. It proclaims forgiveness, a loosing from the sin of the past; and in that forgiveness a cleansing from pollution and the communication of power in which sin is no longer dominant.

Yet these are but the negative values of salvation; they are but initial values. We pass, therefore, to the consideration of the positive values. These may be inclusively described as a spiritual rebirth, a new beginning of conscious spiritual life, new spiritual intellectual enlightenment, new spiritual emotional inspiration, new spiritual volitional freedom. Salvation brings to man a new birth of spirit, in which he comes to new intellectual apprehension of God, an intellectual apprehension which never comes to man but by this rebirth of his spirit. On the ordinary plane of our human life a man may be cultured, intellectual, and yet never know God; he may live and move and have his being in God; he may walk up and down in this world of ours, among its flowers and its fruits, its beauties and its glories, and never find God. It is the pure in heart who see God, discovering Him everywhere, in all the beauties of nature, and in all human life. In all the apparently chaotic movements of the time God is seen by men who come to new intellectual apprehension of Him by way of the spiritual rebirth that comes to them in this salvation.

There comes to them also a new spiritual emotional inspiration; a love never known before springs within the heart of the new-born man. The first evidence of new birth is the love that drives the soul out on some sacrificial service. The first movement of spiritual life in the soul of a man is a missionary movement. We should read out of the word "missionary" all ideas suggested by the word "foreign." There is no foreigner before the throne of God or to the true Christly soul. In

salvation, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, not love for God, but the love of God. The soul new-born of the Spirit is immediately mastered by God's love; the very compassion of Deity touches it to new inspiration and new aspiration, and suggests the pathway of sacrificial service.

Salvation also brings volitional freedom. Is not a man volitionally free before he is born again? In certain senses, yes; in certain senses, no. In what senses no? Let the writer of the Roman letter answer the inquiry. "When I would do good," that is volition, "evil is present with me," that is volition hindered. That is the difference between the unregenerate man and the regenerate man. The unregenerate man admires goodness and even would be good, and makes the attempt but fails; his volitional power is not set free. He is free to choose, but he cannot do the thing he chooses, and so his choosing reacts on him and fills him with despair. When the soul is reborn from above through this great salvation, then not only is it present with that soul to will, but it is present with that soul to do. The thing I choose I can do in the power of the new life communicate.

If, then, we have received this "so great salvation" experimentally we have immediately entered upon grave responsibilities. If the sources of salvation are the love of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, then we are responsible for the streams of the great river of salvation. They may thus be summarized: the fear born of love must become the law of the life of the man who is saved by love; the consciousness of folly that seeks for the Divine wisdom must be ever present in the man who realizes that he has been brought into salvation by the infinite wisdom of God; the consciousness of the frailty that depends entirely on God must always be present in the man who realizes that the great salvation has been brought to him by the energy of the might of the working of God.

Perfect love casteth out fear. That is true. But perfect love generates fear. That also is true. Perfect love casteth out the fear that is cowardly, but perfect love generates the fear that is in itself love. Until a man is brought into right relationship with God he is afraid lest God harm him; but when a man is brought into right relationship with God he is afraid lest he hurt the heart of God, lest he cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit. That is the true safeguard of life to the man who is saved, and we are responsible for the maintenance of that relationship with God in which fear abides with us as a sentinel, forever watching lest we sin against Him and grieve His heart.

The condition for the maintenance of right relationship with God is the abiding consciousness of our own folly and consequent dependence for all things on the infinite wisdom which wrought for our salvation.

The condition of victory in life is ever dependence on God's might in the consciousness of our own weakness. "When I am weak then am I strong" is the apostolic word. As we become forgetful of our weakness and cease to depend on God we are in grave peril, for we are neglecting the responsibility of salvation.

To put the question of our responsibility in another form. In view of the negative values of salvation we have responsibilities. The first of these has to do with the forgiveness of sins. The responsibility of the Christian man toward that initial fact is abiding recollection thereof. Does that sound obscure? Let me illuminate it by quotation from the sacred writings. Peter, writing his second letter, grouped the graces which every man is responsible for developing in faith, and then said: "He that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from the old

sins." To make that more pertinent, practical, immediate, let me say that we are always in danger of forgetting that we are forgiven men and women. One sentence spoken at the Mundesley Bible Conference last year by my friend John Hutton burned itself into my own life. He said, "Christian men should never lose the look of forgiven men." We are always in grave peril when we allow our spiritual attainments to become the foundations of our confidence. We are in danger when we allow ourselves to imagine that because we have run well, and have rendered service to God, we are accepted. As at last, when the day's work is over, we shall expect to enter into light, saying,

Nothing in our hands we bring,

Simply to Thy Cross we cling,

so we are to live each day. That day is always lacking in some measure of strength that does not begin at the Cross and with the memory of the fact that we are forgiven men. He that lacketh Christian graces is blind, seeing only what is near, and one element of his failure is that he has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his old sins.

With regard to our cleansing from sin, our responsibility is that of perpetual appropriation of that selfsame cleansing. Here let me quote from the writings of John: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." That Christian man is in grave peril who imagines he has arrived at such a state of sanctity that he needs no cleansing at nightfall, who in foolish arrogance declares that he no longer prays the Lord's prayer because he does not need to ask for forgiveness. Such a man has never really stood in the awful light of the Divine holiness. The man who stands there meekly assents to the word of Jesus concerning high Christian service, that all servants must say to Him, At best we are unprofitable servants. In the light of the holiness of God, that God Who chargeth the very angels with folly and in Whose sight the heavens are unclean, we are always conscious of the need of cleansing.

There is no breath of prayer that crosses my lips but that needs the intermediation of the Priest Who beareth the iniquity of our holy things. The doctrine of holiness that lifts Christian experience to a plane on which it has no need of cleansing is a doctrine that degrades the holiness of God and has no conception of its awful solemnity. We need perpetual appropriation of cleansing.

Again, if the negative value of salvation is that we have power over sin the perpetual responsibility is that we employ that power in unyielding, unflinching, unceasing conflict with sin. I am not safe for half an hour save as I put on the whole armor of God and take up the whole armor of God.

Let us pass from these negative values of salvation in order to consider the responsibilities that arise from the positive. If the first positive value is intellectual enlightenment and consciousness our responsibility is to seek the light in all the things of life. If we know God and have become conscious of Him our perpetual business is to seek His face in order that we may know His will.

If the second positive value of salvation is new spiritual, emotional inspiration our responsibility is that we answer that inspiration. We begin our Christian life, and the propulsion of God's love suggests that we should go and seek someone and help someone. Such suggestions must not be refused. Judas will always be somewhere on hand and ready to say, Why this waste? Let us, then, solemnly remember that when we stifle the impulse of the Divine compassion within us we are

stultifying our very own life. This is such a common failure. When you began your Christian life, how eager you were to serve! To-day you are content to attend one service, or perhaps two on Sunday, and you imagine therefore that you are religious. You are not! You have lost your religion if you have lost your love! That is the peril with all of us. The love of God is prodigal in its munificence. It pours itself out in service. When that love is in the human heart, the man possessed by it desires to spend and be spent for those who have not yet known the Saviour. But unless the call of love within the soul be answered the call becomes fainter and dies away. We are neglecting our salvation when we are indifferent and unresponsive to the love of God which suggests the pathway of sacrificial service.

If the third positive value is volitional freedom, the responsibility which that freedom creates is that we test our choices with God. Whenever we exercise that high function of human life, election, choosing, we must find our way into the Divine presence, that we may know whether our election is His election, whether our choosing is His choice; and that not merely in regard to those matters of Christian service which perhaps may be uppermost in our thinking now, but in all matters of life. If you are a Christian man you have no right to choose your profession without God, and if you are Christian men you have no business to elect to live in this or that neighborhood without God. The responsibility of volitional freedom, which is the benefit of salvation, is that all choices, all elections are remitted to God.

So it seems to me that, without very many words of mine, the second part of our meditation lies open and plain before us. If these are the responsibilities of the "so great salvation" the peril of neglect is perfectly patent. What is it to neglect? In hurried phrases in my introduction I attempted some definition. Let us come to closer quarters with the thought. This is a great word of ours, "neglect," meaning not to pick up, not to take hold of, not to gather, but just to let a matter lie, not to touch it. That is perfectly simple and most picturesque, but it is graphically arresting. The word of which it is a translation has in it, I think, even more of arresting power. It means without interest in, without concern. That is what it is to neglect. This is not a common word in the New Testament. It almost seems as though it were reserved for just such a solemn inquiry as this. If we are without concern about so great salvation, if our own salvation, that which is ours, that into which we have entered, no longer concerns us, how shall we escape? It is my very salvation, that which is mine in Christ, but does it concern me? It is there, it exists; but to treat it as something assured and positive which now may be relegated to some distance from the actuality of my life is to neglect it. The man who is so sure he is saved as to be careless whether he will be saved is in grave danger.

Again to attempt to illuminate the solemn word by the lines we have already followed. Neglect in the light of the positive values is indifference to the light that is granted, irresponsible to the call of love when it comes, inactivity in the presence of God in the matter of decisions, elections, choices.

It is being without concern! It is the attitude of appalling triviality toward his own salvation of the man who does not carry it with him into every hour and every transaction.

Negatively to neglect salvation is to neglect in practice remembering the cleansing from first sins. It is to travel to such a distance from the first ecstatic hour when the soul knew itself cleansed that the memory is not a present power. It is neglect of the ordinance of confession and absolution, given and received in quiet loneliness with God. It is neglect of the whole armor and of the fight.

How is it that we begin to neglect salvation, that we do not add to the supply of virtues and graces by diligence? What are the alluring forces that prevent our realization and demonstration of the salvation that comes to us by grace? Our attention to things instead of God, our listening to self with all its demands instead of listening to the cry of need outside ourselves, our giving ourselves to license instead of to liberty.

What is the issue of such neglect? "How shall we escape?" How shall we flee if we neglect? The answer is found in the twelfth chapter of this epistle. There is no escape, and the word there is slightly changed; There is no fleeing. In the word there is the thought of imprisonment. The man who neglects the responsibilities of his salvation becomes imprisoned by the things he chooses and is excluded from all the virtues and the victories of that great salvation.

In view of this meditation a passage from the writing of Paul comes back to us with new meaning and force:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure.

The working is mutual. Interdependent are these two things. I cannot work out anything save as He shall work in it; but if I fail to work out I stop the operation of His energy within.

Thus the final appeal of that passage from the Philippian letter, illuminating as it does the inquiry of the text, calls for caution on our part with regard to our salvation; we are to work it out with fear and trembling. But, thank God, it inspires with courage, "for it is God which worketh in."

Have we neglected our own salvation? Have we drifted away from these things in any measure? Then I thank God that in this same letter to the Hebrews there is one word capitalized; it is the word TO-DAY! It is a word that speaks of present salvation, and even though I have neglected, even though I have imprisoned myself, excluding myself from the very forces of life, and shutting myself up to the destructive things, yet even now a door is open, and I may turn back again to Him Who has brought so great salvation, and He will receive and restore me.

Hebrews 3:7-8. The Perils Of Procrastination.

Hebrews 3:7-8.

The Perils Of Procrastination.

As the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

Hebrews 3:7-8

The letter from which our text is taken differs from the majority of the New Testament epistles in that it was written to people who had been born in the special light of revealed religion, and who had been brought into the larger, fuller, final light thereof as it came to men through Jesus Christ our Lord. It was a letter to Hebrews, the people who had lived in the light of hope and anticipation and confidence in a work of God to be accomplished according to covenants made with their fathers. These Hebrews were addressed by the Christian writer in the course of the letter as "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling," and thus they must be counted among the number of those who had not merely had the light of the Hebrew economy of hope, but also had received that of the Messianic fulfilment of that hope. Every difficulty of those to whom the letter was addressed was one of apparent rupture between the old and the new. Profoundly convinced of the divinity of the religion of their fathers, constrained by the presentation of the evangel of the Christ to accept Him as Messiah, in the early days of their Christian experience they trembled and were afraid lest perchance they had made some mistake. That is quite understandable, for what a change was wrought by the coming of Christ! The types and shadows of the ceremonial law were all fulfilled, and gradually they were withdrawn.

The purpose of the writer of this letter, from the intellectual standpoint, was to show these people that the rupture between the old and the new was but the breaking of the shell so that men might find the kernel, the passing beyond the chrysalis stage, in order that the fully developed life might spread its wings. They made their boast in the ministration of angels in the leadership of Moses and of Joshua, in a divinely appointed priesthood and ritual; and the writer of the letter declared to them that none of these things was to be denied, but that in Christ all their suggestions had been fulfilled.

The purpose of this letter was far more than intellectual, however; it was spiritual. This wavering of faith, expressing itself as it did in disobedience, this halting in the presence of intellectual difficulty, expressing itself as it always does, sooner or later, in moral deflection, was a grave spiritual peril which the writer of these words saw threatening these Hebrew Christians. In order to bring them back again into living touch with the living forces which alone could realize the deepest in themselves and fulfil the Divine purpose, he wrote this letter; for he knew that unbelief always expresses itself in disobedience and that disobedience inevitably issues in death.

In order to discover the real force of our text it is important that we should observe that it is partly the words of the writer, and partly a quotation from a psalm. The first five words, "As the Holy

Ghost saith," are the words of the writer of the letter, while the couplet which follows was a quotation:

Today if ye shall hear His voice,

Harden not your hearts.

The particular purpose of this quotation from one of their own psalms was to urge on these Hebrew Christians the necessity for immediateness, and to warn them against the grave peril of procrastination. That is our theme at this time. I do not propose to dwell any further on the details of the passage of which this word of my text is the keynote. We may take the spirit of it in order to emphasize for our own times and circumstances, and for our own profit, the tremendous importance of immediate response to Divine impulses; and to emphasize also the subtle perils of procrastination in such matters.

This subject is of the widest application and might be illustrated on every plane of human activity. Here we are immediately halted and hindered by the fact that the supreme difficulty of all spiritual consideration is that men do not bring to that consideration the same acumen and earnestness and sincerity as they bring to the ordinary affairs of everyday life. In every realm of serious life we grant the absolute importance of immediateness and the grave peril of procrastination freely granted is the need for caution, that, first there must be careful consideration, the winnowing of evidence. Such sane and calculating caution is of the very soul of courage. While that is recognized in every department of life, it is also immediately conceded in political life, in commercial affairs, and indeed in all active life, that when once conviction is reached, response must be immediate. Some of the most hackneyed phrases of our common speech bear evidence of that widespread conviction: No time like the present, Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today. In these and many other similar proverbial utterances which pass our lips quite carelessly we express our profound conviction on the importance of immediate action in response to complete conviction.

I propose now to confine our attention to the application of this matter to the call of Christ. "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Is not such a message necessary? What multitudes of men and women there are who lack but one thing, a personal and actual surrender to Christ! What multitudes of men and women there are who have been attracted by Him who do most honestly admire Him, and do most seriously in the deepest fact of their lives desire to be conformed to His likeness, but are disobedient, have never taken the one step of handing over their life wholly and absolutely to His control! I have said there are multitudes of such. I believe that to be true. I believe there are multitudes of such in this audience. I preach as the years run on to multitudes of men and women who I believe are exactly in that situation, reverent in their demeanor, willing to listen to the messages I endeavor to seek from God and bring to them with a patience that gladdens and strengthens my own heart. I have seen their eyes light up as the vision of the Lord Christ has come to them in many an hour of worship, and yet they are not Christian. Men and women attracted by Christ, genuinely and honestly admiring Him in that inner secret of the heart's depth, desiring to follow Him at some time, yet persistently disobedient! In this message, which it is my responsibility and holy privilege to deliver to this audience, I have but one thing to say. I want to speak of the awful peril of this prolonged postponement of decision. I shall attempt to say it in different ways. I shall attempt to illustrate the theme. By the help of the Holy

Spirit, I shall, so much as in me lies, argue for the accuracy of the message I utter. But this is the one thing I now want to say:

As the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

I want to speak tonight with all love and earnestness of the grave peril of postponing a decision which in the deepest conviction of your life you know ought to be made at once.

In attempting to understand this message, we shall consider first, necessarily, certain assumptions of this text, certain things which the words of my text take for granted. We shall consider centrally, and principally, the inferential warning of the text. Finally, we shall listen once more to the suggested gospel of the text.

First, as to the assumptions. Before I can make any appeal which is warranted by the text it is necessary that we should recognize that two things were assumed by the writer of the psalm, and by the quoter of the psalm in the letter; or may I not say, in harmony with the declaration of the text, these two things are assumed by the Holy Spirit in this text: first, that human responsibility begins with the hearing of the voice, "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts"; and, second, that when the voice is heard man is left free to obey or to disobey. These are the assumptions of the text which must be recognized, or we shall lose the accuracy and urgency of its appeal.

First, that responsibility begins only when the voice is heard. It is the man who knows his Lord's will and does it not who is to be beaten with many stripes. It is the disobedient man, who is the sinning man. It is not the man to whom the light has never come who is blamed for stumbling through the darkness; it is not the soul who has never heard the call who is accounted a sinner for not walking in the way which the voice indicates. Responsibility begins with the hearing of the voice. Here let us make no mistake. God speaks in many ways to human hearts as God fulfils Himself in many ways in human lives. I can imagine that a reservation such as I have made, a perfectly fair reservation—namely, that responsibility begins when the voice is heard—I can imagine that such reservation may seem to open a door of escape for some who will be inclined to say, We have not heard the voice. I pray all such to think again. How may I know when I hear the voice? It may not come to me with the articulation of human utterance. It may not come to me in any sudden blaze of glory, even mental, intellectual glory. How may I know the voice of God and the voice of Christ? The nature of the message determines the question of whose voice it is that speaks within the soul. The voice may seem to be of the mind alone; the voice may seem to man to come out of a man's own thinking. Indeed, it must come out of his own thinking. There is a sense in which, in a degree which is to my own soul growingly appalling and majestic, every human being stands absolutely separated from every other. There is a value not sometimes recognized in the great apostolic word: "Work out your own salvation... for it is God which worketh in you." These are blessed words of hope, for in them dynamic is added to injunction. They have another value, however: "Work out your own salvation... for it is God that worketh in you"; that means the inclusion of God and ourself, and the exclusion of every other human being. The voice of God never comes finally through human lips. We may have heard the voice of God in the sermon preached; we may have heard the voice of God as we have read the page; the voice may have come to us in the silence of our own home, in the loneliness of our own chamber; but it always comes ultimately in our own thinking. We may discern between the voice of God and the

voice of Satan by the nature of the thought and the thing which is spoken. There came to us a call to higher life, to nobler endeavor, to the consecration of the powers of our beings to holy ventures; there came to us the voice that rebuked our sin, there came the moment of illumination when we saw the unutterable folly of our own passionate attempt to satisfy our lives with the things of dust. That is the voice of God finding utterance ultimately, as the voice of God ever must, not through the lips of the preacher, not through the written word, but in our own thinking, in our own conception. So the voice of God sounds in the soul of a man. He does in His great grace consent to use messengers whom He sends to utter truth; but we may hear sermons by the score, and never hear God. It is only when in our own souls we say amen to the truth uttered by the preacher that God has spoken to the soul. God does so speak to men.

Dare any man attempt to escape the call of this text easily by declaring that he has not heard the voice? Let him think again! Let him honestly review the years that have gone. Has not God spoken to him? Did there not come to him in a moment of wrong-doing, a high rebuke out of his own thinking? That was the voice divine. Did there not come to him some great vision of the loveliness of the Lord Christ? Did there not come to him consent of heart to the beauty of holiness? Did there not come to him a great sense of the awfulness of sin? Did there not come to him in some hour the longing to escape its power? Then by all these impressions, aspirations, desire, God has spoken to that man. These thoughts and conceptions of the human mind are divinely inspired; none of them has come from the underworld of evil, none of them has been generated within the heart of man apart from the direct illumination of God. Have not all of us at some time or other, and repeatedly, heard the voice of God speaking thus directly to our souls?

Here is another test. The voice of God always creates in the soul of a man the consciousness of responsibility. Therein is the difference between the voice of God and the voice of man, even at its best and highest. Therein, if I may say this in passing, is one of the final arguments for the divinity of this Biblical literature. We cannot study this Bible without being brought face to face with personal responsibility. I can study Shakespeare without that sense. I can lecture on the moral drift of "Macbeth," and then be immoral; and yet again on the next day lecture on Shylock and the defilement of greed, and continue myself to be covetous. I cannot preach on the word of God out of my own experience, and then disobey its teaching and continue to preach on the Word of God. That argument concerning the Bible illustrates the fact that the voice of God in the soul creates responsibility. A man stands confronting two possibilities of action in his business, in his friendships, in his recreations; a voice within says to him, That way is right, that way is wrong! That is the voice of God compelling him to see two paths stretching out before him, and convincing him that in his choosing he must choose definitely between right and wrong, light and darkness, good and evil. So we hear the voice of God, and we know it to be the voice of God by the nature of its suggestion, and by the fact that it forever creates responsibility.

The second assumption of this text is that of the freedom of the will when the voice speaks, "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." This assuredly means that we can harden them if we will; we can disobey, we can see the light and choose the darkness; we can gaze on the high and admire it, and then turn our face to the depths. It is equally true that the heart can yield, that there can be obedience. When the vision comes, if the heart of man is set on the realization of it, he will find virtue sufficient to enable him to translate the vision into victory. These are the assumptions of the text: responsibility is created by the voice of God; when the voice of God

speaks, man's will is free to obey or to disobey.

Now let us solemnly attend to the warning of the text, "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." By that initial word, "Today," which is the supreme word of the text, we are brought to a sense of the immediate, and consequently to a revelation of the peril of procrastination. The call is heard, and he who hears intends to obey that call, but other matters are pressing and there is postponement. To obey that call will involve a change of plans. That call came to me three months ago, some man is saying; it came clearly, definitely. I heard it, felt its power, consented to its reasonableness; I determined that I would obey it, but to have obeyed it then would have been to rearrange all my life, and therefore I have not obeyed it yet.

Let us not go back. That call is coming to some man now. It has come already. While the preacher has been only arguing for the fact of the call, the voice has been heard. To obey now will be to change all the plans he has made, even for tomorrow! To obey will be to reorganize all his life around a new center. Therefore he says, There is time enough yet; I will postpone obedience. This thing must be done, it shall be done, but at some more convenient season!

Oh, my brothers, if the material walls of this sanctuary had ears and tongues what tragedies could they tell of that description! I do not think any single Sabbath passes but that within this house men and women go through this business of postponement, procrastination! I want to utter this as a personal conviction; let it be received as such, and weighed, and either rejected or accepted, according to personal conviction; I give it as personal, after over a generation of preaching; I am convinced that in this way, more men miss the highest and descend to the lowest, than in any other way. Not by antagonism to the high, but by admiration, and postponement of decision, more souls are lost, wrecked, spoiled, ruined, than in any other way I know.

In order that we may understand this let us consider carefully what are the perils of procrastination. To refuse to obey is presently to lose the sense of urgency. To fail to walk in the light of the vision is presently to fail to admire the vision. To linger when the gleam would lead us is to lose the constraint of the glory, and at last to imagine that the shining of the gleam was the creation of the imagination. Spiritual tragedies of that kind are to be found all over this land today. There are thousands of men who have come into the presence of Christ, who have felt the attraction of Himself and of His message, who have entertained admiration of His high ideals, who have earnestly desired to follow Him, who have determined that they would; but they have halted, waited, postponed. With what result? The attraction has passed away, and today they see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him; their admiration for Him has ceased, His name is but an idle story, the desire to be conformed to His high ideal is dead within the soul. And sometimes even worse, those old days are laughed at, days when they were moved toward Him.

This attitude is not always the result of the vulgarity that can be arrested by a policeman, of the bestiality which human society casts out. It is produced by procrastination, by postponement; it is the reaction on the soul of a high ideal refused, the deadening influence of disobedience to a high call. Thus the opportunity passes and the voice is no longer heard. There are multitudes of men who once were arrested by the claims of Christ, attracted by the beauty of His ideal, affrighted by the solemnity of His warnings, strangely moved by the infinite tenderness of His wooing; but today they are without any of these emotions; they are even cynical concerning Him, and have descended so low that they can be guilty of the vulgarity of laughing at their own experiences of

long ago. In the terrific, appalling, awe-inspiring word of my text they are hardened. That is the peril of postponement, procrastination.

But, finally, let us hear the gospel of this text. If its argument proceeds on assumptions, and if its appeal is in itself the inference of a peril, the whole message suggests a gospel. What is the gospel? It is all suggested in one word, today. There seems to be no music in that word. There is much, to those who know their Bible. The world's dark night is hastening on; but it has not yet come, it is still today.

When he made this quotation from the psalm, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews was conscious of the glorious light of the day in which he wrote, "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The very word is full of hope. Today is a gospel of immediate possibility as well as a warning of consequent peril. Today! The voice of Christ is speaking to the sons of men. His voice is the one voice that comes clear in human articulation out of the infinite mystery of the being of God. His is the one voice that rings down the centuries of time with the finality and restfulness and strength of eternity. It is the voice of essential, eternal wisdom. The things He said are the things He says; and the things He said and the things He says are the things of truth and grace whereby, if a man live, he shall live indeed and not die; by which, if a man obey, he shall come to realization of all the infinite wonder of his own being as he finds himself led into fellowship with God and conformity to His will.

The voice of Christ does not speak speculatively to the sons of men. Christ is not suggesting to men a new philosophy which they may discuss and then receive or reject according to the calculations of their own minds. He speaks the final word with authority, with such inherent truth that when a man ceases to listen to human interpretations of the thing He says, and allows Him to speak directly to his inner life, that man immediately recognizes the authority of His word. The voice of Christ is the voice of all-sufficient might, and of final love. It is the voice which calls men to high duty, and promises the ability to obey. It is the voice which commands men to sacrifice, and provides compensation for all their losses. It is the voice that speaks to men out of perfect love. Oh, this voice of Christ! Do not listen for it from the lips of the preacher. I mean that. I am not degrading my office. I magnify my office. I glory in my office. But do not listen for His voice from my lips. He really begins to speak when I have ceased. When my words are over, and you have properly discounted the accent and intonation of man, then the truth out of the words that gripped the heart and soul and conscience is the voice of Christ to you! The voice that tells you that you dare not do the thing of evil you had intended to do in the coming week! The voice that calls you to something higher! The voice that commands you to the Cross! The voice that says, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out." The voice that says, in the deepest secret shrine of your inner life, "Come unto Me." That is His voice. Today if ye shall hear that voice, in the name of God, harden not your heart.

These are superlative facts. To parley is to blaspheme. To delay is to deaden the power to appreciate. Therefore there is but one reasonable time for action, and that is today. Oh, there is infinite music in that word today! It is still called today! The voice is speaking; heed it, answer it. Your first steps may falter through mists, but the pathway you begin to tread if you obey that voice will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

You may have listened to me and by that very activity be in danger of missing the Voice. Let Him speak! He is speaking! What He is saying to you generally I know right well. What He is saying to you particularly I cannot tell; but you know. I know what He is saying generally. He appeals to you: "Follow Me." But there is some particular secret between Himself and your soul. To the young ruler it was, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor... and come, follow Me." Not to every man does He say that. What is He saying to you? Almost invariably there is at the crisis one last thing between a man and a decision. What is it in your life? I do not ask to know. I do not want to know. I will not be a confessor. Ah, but you know. He has put the finger of His justice and His mercy on the thing that must be abandoned, on the new duty that must be faced, on the new attitude that must be assumed, on the restitution that must be made. "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

Hebrews 3:13. Hardened.

Hebrews 3:13.

Hardened.

But exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:13

"Hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

The warning of the text is addressed to people familiar with the letter of God's word. Hence its applicability to such an audience as this. Most of us heard the first music of that motherhood which soothed our childhood, expressing itself in the songs of the sanctuary. The vast majority of us were first fascinated by Bible stories told us by those best of all theologians for children—our mothers. We know the things of God, and therefore there is for every one of us here a message of warning: "Lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

No more solemn warning was ever uttered by any of the apostolic writers. No words to which we ought to pay closer attention, and to which we ought to give more earnest heed, are to be found in the whole of the Divine Library. Yet is it not the fact that we listen to a text like this with something of curiosity, something of wonder, as to what can possibly be said concerning it?

Or if the text does indeed speak to the conscience, is it not because the old word "sin" is to be found in it, which some men are dropping out of their vocabulary today? Yet the word that should startle us is the word "hardened." We are not afraid, I fear, of being hardened. There are people today who are terribly afraid lest they or their loved ones should become drunkards. Better be a drunkard than hardened! There is more chance for the man who is in the grip of some one specific sin, who still retains a heart and conscience, than for the man who is hardened, and yet commits no vulgar sin condemned by the age in which he lives. The peril is of the subtlest, and it is the peculiar peril of those who know the terms of the law and the Gospel. I very much question whether you could find me a person hardened in the sense of my text who is unfamiliar with the Christian evangel. There are many men in this city who are quite unfamiliar with its terms, and they are so vicious that you thank God you are not as they; but they are not "hardened." If we are not startled by the word, if it produce no blush of shame, no blanch of fear, the danger is that we are already becoming hardened.

Let us consider, then, first the peril, "hardened"; second, the cause, "sin"; and, finally, the method, "deceitfulness."

First, then, the peril: "Lest any one of you be hardened." The word suggests a change, indicates a process, and reveals a condition.

When I say that the word suggests a change, I mean that no human being starts life hard. No little child is hard. Human nature is essentially impressionable. If you take a child in its earliest years out of any set of circumstances, and put it into new surroundings, you can mold its life. There is no greater illustration of this truth than Dr. Barnardo's great work. For forty years the doors of that institution have stood open to any child, the only qualification for admission being destitution. Though the children dealt with for the most part were born with hereditary taint of evil, with an environment that gave them no chance morally, the percentage who have answered the touch of Christ through Christly influence, and have become pure, and noble, and beautiful, is amazing. Every child is impressionable; every child has its windows open toward the morning; every child indulges in romance, dreams dreams, sees visions, hopes, is capable of tears and laughter; every child is plastic. The man who is hard, and who boasts in his hardness, was not always hard.

If I could put my hand, my brethren, tonight upon your shoulders, and by some mysterious process drive you back through the years, I should bring you to a period of tenderness, to a moment when you also were soft, and plastic, and emotional. You tell me you are glad the day has gone? If you knew what it really means, you would begin to weep again tonight, because you have lost the power to weep.

"Lest any one of you be hardened." Because the word suggests a change it also indicates a process.

What is this process? Let us look at it in its symptoms. What are the symptoms of this hardening? We began to fight against tenderness as being childish, and then we silenced conscience as being inconvenient to success, and finally we questioned the verity of the things unseen. This is the process of hardening.

There was a time when some of you men would have wept over a dead canary. Tonight you do not weep over lost souls! The fountain of tears has been dried up. There was a time when you blushed awkwardly when you told a lie. Today there is no blush and no inward shame. There was a time when you believed in God. Today you are hardly sure of your own wife.

The hardening process has gone forward until at last the condition of hardness is reached. It is the inevitable result of the stifling of tears, and the refusal to listen to conscience, and to believe. No tears, no conscience, no faith! Hard! Equal to dealing with business problems, but not equal to the commerce of eternity. Quite equal to touching and handling forces which are merely the affairs of this life, but not equal to laying hold on eternal life. Quite equal, in a word, to dust and the things of dust, but not equal to Deity and fellowship with God. Yet let me put this even more practically and personally. The moment comes when a man, who as a boy wept as he heard the story of Jesus, hears it without one thrill of emotion. The day comes when a man still listens to the terms of the law of God, but never trembles. The most difficult men and women to reach with the evangel are those who know it best, and are yet unmoved by it to tears, or high endeavor. "Lest any one of you be hardened."

But now, how does a man become hardened? I take you to the final word of my text, "sin." What is sin? It would be unfair to interpret the word "sin" in this letter in any other way than by the use of the writer. In every case, from first chapter to last, he uses it of unbelief. The whole argument of the letter is intended to strengthen faith, and the whole force of the writer's appeal against sin is an

appeal against unbelief, and the sin that hardens is the sin of unbelief.

In order to explain that, let me first deal with what is meant by unbelief, for I can quite imagine that someone finds reason in rebellion against such a statement. It may be affirmed that a man cannot help unbelief, because a man cannot compel his belief. Such an objection reveals the fact that the meaning of unbelief is not understood because the meaning of belief is not understood.

What is belief? Belief is that which brings a man into personal relationship with Jesus Christ so as to save that man. But what is the belief that saves a man? It is not an intellectual assent to a certain number of formulated truths. It is possible for a man to believe intellectually all the truths of the evangelical faith, and yet be lost for time and eternity. The fact that I am convinced of the truth of the Deity of Jesus, and of the atoning nature of His death, will not save me. These truths do not become dynamic simply by intellectual apprehension and consent. No man is saved by intellectual comprehension and conviction. All that may be a part of the process, but it does not save a man. What, then, is the belief that saves? Now let me go to a slightly different standpoint. What is the thing you really do believe? A man in church on Sunday recites a creed. I have great respect for his doing so. He says, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." Does he? The fact that he recites the creed on Sunday does not prove that in the deepest of him he believes. I shall want to watch him on Monday to know whether he really believes in God. I shall want to live with him, and observe his business method, and his habits of speech, and the tone and temper of his disposition before I know whether, in the deepest of him, he believes in God. You say, "I do believe in God," and that is true intellectually, but that is not the belief that saves. The faith that saves is the answer of the will to the truth of which the reason is convinced, the handing over of the life to the claim of truth. If I believe in God the Father Almighty, not merely with my mind and heart, but also with my will, then I shall walk from Monday morning until Saturday evening, as well as upon the Sabbath day, as a man recognizing God's throne, seeking His law, endeavoring to find the way of His commandments, measuring all the activities of my life by His claim upon me. That belief saves, which compels the surrender of the whole life to the conviction of truth. The following of light is the faith that saves a man. I am always thankful to remember—and I pause to say this, though it is not part of my main argument—that the New Testament never asks me to believe in the atonement in order to be saved. I am not saying a man can be saved without the atonement. But the Scripture asks that I shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The belief which saves is belief in the Person of Christ, which expresses itself in surrender to Christ, even though I may have to postpone the explanation of the mystery of His being, and the marvel of His atonement, and the miracle of His resurrection.

Therefore it becomes evident that unbelief is refusal to obey that truth of which I am convinced intellectually. To know the truth, and then refuse to obey it; to hear the message, assent to its accuracy, bow in the presence of its great demand intellectually, and yet not answer its claim, that is the sin which hardens a man. When a man so disobeys, he becomes hardened by the very truth that might have softened him; he becomes enslaved and debased by the very message that ought to have made him free indeed. In that sense the Gospel is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death; and the unbelief that hardens a man is not his refusal to accept intellectually a statement of truth, but his refusal to obey the truth when it lays claim to his allegiance, and calls upon him to tread some definite pathway. "Hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

That brings us to the central thought of the text. How is it that men commit this sin of unbelief? Brethren, is not that the mystery, the perpetual mystery? Is not every preacher confronted by it, every Christian worker conscious of it? Why is it men hear the truth and do not obey? Why is it that men, conscious that the Spirit of God is striving with them, even though they may not express the fact in these words, yet will not yield. Why are men guilty of unbelief? Here in my text is the word that shows that the writer of this letter understood perfectly the reason: "the deceitfulness of sin." The sin of unbelief is always the result of a false argument. When truth breaks upon a human soul and makes its claim, if the man does not obey, it is because he is deceived either intellectually, emotionally, or volitionally.

It will be easier now, I think, to illustrate than to attempt to state the case theoretically. Suppose that I should resolve this service into one of another kind, and some of you in honesty should tell us why you are not Christian people in the full sense of the word, what would be the result? You are familiar with the terms of the evangel, you have been nursed upon the songs of the Church, and yet you yourself are not Christian. It may be that once you made a profession, and once you companied with the saints, and once rejoiced in the vision of God, and once knew all the blessedness of fellowship; but things have changed, and you have become hard. Why? Because of your unbelief, your refusal to obey truth. But why did you refuse? Now, I say if we could have definite testimony, I think we should hear some things such as these. I will not imagine a single case, but will tell you actual things that have been said to me. One man tells me that he is not a Christian because he desires his liberty. There are thousands of young men in London tonight who in their deepest heart revere the Christian standard; but they are not Christians simply because they want to be free. Now, listen. "The deceitfulness of sin." Was ever unbelief more subtle than when it promises a man that if he will refuse to believe, in this evangelical sense of the word, he will be a free man. Do you not know, have you not yet discovered in your own experience, that the only free man is the man bound to the throne of God, that no man is free who is simply attempting to follow the lusts and desires of his own heart and life? Your freedom to do the things that you yourself desire to do, unchecked by law, is at this very moment weaving a chain. It may seem to be of silk, and you toy with it in its silken loveliness, and imagine you will presently snap it. But you will find that the chain about you is adamant. If you and I were talking together as man to man you would confess that already you have discovered that habit has so fastened upon you that you cannot break it. What is the story of the corruption of sin that abounds in our city? It is the story of men who have sought for freedom and have found slavery. It is the story of men who declined to have a master, and they have become the slaves of the worst taskmasters that ever held human beings in bondage.

Your own lust? Lust is not wrong. Jesus said to His disciples, "With lust have I lusted to eat this passover with you." I find it is written in my Bible, "which things angels lust to look into." At the back of every sin that curses humanity is a true desire. Sin is always the prostitution of right, the taking of a true capacity, and using it in an untrue method. If a man answer his desire without constraint, without instruction, without guidance, without mastership, he cannot fulfil it, and at last the desire becomes a burning, flaming thirst, a passion that nothing can slake; and he becomes the slave of the desire he answered when he refused to obey the light that came to instruct him how to answer the true desire within his own life. You want to be free, my brother. Come tonight to your Master Jesus. Hand in to Him your wholehearted surrender and allegiance. Say to Him as

you stand before Him, "Here and now, O living Christ of God, spirit, soul and body, now and forever, in every fiber of my personality, and every power of my being, take me!" Then you will be free. Then you will find liberty. The Son alone can make you free. If you have refused to obey the voice of truth, and so have been guilty of the sin of unbelief, it is because you have allowed yourself to be deceived by sin's promise of freedom, while all the time it has been forging your chain.

Take another illustration. A man will say to me, "Yes, I know all that you say is true. I know that the pure is the beautiful. With my mind I admire its great ideal, but I want to see life. Oh, sometimes I wish I could give all my life to speak on that one theme to the young men and women of our cities. You want to see life? Yes, you say, I should have to give up so much if I became a Christian. What would you have to give up? I would be quite willing to stop preaching for a moment if you would tell me. Will you tell me what you would have to give up if you became a Christian, which I cannot keep, being a Christian? Or, rather, what can you have of life by not being a Christian which is denied to me because I am a Christian? If you will name anything that you can do, not being a Christian, which I cannot do as a Christian man, you will know immediately that the thing that you are clinging to, that you call seeing life, is the thing that passes sentence of death upon you.

What does a man lose that is essential to his manhood when he becomes a Christian? Freedom for intellectual pursuits? Nay, verily, Christianity has set the world's intellect free. The late Lord Salisbury said that it was a good thing to study large maps. So it is. When you want to know what Christianity has done for the world, take a broad outlook over the centuries and over the world as it is, and know this, that the crucifixion and stoning of a man for scientific investigation has been made impossible by the presence of Jesus Christ in the world. Jesus Christ has set man's intellect free, has said to men in effect, You may knock at every door and demand admission, and you may enter as far as you can. The only limit set to your investigation is your power of investigation. But then Jesus Christ also says, When you have come as far as you can along the line of investigation, never forget the revealed things are yours, and the secret things belong to God.

Christ has set the intellect free. What is it that you have to abandon? Music? I will not insult the intelligence of this congregation by arguing it. You have all heard the "Messiah," and after that there is nothing to hear. Art? Certainly not, save as art may be debased in order to suggest evil thoughts. Some pictures you are hiding, or showing clandestinely, you had better burn, and you know it! Amusement? What form of amusement must you give up if you become a Christian? No amusement that is recreation. That must be your philosophy of amusement, recreation. Anything that destroys you, spirit, mind, or body, of course you must give up because Jesus is set upon making you perfect and beautiful, and He will not tolerate a retention of anything that stultifies you physically, or dulls you mentally, or blights you spiritually. In the name of God, I charge you do not hear me as a theorist, but come and see me, if you will, and tell me what you have to give up that I cannot keep. You dare not do it, my brothers, because you know that I should say to you, "What about it? Do you not think you had better give it up?" And you would have to say, "Yes." And yet you are being deceived by sin. You want to see life, and in the pursuit of life you are tracking the desert of death. Oh, the deceitfulness of sin!

Or, again, another man says to me, "Well, I am not a Christian because I am not fully persuaded of all the truths of the Christian religion." If you adopted that method in any other department of life,

where would you land yourself within the next seven days? The perpetual law of life is that a man accepts the known fact and acts upon it, afterwards investigating the mystery that lies behind it. And yet there are men—I know them, I hear from them; they come to see me, and tell me they are not Christian because they do not understand the mystery of incarnation, or the mystery of atonement, because they cannot quite follow all the statements of the Bible concerning the methods of God. My brethren, Jesus Christ presents Himself to you, attested by tens of thousands of witnesses in the passing centuries, as the One Who gives you at once the highest ideal of life, and is able to communicate to you a sufficient dynamic to enable you to realize your ideal. Obey that, and postpone the rest! I know there are men who tell me they understand all the mystery of the Christian truth. I thank God with all my heart that Christian truth is so large that at present I do not perfectly comprehend it all. I thank God for its vastness, for the infinite reaches of it. This heart of mine, poor little restless thing as it is, is yet so big that it would rebel against a religion formulated and tabulated, in which the last thing could be recited in a creed in half an hour. It is the vastness of the reach; it is the sense that this thing is greater than I, that there are infinite reaches stretching out on every hand, that makes me thank God in the midst of the mystery. I have found foothold, and I have found it upon the rock of Christ, and from that vantage ground I may inquire.

Because of the mystery, in God's name do not refuse to obey what is no longer mystery, the plain fact of what Christ is, and what He can do for you.

Compare your present position with the past. Take your childhood, and put it into comparison with your present position. I do not say possession, material possession. I said your present position, the position of your own inner life. What is the difference?

I remember, I remember,

The house where I was born,

The little window where the sun

Came peeping in at morn;

He never came a wink too soon,

Nor brought too long a day,

But now I often wish the night

Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember,

The fir trees dark and high;

I used to think their slender tops

Were close against the sky.

It was a childish ignorance,

But now 'tis little joy

To know I'm farther off from heaven

Than when I was a boy.

Is that what you are saying? You have done wonderfully well, so the world will tell you. You have made a great deal of money, you lost yourself. When you lost your tears, you lost God's finest gift to you. When you lost your conscience, you lost the balance wheel of your life. When you lost your faith in God and man, you lost everything that makes life high, and noble and beautiful.

Ah me, there is another song that comes back to a man's heart tonight, a song which I wonder people can sing without catching its pathos and tragedy:

Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight,

Make me a child again, just for tonight.

Mother, come back from the echoless shore;

Take me again to your heart as of yore.

Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,

Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair,

Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,

Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.

I do not know who wrote it. I do not know the circumstances but I tell you that is not the cry of a baby for toys. It is the wail of a soul after God. Listen!

Tired of the hollow, the base, the untrue,

Mother, O mother, my heart yearns for you.

Many a summer the grass has grown green,

Blossomed and faded, our faces between;

Yet with strong yearning, and passionate pain,

Long I tonight for your presence again.

Come from the silence, so long and so deep,

Rock me to sleep, mother, rock me to sleep.

My brethren, do not check that emotion. If those lines have touched a chord that has not vibrated for years, thank God for it. If there is a sob in your heart tonight, it is a sign of hope. Follow it; it is a gleam, and it is because long ago you refused to follow some gleam like it that you have become hard as the nether millstone.

But there is another word, and it is a word that the King James's translators and the revisers have written with a capital letter. What is it? "Today." "Exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today." That means to say that if you have become hard, you are still in the place you can

be remade.

Today! O blessed word of hope,
And laden still with heaven's own breath,
The night is passed, and has not come,
Between the shades life conquers death.
Light falls around the ruined soul,
The wind of God blows with new lust!
Fling back the shutters! Swing the door!
Answer God's breath upon thy dust!
Then day shall never end in night,
But night be merged in perfect day;
And all the forces of God's life
Control thy life with mighty sway.

It is Today, and you may go from the sanctuary without word spoken to any friend, with all the fallow ground plowed up, and with the promise of harvest, and the blossoming of the rose where the desert has been. But, my brethren, in order to do that you must obey the truth you know. So believe with all the mind, and all the heart, and all the life, and you shall find the remaking of your life by the grace of God.

Hebrews 9:14. Purity By The Cross.

Hebrews 9:14.

Purity By The Cross.

How much more shall the blood of Christ... cleanse your conscience from dead works?

Hebrews 9:14

In our previous study we considered the first blessing that comes to men by the way of the Cross—first, I mean in the line of human experience—the blessing of pardon. We attempted to listen reverently to this note of the great evangel, the glad declaration that forgiveness for actual trespass is provided for men not merely on the basis of pity, but in righteousness, through the mystery of the Cross of Jesus. We all are conscious how great a blessing this is, yet I think I speak for every person here when I say that we do not feel that it goes to the root of our need.

That is not to undervalue the blessing of pardon, but it is to say that mere pardon leaves us lacking something that we do not earnestly desire, and something which we desire the more earnestly as the result of the pardon bestowed on us. I attempted very carefully to limit our previous study to the word which my text contained, "trespasses": sins rather than sin, definite, personal, actual acts of disobedience. Sins as trespasses are pardoned by the way of the Cross, but all such sins are the outward manifestations of an inward disease—a moral disease, of course—the disease of sin.

I am not proposing to enter into any lengthy discussion even now as to how man, using the word in its generic sense, contracted the disease. I simply propose to recognize the fact that it is here, present in human life, that we are all conscious of it, that we feel that behind the deed is a force which impelled us to the deed, and which, strive as we will, struggle as we may, has proved too much for us.

That is not the experience of lonely individuals. It is the common experience of the race. Every man fails, goes wrong, breaks down; and the fact of his actual transgressions results from this deeper, subtler, profounder fact of a tendency toward actual transgression, of a bias in that direction. You may call that original sin or continuous abnormality—phrases matter nothing. The fact of which I am conscious and you are conscious and every man is conscious is that in man there is the double consciousness of a desire to do good and of a force which prevents his doing good.

Unless the evangel of the Cross can deal with that deeper thing in my life it does not meet my profoundest need. Great and gracious is the proclamation that my sins may be forgiven, and my hands are open to receive that gift and my heart sings a song of gladness as I receive it; but, oh, my soul, is that all? Must I still be left with this underlying somewhat that drives me to sin? Can nothing be done for me in the actual warp and woof of my spirit, in my moral fiber, to quench the fires of passion, to correct the poison that throbs? Or, again, to use the simpler language, is my prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," to find no answer?

The evangel of the Cross is incomplete unless it meets that great need. My probation is not the probation of an unfallen man, of a man born without these forces and vices within him. The probation that I live is not exactly identical with that of the perfect One of Nazareth, or even of the first man according to the story of holy writ. The father of the race, according to that story, stood upright, erect, began without these forces throbbing through his consciousness. I did not so begin. I was born in sin and "shapen in iniquity." I was born with the need of a redemption that should deal not merely with the sins I have committed as the result of an inherited iniquity, or deviation from the straight, but with the inherited iniquity itself. And I am prepared to say this, even though for a moment it may sound a startling thing. Believe me, I say it most reverently, and yet I am talking out of the deepest and most passionate conviction of my life: Unless God has provided a redemption that touches sin in me as well as the sins that grow out of it, it is an imperfect redemption. All that, as it states the need according to the common experience of men, prepares the way for the consideration of our text, in which the perfect provision is revealed.

God has provided—to quote from the passage I read—"eternal redemption," and eternal redemption is infinitely more than long-lived redemption. Eternal does not finally or necessarily mean continuance without end. Eternal is as broad as it is long, as high as it is deep. Eternal redemption is redemption that meets every possible and conceivable necessity of the case. He has provided that redemption, and, while pardon for sins is its first benefit, everything else that I need is contained within that selfsame redemption. In this passage it is declared that Jesus Christ, who offered Himself through the Eternal Spirit, without spot to God, made a provision by which my conscience can be cleansed from dead works, that I may be able to do that thing that I have not been able to do—to serve the living and true God.

Now let us consider some of the outstanding terms of this text. I want to draw your special attention to the expressions, "conscience" and "dead works." "Conscience" is a word used at this point in one particular sense. "Dead works" is a figure of speech, and we must go back to the old economy with which the writer was dealing if we would understand what the phrase really means in this connection.

According to popular usage, conscience is a faculty enabling men to distinguish right from wrong. Conscience in the Bible has a far wider meaning.

The word is found only once in the Old Testament save once, and then it is in the margin. A careful examination of all the passages in which the word occurs in the New Testament shows that it is used in the sense of consciousness rather than in our ordinary sense of "conscience." The Apostle speaks of "a good conscience," of "a conscience void of offence," of "an evil conscience," of "a conscience branded as with a hot iron." Now, in neither case was he referring to the faculty that discerns between good and evil, but rather to the facts discerned. When he speaks of a good conscience he does not mean an excellent capacity for the discernment of good and evil. When he speaks of an evil conscience he does not mean a conscience unequal to the discernment of good and evil. Conscience is consciousness. To make this clearer let me requote those isolated passages, inserting the word "consciousness" instead of conscience. "A good consciousness," "a consciousness void of offence," "an evil consciousness." In each case the word indicates the fact of discernment rather than the faculty of discernment. "A conscience void of offence," then, is man's inner consciousness, having nothing in it that causes him to offend. "A good conscience" is

man's whole consciousness, the whole sweep of his mind good. "An evil conscience" is man's whole consciousness, the whole content of the mind evil.

And here the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says that by the mystery of the Cross man's consciousness is cleansed. Consciousness lies at the back of conduct, is influenced by conduct subsequently, but is first the inspiration of conduct. There is perpetually a reflex action between a man's consciousness and his conduct. My consciousness of anything creates my conduct toward it, and my conduct toward it reflects on my consciousness, and changes it, in that it either defiles it, or lifts it into higher reaches of purity.

Take the simplest thing you know for purpose of illustration. Let us take such a simple thing as the Master would have taken. Bring me a little child, and put this little child in the midst. My consciousness of a little child will create my conduct toward that little child. Let that be my first proposition. What is a little child? What do you think of a little child? Tell me, and I will tell you what your conduct toward that child will be. Is your consciousness of a little child a low consciousness, a mean consciousness? Your conduct to the little child will be low and mean. Suppose you have the same consciousness of a little child that Jesus had, suppose you say, In heaven its angel always beholds the face of the Father, then what? Then your conduct toward that little child will make you say what He said. If you offend that child it is better that a millstone were hanged about your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. My consciousness of a flower will affect my conduct toward it. Young man, your consciousness of a woman will affect your conduct toward her. Now, as God is my witness, there is nothing I crave more than a clean consciousness of things—a consciousness that takes hold upon a flower, a child, a woman, a city, everything, cleanly, purely, and without defilement; if I have that, then have I solved my riddle, then have I found plenteous redemption. And that is exactly what the Cross provides for every man, no matter how depraved he may be, or how utterly his consciousness has become evil. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, "If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your consciousness from dead works to serve the living God."

Now let us look at that phrase, "dead works." As we indicated before, it is absolutely important that we should notice that the writer is dealing with the old economy, and we remember how strict and stringent were the laws of that economy concerning ceremonial defilement. Both in Leviticus and in Numbers we find clear revelation of how particular God is about small things. To touch the dead was to be defiled, and cleansing was needed. To enter the house where the dead were, and, though they were wandering through the wilderness, and the tabernacle was not erected, and they could not come to sacrifice, they must be sprinkled in water in which were the ashes of a red heifer. If you will ponder well these old Mosaic requirements they are suggestions and pictures of infinite truth, telling us what God thinks of defilement and how easily a man is defiled. So that when I read here, on the page of a letter written to Hebrews, the term, "dead works," I must not pass it over as a mere poetical description. It is a description of corruption, of an evil thing that contaminates and spoils the life. These are the very forces spoiling me; these are the things from which I want a cleansing. My consciousness—how, I do not know; why, I may not be able to tell—is defiled, is contaminated; it suggests things to me which are not pure. Of course, I am speaking of a man by nature, and apart from the grace of God. I am speaking also of many a man

who has been born again, but who has never appropriated God's gift of purity. The consciousness is tainted, defiled, spoiled by dead works. It is from that possibility of being contaminated that man wants cleansing.

Let us take some illustrations of things resulting from a consciousness defiled by dead things, corrupt things. First, in personal life—in the realm of the physical, a perpetual inclination to self-indulgence, to laziness, even to sensuality; in the realm of the mental, a tendency toward sloth, toward covetousness, toward dishonesty in dealing with truth, and even, alas! sometimes toward actual impurity of thinking; or, in the spiritual, proneness to lethargy, to neglect, to compromise between right and wrong. It was such impure consciousness issuing in carnal conduct which made the Apostle urge the Corinthians to purify themselves and cleanse themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. It is the defilement of the spirit which lies at the back of these manifestations in the realm of the flesh that we supremely need to have dealt with.

Then, because of this defiled consciousness, this defiled spirit, sin abiding still in the life manifests itself in lack of love, so that envy, malice, and even hatred are present. These are actively expressed by unwillingness to forgive where wrong has been suffered and unwillingness to apologize where it has been done. Or, again, in violation of truth, so that men are given to exaggeration or to prevarication, which is an evasion of truth; or deceit, which is to give another a wrong view of a matter; or fraud, which is to give another a wrong view in order to gain something for oneself; or slander, which is to issue a false report to the injury of another person. Or, again, in the violation of justice, the spiteful disposition, the incivility, the rudeness, the thoughtlessness, and, alas! sometimes the robbery. Now, all these things are to be found, not all in any one person perchance, but in the common consciousness of men and women who have received the blessing of pardon and sing in their joy over that blessing. My brethren, I am talking with you, not merely to you. We know what this conscience or consciousness is which is not devoid of offense, out of which offense comes, so that we do not look on men or things or affairs as we ought to, and the distorted vision of men and things and affairs produces a wrong attitude toward men and things and affairs. We know this is wrong, and we cry out at last, in the agony of our hearts, and say the good we see we cannot do. The vision of the ideal is in front of us, but power to realize it we lack. Or, in the words of the Apostle, when we would do good, evil is present with us.

Now, what we need supremely—what I need, what you need—is that our very inward nature should be taken hold of and cleansed. We need not merely the forgiveness of sins, but a consciousness that is clean. It is a terrible need. It is as deep as our nature, and the cleansing must penetrate as far as our pollution. It must be a cleansing that deals not merely with the surface of sin, but goes down into the warp and woof, into the fiber of the being. Water will not do; fire is needed. Water is not sufficient; the infinite mystery of blood is demanded.

If I have partially voiced your sense of need, as I have spoken experimentally to you of my sense of need, as I have come to know what God is, and what I am, then I bring you the second note of the evangel. It is in the presence of that need that the writer asks, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your consciousness?" Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit. And by that offering He is able to cleanse the nature of the soul that trusts Him by the mystery of that blood poured forth. He can cleanse the consciousness and make it pure and good. And again I say I am not going to tell you

how it is done, I am not going to try to explain to you by speculation of my finite mind or any philosophy of man how through the mystery of that shed blood a man's consciousness can be cleansed as he trusts in Jesus. The writer does not explain it, he affirms it, and all the burden of the teaching of the New Testament is this, that not merely by the mystery of this shed blood a man's sins are forgiven, but he is cleansed from his sin, changed, remade, a new creation, so that the consciousness defiled becomes a consciousness that is pure.

Now, I am perfectly well aware that a great many people who certainly have received the blessing of the forgiveness of sins have never appropriated this blessing of the cleansed consciousness and purity. I am perfectly well aware that hundreds and thousands of us are sighing after it, but not possessing it; and consequently I am driven to ask this question, if that indeed is declared to be a possibility, on what ground can I have that cleansing of my nature which shall change my view of everything, and give me a new outlook on everything, and so remake my attitude toward everything? How, in brief, can I have, instead of an evil conscience, a good conscience, instead of a conscience seared as with a hot iron, a consciousness which is void of offense? How? And the answer takes us back again to the statement of first principles.

The first thing we have to learn to do is to cease attempting to change our own consciousness. We must quit the conflict which is purely personal. A man says, I will come to look upon a little child as I ought to look upon a little child. You cannot do it in the strength of your own willing. That is the very mystery we have been dealing with. How many a man has said, I hate my outlook, this conception which is false and which issues in sinful conduct. I will alter it, I will change it, I will look upon the old things from a new standard, with cleanness of perception. A clean consciousness of the things round about me shall be mine. He was sincere in the vow, but long before the sun went westering, and the night had come upon him, he had looked again with evil thoughts, and impure desire, and debauched conceptions. The first thing, then, to do, strange as it may sound, is that we cease attempting to change our own consciousness. What then? Then we must be ready and willing to abandon once and forever all permitted acts of sin. We are to put ourselves, so far as it is possible to us, outside the place of sinning. That is very concrete if only you will make it so. It means this. If you are going to quit impure thoughts you must begin by burning your impure pictures. If, after long struggle, you are going to enter into the possibility that lies declared in this text and overcome your tendency toward drunkenness—for let us name things by their right name—you must begin by turning out the last hidden cupboard in your house of the thing that has made you sin. "Having, therefore, these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Having, therefore, these promises," what promises? "I will be their God." "I will dwell in them and walk in them." "I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters." These are the promises. Having them, what am I to do? Cleanse myself! But that is what I cannot do. If I try self-cleansing apart from these promises, and apart from the claim that faith makes upon them, I shall fail; but if I claim the promises and neglect the personal cleansing, I shall fail. There must not only be first a cessation of attempt to master the underlying evil in my strength, there must also be what appears to be a contradiction to that first statement, a resolute parting company with all the circumstances and friends and habits and methods which I know have led me into sin.

What beyond? There must be a handing over of the life just as it is, with its defilement, to Jesus Christ. Oh, but you say you are telling us to do what you tell people to do when they come to Him

at first. Exactly! When the Church at Ephesus lost her first love, the great and glorious One, walking amid the seven golden lamp-stands, said, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." What shall she do? This is what she shall do: "Repent, and do the first works." Begin where you began, fall in line with the principles you have neglected and wandered from. Remember, when we come for purity we are to come exactly as we came for pardon. First, "Nothing in my hands I bring," the cessation of my attempts to deal with the underlying impurity; second, "Here I give my all to Thee," the utter and absolute abandonment of the life to Jesus Christ—not as a theory to be sung, but as fact. And then what next? Then, dear heart, trust Him for that very thing after which you have been sighing. Accept it as from Him, trusting in Him. The cleansing of the conscience comes whenever a soul ventures everything on Christ and trusts Him absolutely. If you will come now, just where you are and as you are, with your false consciousness, but in strong determination that you will cut every cord that binds you to the old life, burn every bridge behind you, stand out in separation to Him, and then trust Him, He will break the power of canceled sin. He will set the prisoner free. And so, by the way of this Cross, infinite and ever-increasing mystery of God's love, there comes to men not merely pardon, but purity—that for which the heart, quickened by the Spirit, most profoundly seeks.

Hebrews 9:28. The Purpose Of The Advent: 4. To Prepare for a Second Advent.

Hebrews 9:28.

The Purpose Of The Advent:

4. To Prepare for a Second Advent.

Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation.

Hebrews 9:28

We come this evening to consider the last of the four great values of the first Advent. We have spoken together of the fact that He was manifested to take away sins, that He was manifested to reveal the Father; and now we come finally to this great truth that He was manifested to prepare for another manifestation, that He came once in order that He might be able to come again. All the things of which we have spoken as constituting the values of the first Advent were necessary in order that there should be another Advent.

Our thoughts are turning with gladness to the first coming of Jesus. The light that shone o'er the plains is shining around us; the songs which the shepherds heard we also hear; and the new hope that filled the hearts of shepherds and Wise Men in that Eastern land at the Advent of Jesus is in our hearts at this time.

Yet we are all conscious that nothing is perfect, that the things which He came to do are not yet done, that the works of the devil are not yet finally destroyed, that sins are not yet experimentally taken away, that in the spiritual consciousness of the race God is not yet perfectly known. As the writer of this said in another connection, "Now we see not yet all things subjected to Him." The victory seems not to be won. There seems to be very, very much still to do. Or, if I may put this into another form, it is impossible to read the story of the first Advent and to believe in it, and to follow the history of the centuries that have followed upon that Advent, without feeling in one's deepest heart that something more is needed. The first Advent demands something else.

Therefore, we turn with relief to the declaration of the New Testament which formed the very hope and song of the Early Church, the declaration which states that He Who has come will come, that the first Advent was indeed preparatory, and that the consummation of its meaning can be brought about only by another coming, as personal, as definite, as positive, as real in human history as was the first.

Think of the fact stated in my text: "Christ... shall appear a second time." There is no escape, other than by casuistry, from the simple meaning of these words. The first idea conveyed by them is that of an actual personal advent of Jesus yet to be. To spiritualize a statement like this and to attempt to make application of it in any other than the way in which a little child would understand it is to be

driven, one is almost inclined to say, to dishonesty with the simplicity of the Scriptural declaration.

This statement is not peculiar to the letter from which it is taken. It is the teaching of the whole of the New Testament. To the man who has given up the New Testament as final, authoritative, and infallible, I have no appeal. We have no common ground. If you are attempting to erect a Christian structure upon your philosophizing I have no time to argue with you. I respect your conviction, I believe in your honesty, but I part company with you. To me the New Testament is the living, final, absolutely infallible Word of God.

I find a great many Christian people, however, who believe that as surely as I do, who yet seem not to be perfectly sure of a second personal Advent of the same Jesus. I repeat, and again I would say it carefully, with no desire to offend or hurt the convictions of any, that you cannot take your New Testament and read it simply and honestly without coming to the conclusion that the Christ Who came is still to come. There may be diversities of interpretations as to how He will come and when He will come. I am not discussing these tonight. We may part company as to whether He will come to usher in a millennium or to crown it. I think that is important, but I am not careful now to argue it. When the risen Christ had passed out of the sight of the men who waited upon the mountain side and in astonishment looked at the clouds which had received Him, angels appeared to them who said, "This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven." He is coming or the angels were wrong.

Paul in all his writings is conscious of this truth of the second Advent. In some of them he does not dwell upon it at such great length or with such clearness as in others, for the simple reason that it is not the specific subject with which he is dealing. In the Thessalonian letters you have most clearly set forth Paul's teaching concerning this matter. In the very center of the first letter we have a passage which declares in unmistakable language that "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." "It was this hope which more than anything gave its color to the primitive Christianity, its unworldliness, its moral intensity, its command of the future even in this life." The latter sentence is a quotation from the book of a man who does not hold the position I hold, who does not believe as I believe in the actual second personal Advent of Jesus, who, nevertheless, recognizes that this view gave the bloom to primitive Christianity and constituted the power of the early Christians to laugh in the face of death, and to overcome all forces which were against them.

That is not peculiarly Pauline. Writing to those who were in affliction, James said, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

With equal clearness, Peter said to the early disciples, "Be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

John, who leaned upon his Master's bosom, and who wrote the most wonderful of all mystic words concerning Him, said, "We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Jude said to those to whom he wrote, "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

That is but a rapid passing over of the great field of New Testament teaching. To summarize yet more briefly the things to which I have already referred, I would declare that every New Testament writer presents this truth as a part of the common Christian faith. I believe there is nothing more needed in our day than a new declaration of this vital fact of Christian faith. Think what it would mean if the whole Church still lifted her face toward the East and waited for the morning, waited as the Lord would have her wait—not star-gazing and almanac examining, but, with loins girt for service and lamps burning, waiting as she serves. If the whole Christian Church were so waiting she would cast off her worldliness and infidelity and all other things which hinder her march to conquest. It is because we have lost the bloom of hope that our songs are so poor. If we may but hear again the promises of the New Testament, the assurances of the Word that He Who came is coming, then there will be strength in service and new fortitude for suffering, and new hope for all the world in its sin and its sorrow and its sighing.

Our text does more than affirm the fact of the second Advent. In a somewhat remarkable way, it declares the meaning thereof, "Christ... shall appear a second time, apart from sin."

To understand this rightly we must look upon it as putting the second Advent into contrast with the first. That is what the writer most evidently means, for the context declares that Jesus was manifested in the consummation of the ages, to bear sins. That we have considered. He now says that "Christ... shall appear a second time, apart from sin." Consequently, I repeat, to understand this rightly we must look upon it as putting the second Advent in contrast with the first. All the things of the first Advent were necessary to the second, but all the things of the second will be different from the things of the first. The whole of the first Advent was conditioned within the fact of sin. Jesus came to deal with sin. By His first Advent sin was revealed. Men never truly understood the meaning thereof until He came, and by the light of His presence in human history flung it into clear relief. From the slaughter of the innocents which accompanied His birth to His own death upon the cross His presence in the world flung hatred into view. The slaughter of the innocents was the action of a false king who feared a new king coming to snatch his scepter, and hatred manifested itself in devilish cruelty to little children. Our Lord's own cross was the place where all the deep hatred of the human heart expressed itself most diabolically in view of heaven and earth and hell.

There was also revelation of darkness as contrary to light. "Men loved the darkness rather than the light," was the supreme wail of the heart of Jesus. His presence in the world was, moreover, revelation of spiritual death as contrary to life. In the perpetual attempt of men to materialize His work, the attempt of His own disciples as well as all the rest, and their absolute failure to appreciate the, spiritual teaching He gave, we see what spiritual death really is.

In His first Advent He not only revealed sin but bore it. In the words, "Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many," the reference is not merely to the final movement of the cross. The word "offered" is used in reference to God's action in giving Him. It would be perfectly correct interpretation to supply the word "offered" by the word "gave," the word which you have in John's Gospel, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Let us put that word

here, "Christ also, having been once given to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time." All through His life He bore sin. All through the long, long days, He was putting Himself underneath sin in order to take it away. He bore its limitations throughout the whole of His life. In poverty, in sorrow, in loneliness He lived, and all these things are limitations resulting from sin. All poverty is the issue of sin. It is well we should remember that. The problem of poverty has a deeper problem lying at its heart which is the problem of sin. I do not mean that the poor man is the sinner always. Far from it. It is very easy for people who live in comparative ease and comfort, or in affluence, to write about the blessings of poverty. There are no blessings of poverty save as God does overrule all the grinding and crushing of human life for some essential good. All poverty is the result of sin, either of the man who is poor or of some other who is robbing him. When Jesus Christ entered into flesh He entered into the limitations which follow upon sin and He bore sin in His own consciousness through all the years. Not poverty only, but sorrow in all forms. Sorrow is lack. The sorrow of bereavement is the lack of the friend. Every sorrow is a sense of lack, something wanting, something gone, and Jesus lived through all the years "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And in His long loneliness He lived in the midst of limitations resulting from sin. Finally gathering all these things to a crisis, He reached the ultimate issue of sin, bearing it, carrying it, lifting it, placing Himself, very God as well as very man, underneath it until all its weight was upon Him—the weight of its poverty, for "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor"; the weight of its sorrow, for all the sorrows of the human heart were upon His heart until He uttered that unspeakable cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Such was the story of the first Advent.

Now hear my text. Having finally dealt with sin and destroyed it at its very root in His first Advent, Jesus' next coming, His second Advent, is to be that of victory. He will come again, not to poverty but to wealth. He will come again, not to sorrow but with all joy. He will come again, not in loneliness, but to gather about Him all trusting souls who have looked and served and waited. We are celebrating the Advent when there was no room for Him in the inn. When He comes again the whole world and the universe will make haste to make room for Him. At the close of the first Advent we saw Him holding the reed of mockery, robed in the purple of contempt, crowned with thorns, surrounded by a mob. When He comes again He will hold the scepter of the universe in His right hand; upon His brow there will be many diadems; He will be panoplied with all the splendor of God, and ten thousand times ten thousand angels will be the cohorts that accompany Him. All in His first Advent of sorrow and loneliness, of poverty and of sin, will be absent from the second. The first Advent was for atonement, the second will be for administration. He came, entering into human nature and taking hold of it, to deal with sin and put it away. He has taken sin away, and He will come again to set up that Kingdom, the foundations of which He laid in His first coming.

I pause for one moment to say I am not dealing with the different phases of the Advent, with the fact that He will first gather His Church to Himself and then establish the Kingdom on earth. I am viewing the whole in general outline, recognizing the different phases, but insisting now only upon the glorious and gracious fact that this One Who came is yet to come.

Let us go one step further, and we shall find that my text declares the purpose of the Advent. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for

Him, unto salvation." A similarity is suggested. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." Over against that dual appointment stands "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation." As His first Advent was parallel to the appointment of death, His second Advent is parallel to the appointment of judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die... Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many." It is appointed that after death there shall be judgment—He "shall appear a second time, apart from sin..." But the contrast seems to break down. The similarity is not carried out. There is a strange differentiation in the ending of the two declarations, and we must notice it. We expected that it would have been written to complete the comparison, thus, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, unto judgment." That would seem to be a balanced comparison, but the writer does not so write. Notice how this very difference unfolds the meaning of the first and second Advents. It is appointed to men to die—He was offered to bear the sins of many. After death judgment—He is coming again unto salvation. As the first Advent negated the death appointed unto men, the second Advent will turn the judgment into salvation.

"It is appointed unto men once to die." It is often somewhat carelessly affirmed that men must die. While admitting the truth of this statement, we inquire why must they die? Ask the scientist. Science can no more account for death than it can account for life. It has never been able to explain the mystery of the beginning of life. It has never yet been able to say why men die. How they die, yes; why they die, no!

We are all reconstructed on the physical side every seven years. The essential personality is not reconstructed, but maintains its individuality through all the processes of reconstruction. I am the man I was seven years ago, and yet there is not a particle of this tabernacle, through the medium of which I speak to you tonight, that would have been here had I been here seven years ago. Waste of tissue and breakdown of the physical is a constant process of remaking. The mental in man gains breadth and strength and beauty as years pass on. The man who has run out the allotted three score years and ten, or for whom God has lengthened the lease a few years, mentally and spiritually is greater than he has ever been before, but the reconstruction of the physical is not quite so perfect as it used to be, the elasticity is missing, the vision is becoming dim, the new-made temple is not quite so fibrous and tough as the old one. Why? I wait for scientific answer, but I wait in vain. No man without revelation has ever been able to tell me why the physical ceases at maturity to reconstruct itself with ever-increasing strength. I will tell you why. Death is the wage of sin. Science will admit that death comes by the breaking of certain laws. Science will use some other word than the word "sin." Sir Oliver Lodge tells us that sensible men do not use the word "sin." I am a little tired of the Church's worship of Sir Oliver Lodge. I am surprised at the way Christian ministers have welcomed his creed. I have every respect for him as an honest scientist, but he does not understand Christianity. His creed is not the Christian creed. If there is no place for "sin" and "blood," there is no room for Jesus Christ. "It is appointed unto men once to die" by the fiat of God Almighty because they are sinners, and no man can escape that fiat.

But Jesus Christ was offered by God to bear the sins of many—that was the answer of the first Advent to man's appointment to death.

Beyond death there is another appointment, that of judgment.

Who shall appeal against the absolute justice of that appointment? He "shall appear a second time, apart from sin... unto salvation." To those who have heard the message of the first Advent and have believed it, and trusted in His great work, and have found shelter in the mystery of His manifestation and bearing of sin, to such, salvation takes the place of judgment. But to the man who will not shelter beneath that first Advent and its atoning value judgment abides. All the things begun by His first Advent will be consummated by the second.

At His second Advent there will be complete salvation for the individual—Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption. We believed, and were saved. We believe, and are being saved. We believe, and we shall be saved. The last movement will come when Our Lord comes.

What of those who have fallen on sleep? They are safe with God and He will bring them with Him when He comes. They are not yet perfected, "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be perfected." They are at rest and consciously at rest. They are "absent from the body... at home with the Lord," but they are not yet perfected, they are waiting. We are waiting in the midst of earth's struggle, they in heaven's light and joy, for the second Advent. Heaven is waiting for it. Earth is waiting for it. Hell is waiting for it. The universe is waiting for it.

That coming will be to those who wait for Him. Who are those who wait for Him? Let Scripture interpret this. In the Thessalonian Epistle I find Paul's description of the early Christians, "Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." The first thing is the turning from idols. Have you done that? The second thing is serving the living God. Are you doing that? Then because you have turned from idols and are serving Him you are waiting. That is the waiting the New Testament enjoins, and to those who wait, His second Advent will mean salvation. There is waiting other than that, but we have no share in it. That is our waiting, because we have heard the Evangel of the first Advent and know it. The whole creation waiteth, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." I hear the sob of the waiting myriads in China and Africa and India. They are waiting. They have never yet heard of the first Advent. They are waiting. They know not for what. They cry as a child in the night, with no language but a cry. Oh the pathos and the tragedy of it!

"Christ shall appear." Glorious Gospel! He shall appear, to heal the wounds of all creation. "He comes to break oppression and set the captives free." He is coming to rule with a rod of iron, which means absolute and inflexible equity. Ofttimes there is more love in justice than in mercy. When He Who came in meek mercy long ago comes again, He will come in majestic might, and also in love. He will come to gather out His trusting souls and then to establish His own rule and set up His own government. What a day of burning it will be for some! What terror will come to the hearts of those who have lived and fattened upon devilism!

He is coming! That is my hope and confidence. That is my hope and my song for the world this Christmastime. He came to commence, to initiate. He will come to complete. "Christ... shall appear a second time, apart from sin... unto salvation." Salvation means judgment wrought out in the impulse and power of love.

We stand tonight between the Advents. Our relation to the first creates our relation to the second. To receive Him as rejected is to be received by Him at His coronation. To accept His estimate of sin and share in the value of His atoning work is to enter into His coming administration of righteousness. To trust in the first is to wait for the second.

How stands it between my soul and the Advents, first and second? I am not trying to cast a cloud over the merriment of Christmastime. But have a reason for your merriment, and in God's name cease your merriment if the Child Who was born, and of Whom you sing, is excluded from your heart and hearth and home. The blasphemy of it! The tragedy of it! The shame of it! People who by persistent sin are crucifying this Christ afresh every day yet make merry this Christmastime. If you have admitted Him and found room for Him for Whom there was no room in the inn, if you have handed Him the kingdom of your life though the world still rejects Him as in the days of old, then make merry. Let your songs abound. Let your hearts be glad. Give the children a good time. But I warn you against all merriment if you have shut Him out, for He comes again, and if, in spite of the light of the first Advent you have rejected Him, He must, on the basis of eternal justice, reject you. He is coming. May we so trust Him as to the meaning and merit of His first Advent as not to be ashamed of Him when He comes again!

Hebrews 10:14. The One Offering.

Hebrews 10:14.

The One Offering.

For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14

The Biblical conception of religion is right relationship between God and man. The Biblical doctrine of man is, essentially, that he is the offspring of God, whose relation to God, therefore, is threefold: first, that he has the right of personal access to God; second, that there the possibility of direct, immediate intercourse with God is given to him; finally, that the privilege and responsibility of co-operation with God in carrying out God's designs rests on him. After the briefest declarations concerning the origin and nature of man, the Bible introduces the subject of sin. Sin, according to its teaching, results in the exclusion of man from God, the cessation of communion with Him, and the consequent inability to realize the privilege and fulfil the responsibility of co-operation with Him.

The ultimate message of the Bible, however, is neither that of the essential nature of man nor that of his sin. The final message of the Bible is that of redemption. It is the literature of redemption. It is therefore a message to sinning men, to those who are excluded from their birthright by sin; excluded from the consciousness of the presence of God, denied fellowship with Him, and unable to fulfil their responsibility to Him either personally or relatively. To that state the Bible appeals. The Bible has been written for sinning and not for sinless men. If I may venture to put into brief words that which shall express the whole message of the Bible, then I shall employ the very words of the Lord Himself, for that which is the truth concerning the Word incarnate by His own declaration is true concerning this written word: "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

The burden of the Bible was perfectly expressed in the words of the wise woman of Tekoa to King David when he was fleeing from Absalom, in which she uttered the profound truth, "God... deviseth means that he that is banished be not outcast from Him." So far as the Biblical revelation is concerned, this great declaration has been made in two stages, both of which are referred to by the writer in the opening words of the treatise from which our text is taken: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." The first stage was that of the revelation to the fathers in the prophets by divers portions in divers manners. The final stage is that of today, the revelation in the Son.

The method of the old economy was suggestion, prediction, illustration. That of today is the method of finality, fulfilment, realization. In the Hebrew system one phase of the necessity for human redemption, and one phase of the way of its provision was revealed in all that splendid ritual of the Hebrew people, revealed particularly in the offerings as they shadowed forth the way

of approach to God by sinning man. It is the way of complete dedication, accompanied by sacrifice and propitiation, with the resulting elements of atonement and forgiveness. In that pictorial system there were five offerings, named, respectively, the Burnt Offering, the Meal Offering, the Peace Offering, the Sin Offering, and the Trespass Offering.

These may be divided into two groups, the first consisting of three offerings, the Burnt, the Meal, the Peace: the Burnt, the symbol of the dedication of the entire life to God; the Meal, the symbol of the dedication of the service of the life to God; and the Peace, the symbol of that fellowship with God which is possible on the basis of the dedication of life and of service. In each case there was the element of sacrifice connected with the offering.

The second group consisted of two offerings: the Sin Offering, which suggested the necessity for, and the method of, putting away sins in order that man might be brought back to his birthright of access to God, intercourse with God, and co-operation with God; and the Trespass Offering, which dealt with certain definite acts of sin.

The writer of this letter to the Hebrews declared that these offerings were not in themselves efficacious, and in that declaration he wrote in harmony with the teaching of the great Hebrew prophets. In his argument he quoted from the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, and his quotations might be multiplied, for they are manifold. The declaration of the seers of the old economy was persistently that in themselves these sacrifices, these offerings, had no value, no efficacy, but that they pointed to something profounder, were adumbrations of something greater, shadows of it demonstrating its reality. In this chapter the word of the writer of this letter, is a striking, suggestive one, "The law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things." While he recognized that there can be no power, no dynamic, no saving virtue in the shadow, he did nevertheless recognize that there can be no shadow without the substance. There was infinitely more in these ancient sacrifices than feasting and fasting; they were evidences of the existing purpose and power of Deity, to be yet more perfectly manifested. The whole argument of the writer of the letter was that the deepest, profoundest meaning of all those offerings of the ancient ritual was fulfilled in human history in the Person and work of the Son of God, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We must be true to the conception of the writer if we would understand his meaning. To whom, then, was the writer referring? Who is it that by one offering can perfect forever them that are sanctified? The answer is found in the opening declaration of the letter, "God... hath spoken unto us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." In that august and remarkable introduction of the central Person in the mind of the writer we find relationships with all the arguments that follow. When I read that He, this wondrous Son of God, perfects forever them that are sanctified, I remember that associated with the description of His inherent being and glory and beauty is the declaration that He has made purification of sins.

The declaration of our text, then, is that in and through Him the Son of God man may be restored to right relationship with God, and that in every way. If the Biblical conception of religion be that of man in right relationship with God; if the Bible teaches that sin has excluded man from access to God, from intercourse and from co-operation, the ultimate word of the Bible is that God has

devised means by which the banished shall not be outcast, the means being that in His Son God has wrought the work through which man may be restored to his right of access, restored to his communion and fellowship, restored to both the responsibility and privilege of co-operation with God.

Let us, then, consider this declaration of the text as it deals with the one offering provided in Christ, with the perfection provided for men, and with the condition of appropriation.

"By one offering." Let us think of that offering in itself, in its sufficiency, and in its exclusiveness.

First, in itself. Directly we begin to attempt to think of this one offering in itself there are so many aspects of the matter that we are in difficulty. Let us follow the simplest method and consider the offering, using the word as a noun, that which was offered; and then consider the offering, using the word as a verb, the act of offering, the way of the offering.

What, then, is this one offering through which Christ hath perfected forever them that are sanctified? We are not left to any speculation; we follow the statement of the writer and we have a clear and distinct declaration of what that offering was. From verse fourteen, which constitutes the text, I glance back to verse ten, and there I read these words: "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Ere I am able to comprehend the meaning of that utterance, I move backward still a little further, and notice a very remarkable and significant quotation from one of the psalms,

Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, But a body didst Thou prepare for Me.

By the offering of that body of Jesus Christ, that body prepared for Jesus Christ, He perfects forever them that are sanctified. We must briefly give attention to one matter of detail, and perhaps of difficulty. The quotation of the psalm here by the writer is a quotation from the Septuagint, and not from the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Hebrew the psalm reads:

Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, But Mine ear hast Thou opened.

I draw attention to the difference because it has created difficulty as to whether the translators of what we speak of as the Septuagint version thought for some reason that there was a mistake in the Hebrew, or whether the text as it is in the Hebrew today is correct. There is a sense in which the vital, underlying spiritual value is not changed in either case, for the word as we have it in the Hebrew text and in the Bible, "Mine ear hast Thou opened," has no reference whatever to that ancient rite or ceremony by which the servant coming to the doorpost had his ear pierced in order that he might demonstrate his fidelity. The thought is that rather of making the ear absolutely attentive in order that the soul may be mastered by the Divine will. That is the whole story of the human life of Jesus. I have no doubt that the Septuagint version is the true one. I build my view on the fact that the New Testament writer quoted the psalm in this way, as I believe, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thus distinguishing between the true and the false and giving us a most remarkable statement concerning that offering which our Lord made: "A body didst Thou prepare for Me." Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this word was fastened on by the writer of the New Testament to show that the sacrifice of our Lord by which we are redeemed, even on the physical side, was that of a body especially prepared by God for His Son. Thus the One Who hung on the Cross is differentiated from all other men, even in the matter of His physical life. In that

word, "a body didst Thou prepare for Me," is involved the mysterious method of incarnation which is recorded by two of the evangelists, that of the virgin birth of our Lord. In an activity, wholly within the compass of the Divine power, God did purify human flesh and through that purification gave to us the immaculate Son of His love in human form and human being. He was in Himself the sinless One, not a member of our sinning race, but a member of our race, brought into it by a Divine overruling and activity of love and power so as to share that which is essential in humanity and be separate from sinners and from all things which have ruined and spoiled humanity.

Then we must remember that His living body fulfilled its true function, that of being an instrument of the spirit. The body of a human being is but the earthly instrument of the spirit, which is the essential fact in the life of that human being. Thus reverting to the original economy and ideal of creation, this Man of Nazareth fulfilled the Divine purpose, and His body, prepared for the specific purpose, was the perfect instrument of His spirit. His spirit was never imprisoned within His body, was never mastered by the appetites of the body, was never deflected from the course of rightness by the allurements of the body, was never clouded in its vision of God by illicit answer to the cry of the body. It was the instrument of the spirit; and as in His spirit life this Man of Nazareth was separate from sinners, holy, undefiled, so also in all His bodily life He was separate from sinners, holy, undefiled. Therefore, when we think of the Man of Nazareth, and in those hours in which we properly rejoice at His nearness to us by reason of His humanity, let us with equal propriety and solemnity tremble and wonder as we recognize that He was alone, distanced from us in Himself in spiritual life and in bodily life; that He stands alone, unique in all the centuries, a lonely Man by virtue of His purity and uninterrupted adjustment to the holiness, purity, and rightness of God.

If these things be remembered we shall never fall into the unutterable blunder of imagining that the evangelical doctrine is that one man died for other men, we shall never fall into the unutterable mistake of imagining that on the Cross some one member of our own race did persuade God to a change of mind and a change of relationship concerning men. We shall watch through all the process for the movements of God, for which He first did prepare a body for the Son of His love; and we shall watch Him as He moves along the way of men, ever recognizing His entire separation from humanity, even in the hours of close, mysterious identification.

In the Hebrew economy the Burnt Offering was symbolic of the dedication of the whole life to God; the Meal Offering was symbolic of the dedication of the service, for in that offering men brought what they themselves had wrought, the result of their own toil; the Peace Offering was the symbol of the unbroken fellowship with God which results from the dedication of the life and the service. We immediately see how that wonderful kindergarten of the old economy found its fulfilment in Jesus. On all the pathway of His pilgrimage the supreme note was that of the dedication of His whole life to God. I reverently quote in this connection from the Roman epistle: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." That was the apostolic appeal to redeemed men, that they should make the body the sacramental symbol of the spiritual attitude. Reverently I declare that this is exactly the story of the life of Jesus; His spirit was ever yielded to God in perfect obedience, and the body perpetually expressed that attitude of the spirit, so that every journey the body took was a journey God-ordained, and every activity of those gentle hands was an activity God-inspired, and every glance of His eye was the outlooking of the purpose and will and intention

of God. All the body of the Lord expressed the fact of the dedication of His whole life and being to God. It was also the medium of a dedicated service, for all that He did He did under the Divine authority; I do nothing of Myself; I speak nothing of Myself; what My Father gives Me that I do; what My Father gives Me that I speak. All His service was God-inspired. I see Him with the children about Him, angry with the disciples who would prevent them coming, and I hear the thunder of His love, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of heaven." That is a Man acting under Divine impulse and Divine authority. I see Him on another day, when, looking into the eyes of the false rulers of His people, He says to them, Woe unto you! scribes, hypocrites, whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones. That was not a passing spasm of human passion; it was God speaking out of His holiness and His wrath to the men who oppressed other men. Therefore He realized the meaning of the Peace Offering. He was always at peace with God, always in fellowship with God. He spoke with august and reverent familiarity of His Father at all times and in all circumstances, feeling that no sanctity was violated when He linked God to flowers, to sparrows, and to children.

Consider, then, the worth of that One, and mark the worth of that body, prepared in infinite mystery and by infinite power, the perfected and unharmed instrument of the spirit, perfectly adjusted to God. There has been nothing like it in human history.

We pass now to the word "offering" as a verb. The intention of the offering was symbolized in the two remaining offerings of the Hebrew economy, the Sin Offering and the Trespass Offering. Its method was co-operation with God, and its purpose, reconciliation of man with God, making peace, or, again to take up the august word of the Old Testament and of the Christian Church, making atonement.

In Jesus, fulfilment of the symbolism of the Burnt, the Meal, and the Peace Offerings, we see the sacrificial element. Have I spoken of the Burnt Offering of a dedicated life? He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Have I spoken of the Meal Offering of dedicated service? In all His service there was the element of vicarious suffering. With infinite ease He healed the sick as Matthew records—no, not with infinite ease, for Matthew adds, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." Have I spoken of the Peace Offering of fellowship? Our Lord's unbroken peace with God was challenged by the perpetual restlessness of humanity, and found expression again and again in the hot discontent of His heart with things unlike God. Take sin out of the world and Christ had known no sorrow. He might have lived a life of perfect dedication, a life of perfect dedication in service, a life of perpetual peace untroubled by sorrow, undesolated by agony. But in this world the measure of His perfection was the measure of His pain. The measure of our nearness to Christ is the measure in which we are capable of suffering with sinning men and sinning women. If we are merely righteous, cold and hard when we have sinners to deal with, we know very little about God or Christ. The measure of purity is the measure of pain in the presence of impurity. All through His life there was this sacrificial element, until at last everything was gathered up in the infinite, awe-inspiring mystery of the offering of His body on the Tree.

All the demand of the Divine character was perfectly met in that offering. In such life there ought to be no pain, no death; if pain and death were there, and that by the very will of God, pain and death were there for some wider and beneficent purpose. All the demands of the Divine character are

met in that Person.

Once again, that which it is so extremely difficult to state or to comprehend, but which nevertheless is the declaration of Scripture and must be true or all our religion fails, in Christ there was the fulness of the Divine consciousness: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally." All the Divine consciousness was in Him, and the Divine consciousness includes the whole creation, the consciousness of all men and of all life that has consciousness. All was focused in Him. That body prepared by infinite power and in infinite mystery, and yet of my very nature, was the central instrument of the spirit which in co-operation with God was conscious of the fulness of the Divine consciousness.

Not only did it please the Father that all the fulness should dwell in Him as to consciousness, but also as to resources. The supply of Deity was vested in Him in order to co-operate in the Divine work.

So, in the light of these unfathomable things and of these Divine facts that defy our mathematical terms, I read my text again: "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

I say in the presence of God that I am not astonished now, when I think of Who Christ is, and what that body really meant, even though I cannot fathom the mystery. If there are depths too deep for me and heights too vastly removed for my climbing, still I feel that here is the place of my refuge:

Rock of ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.

That one offering excludes all human activity which is insufficient to realize the restoration which man seeks. It excludes the value of human merit, for human merit is worthless. It excludes the necessity for all human intervention which, in its presence, becomes blasphemous and impertinent.

In considering the perfection provided through the offering we go back to the initial words of our meditation. The perfection provided is the restoration of everything lost. Through that one offering we have perfection of access to God, for we come to God now by way of a cleansing which is immediate and continuous. We come to God by the way of a renewal of our spiritual life which is progressive. We come to God by way of a reconciliation which is constant.

It is the perfection of communion with God. Communion with God is, first, the sense that we have no secrets from Him, that He knows everything, all our sin and our failure:

Thy kind but searching glance can scan The very wounds that shame would hide.

Do you know the restfulness of getting alone with someone to whom you have not to say anything about yourself because that someone knows? You do not, unless you know God. Do you know the awful agonizing awkwardness of attempting to make yourself known to your nearest and dearest? Fellowship with God means that there is no such agony, no such awkwardness; all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with Whom I have to do. That is the doctrine that fills the soul with fear until the soul is reconciled; but it is the doctrine of infinite comfort to the soul that has rested on Christ.

It is not only a sense that we have no secrets from Him, this communion with God; it is also the desire and capacity to know His secrets, and the fact that He tells us His secrets. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Fellowship means, moreover, the appropriation in intercourse with Him of His wisdom, so that we need no longer blunder our way through darkness—He will direct; it means appropriation of His might, so that we need no longer struggle helplessly against difficulties—He will energize; it means appropriation of His love, so that we are never alone. In fellowship with our Lord we can say with our Lord, My Father doth not leave me alone!

All that issues in perfection of ability. Restored likeness to God is renewed fitness for co-operation with God, and that is in itself regained power.

The condition for appropriating the perfection provided is sanctification. There are different aspects of sanctification. Sanctification is separation to the will of God. It is wrought in the soul of man by the ministry of the Spirit. It is made possible by the work of the Son.

The reference to sanctification in this text is to that act of the Spirit, in response to faith, whereby we are accepted in the beloved. All such are adjusted to the will of God, perfect but not yet perfected; perfect in standing, relationship, and resources, but yet to be perfected in experience, in finality and complete realization.

The dwelling place of the saints is the holy place. They sit at the table of shewbread and have communion with God; they trim the golden lampstand and bear their testimony to the world; they stand before the golden altar of incense, God's remembrancers and intercessors; and, most wonderful of all, they pass beyond the holy place into the holy of holies, and, standing face to face with God hold communion unafraid, because on the mercy seat are the tokens of that one offering whereby He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

This is our only perfection. Let us not presume upon it. Let us not repose our confidence in anything else, not in our Christian service, not in our preaching, or our work; for at the last we shall come home, and we shall do, saying:

Nothing in my hand I bring;

Simply to Thy Cross I cling!

Naked, come to Thee for dress;

Helpless, look to Thee for grace:

Foul, I to the fountain fly;

Wash me, Saviour, or I die!

I think that will be the last prayer I shall ever pray, and it will be answered, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"!

This is not only our only perfection, it is our sufficient perfection. Let us perfectly trust it. Let us answer all its demands, that we may realize all its power. Let no doubt of the efficacy of the one offering lurk in the heart, and so we shall enter into the very peace of God.

Hebrews 11:1. The Optimism Of Faith.

Hebrews 11:1.

The Optimism Of Faith.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

The history of the world's progress is the history of the triumphs of faith. Faith, to all human seeming, does the most unwarranted things. It sings in prison. It fights while still in chains. It works without tools. You may put the men of faith into prison, but at midnight you will hear Paul and Silas singing. Sight sings in the morning when it has escaped from prison. Faith sings at night while it is in prison. You may put the man of faith into the dungeon and bind him with chains; but there, without a sword, with no carnal weapon, he will still fight a fight, and win a victory the issue of which will be seen in the days to come. Put the man of faith into circumstances devoid of all the forces upon which the man of sight depends, and he will begin to work, and in the long issues you will discover that his work is that which lasts, that which abides.

The literature of the prison is a wonderful literature. We confine ourselves to Biblical illustrations, and to one that is almost Biblical, Biblical in spirit. The great prophecy of failure and tears breaks out into its sweetest music when Jeremiah sings in prison. Find the central messages of hope, and they are messages which were written while he was in the dungeon. The clearest and most startling visions of God ever granted to the ancient people came to Ezekiel when he was an exile by the banks of the river Chebar. The great epistles of the New Testament were written in prison. Though you take the fisher of the Galilean Sea and banish him to the Isle of Patmos, there he sees through the mists and mysteries to the light and glory of the infinite consummation, and the Apocalypse is part of the literature of the prison. If you take the Bedford Tinker and shut him away in the prison house, there Bunyan dreams his celestial dreams and lays the world under a perpetual debt of gratitude to him. Why? Because these men were men of faith. If the test of a word is a work, if the test of a creed is a creation, if the test of a root dry and withered, is fruit luscious and beautiful, then faith is vindicated in the passing of the centuries. The men of faith have found:

Glory begun below

Celestial fruit on earthly ground

From faith and love will grow.

Lo to faith's enlightened sight,

All the mountain flames with light,

Hell is nigh, but God is nigher,

Circling us with hosts of fire.

We may not be able to account for it, but I think no one here will be prepared to contradict the statement, that it is the men of faith who have made the great contributions to the world's progress; always the men of faith. I am not proposing to argue that tonight. My business is of a profounder nature.

I want to ask this simple question. Why is it that faith always triumphs? Why is it that the word of faith materializes into the work that lasts? Why is it that the creed of the man of faith vindicates itself in a creation? Why is it that this root—may I very reverently borrow a word that does not belong here—this "root out of a dry ground," this root which at the present moment is considered by the philosophies of men to be so entirely out of date, why is it that this russet, drab bulb, that seems to have no color and no glory and no light, why is it that it is forevermore breaking through and blossoming into beauty and triumph? Why is faith victorious? The answer is in my text. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen."

Let us first take two phrases from the text in order that in the briefest way possible we may remind ourselves of what they mean; "things hoped for"; "things not seen."

These are the unreal things, the intangible things, the imponderable and unlikely matters; the uncertain things of the future "things hoped for"; the uncertain things of the present, "things not seen." Mark, I pray you, that difference in suggestion. "Things hoped for" are always future. "Things not seen" according to the interpretation of this writer and this letter, are not future but present.

The "things not seen" are in existence now. How are you going to demonstrate them, be sure of them? By faith. The "things hoped for" are future. How are we to be sure of them? By faith. This is the statement not only of the two sides of the great fact, but of a sequence. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." Why? Because it is the "proving of things not seen." "Assurance of things hoped for" grows out of faith, because faith demonstrates, proves to certainty the "things not seen." "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for," therefore it sings in the midst of the process and in the prison house. Why does it sing? Why is it sure? Because it demonstrates, it proves the unseen things.

"Things hoped for"; these are things that lie ahead of us, things that we have not yet come into possession of, things that according to the philosophy of men and the appearances of the hour, it is improbable we ever shall come into possession of. "Things hoped for," the realization of our own ideals; the ultimate victory of good in the world; compensation for all the travail, the sorrow, and the loss of today; the striking of an even balance in the affairs of men, when justice shall reign supreme. We all sigh for these things; they pass, ever and anon, like a vision before our eyes, and we speak of it as a mirage, a disappointment, and ask, "Can our ideal ever be realized? Will there ever be the ultimate victory of good? Is there to be compensation for the stress and strain and sighing and sorrow of humanity? Will there be a victory of justice?" "Things hoped for" are the things we fain would see if we could.

"Things not seen." Is there anything unseen? Have we not done with reality when we have looked the last upon the things material? We are gathered together in this building; there are real, seen things in this building, light and life; men and women. Is that all? The man of the world says, "That

is all you can prove." Faith, according to this writer, proves the unseen thing, not the unseen things that are distant, but that are near. What are the things that faith claims to prove? For the moment, I will not say faith has proved them. What are the things faith claims to prove? God, the spirit world, the hidden forces; angels sweeping up the mountain side that the prophet saw and his servant did not see, the angel ministers watching in Gethsemane, which Jesus saw and the disciples did not see. You say these are the uncertain things which the present age doubts, the unseen things. So much for our phrases. "Things hoped for"; the realization of ideals, the ultimate victory of good, compensation, the even balance and justice; the building of the city of God and the triumph of righteousness. "Things not seen." Oh, if there only were a God, if only there were spiritual forces as well as material forces, if only the dreams of these men of old were true and the mountain flamed with light and angelic hosts; if only these things were real, then we should be quite sure that our dreams would be realized. Fail to believe in things unseen and hope dies, the song is silent, the fight ends, and the work is abandoned. Let the dust of the highway be everything, and the troops will weary upon the march and the territory will never be possessed. Let humanity come to the conclusion that the life of bread and raiment and dust is everything, and thereby is signed the death warrant of all high ideals and aspirations, and of everything noble. There is no assurance of things hoped for unless there be the proving of things unseen.

The writer of this letter declares that "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen."

It is necessary that we take time to understand what this man meant when he wrote that word "faith." This letter to the Hebrews is peculiarly the letter of faith. It is a letter which supremely warns men lest they apostasize from faith in the unseen. From beginning to end, without waiting to turn to actual passages, sin is synonymous with unbelief; the sin that is in good standing around, that is, the sin that is popular, the sin that men never count vulgar, but which is so insidious that it weakens the nerve and dims the vision, and ends the possibility of strife, is unbelief. The master principle of victory is that of faith, the opposite of unbelief. This eleventh chapter, of which my text is but an introductory, explanatory word, deals with that whole subject. In this chapter, the writer makes pass before us the men of the ancient economy who wrought wonders, won victories, and made contributions toward the final consummation, and it was always by faith that they did these things. It is the story of faith.

What is faith? Faith is not merely intellectual conviction of a truth. Faith is more than intellectual conviction of a truth. Let me turn to one or two words here. In the third chapter of this letter, verses twelve to fourteen—

Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.

Confidence is the word that I want you to remember there. Store that word in your mind.

Pass on to the nineteenth verse, and in close association with it read the eleventh verse of chapter four. "We see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience."

Store in your mind the word disobedience. Turn on to chapter six and the twelfth verse—"Be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

From this passage we will store in our memory the thought, not sluggish but patient.

In chapter ten, verse twenty-two—"Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water."

The phrase I ask you to store in your memory hence is, "with a true heart."

That is a somewhat wearisome business; but very important, for I hold that it is far more important for us to catch the real significance of the word, according to the mind of the man who wrote it, than that we should speculate about it. In the reading of those verses, my hope is that some of you, my young friends particularly, will go back to read this letter through again and find what faith is. For the purpose of our present study let us observe that faith is not only intellectual conviction; it is that confidence reposed in a statement which produces obedience. I am not sure that faith is always perfect certainty. I am not sure that there may not be living faith which is not intellectual certainty. Faith is that which in the presence of a great statement, puts confidence in it, obeys its suggestiveness, risks something, ventures something upon the declaration in order to discover whether the declaration be true or not. I am growingly convinced that there may be living faith which is not based upon absolute intellectual certainty. I am inclined increasingly to say to men, "You will come to intellectual certainty by the exercise of faith." That is one of the values of my text. Faith is the proving of unseen things. That is the way whereby men find out whether there be a God, whether there be a spiritual world, whether there are forces other than the material. The declaration is made of the existence of God. The declaration is made as to the reality of the spiritual. The declaration is made that there are forces other than those of dust. You say, "I am not sure, my intellect is not entirely convinced; yet I will exercise faith, I will put confidence in the declaration, obey its suggestion; and I will do it with patience and diligence and a true heart. If I do that, and there is no answer, I shall have the right to deny the existence of the unseen and banish the hope of ultimate realization." I have no right to begin by denying the existence of the unseen and turning from the hope of the future, on the supposition that they are not. Faith is a risk, a venture, an adventure. That is the word, adventure. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees. What was he doing? Making the great adventure. If there had been newspapers in Ur of the Chaldees, I can imagine the leading article on the morning after he had left—"We regret that our respected fellow-citizen has imagined!" It was a great adventure of faith, and faith was vindicated. What this letter calls men to is the proving of the great declarations of the unseen by stepping out in obedience to what these declarations demand, in order to discover. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." Whereas that great word may have many applications—and I have heard many applications made of it, more or less correct—take its first significance. Christ was being criticized, men were denying the authority of His teaching and asking Him whence came His authority and His learning. Did He tell these men, "You must be intellectually convinced before you can be My disciple?" By no means. He said, "Do the thing I tell you, and in the doing of it find out whether it is true or not." This is the perpetual challenge that faces man, and faith is the great adventure. Might I not illustrate it on lower levels? Has anything ever been done in this world save upon the principle of adventure? Would the New World ever have been discovered if there had not been one man fanatical enough to sail and sail until he

found it? "Oh," but you say, "it was there." If it had not been there, he could only prove it was not there by the same action. "Unseen things? Oh, they are not there." How do you know? You cannot deny until you have made the great adventure to discover. The testimony of the centuries is that the man who does make the adventure always discovers the unseen things.

When the writer of this letter here says that faith is the proving of things not seen, I want you to notice that he is not saying what I have been saying. He does not say that faith is the adventure. He says that faith is the victorious adventure. He declares that the man of faith demonstrates, proves the things that otherwise are absolutely uncertain. When a man will hear the declaration of the unseen and will square his life to the doctrine of the unseen, refusing to put upon his own personality the measurement of dust; when he will behave as though there were a God and eternity, and a spiritual world; that man shall come at last to certainty of God and certainty of the spiritual world. Faith is the proving of unseen things. One would like to go through this eleventh chapter not so much to tell again the ancient story, as to mark the working of the principle in the case of individual men.

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for"—the realization of ideals. Faith is perfectly certain they will be realized. Faith says, "He will perfect that which concerneth me." Faith says, He shall present us faultless before the throne of God. Faith says these things. That is assurance, that is certainty. What is it based upon? He will "perfect that which concerneth me." That is an uncertain quantity. That is taking God for granted. That is the venture of faith. Faith is sure. Why? Because faith has proven the unseen. Faith has discovered God, is sure of God, and when faith is sure of God, faith is sure of the throne, and sure of the spiritual world, and sure of the reality of the things that lie beyond the material.

How am I to prove this to you? I cannot prove it to you. You must prove it for yourselves. While you challenge me to prove to you the reality of the unseen, let me give you a challenge in all earnestness and sincerity. You try to prove to that old woman that there is no God and see how you get on! She has never had more than the bread necessary for the day; her heart has been crushed with bereavement after bereavement; she has laid the sacred dust of loved ones in the grave until she is quite alone. Go to see her one day. Do you not know her? I will introduce you. She is in London. You will find her in every village. Go into her cottage. She will soon talk to you about the loved ones gone, and then suddenly with a light in her eyes that never was on land or sea, she will say, "I shall soon be with them. They will not return to me, but I shall go to them." "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Prove to her that she is wrong! You will not attempt it. You think she is wrong. You have no right to think so, until you have made her adventure, until you also have acted along the same line and have found out by that action of faith whether these things are so or not.

Mark the inter-action between these two statements. The proving of things not seen "is the assurance of things hoped for." Look at verse ten, "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." The assurance of the city resulted from the proving of things not seen. You say, This man was very foolish to leave a certain city for an uncertain city, to leave Ur of the Chaldees for some city never seen. Oh, but he was sure of the city. What made him sure? God. Let faith find God and faith sings the song of the city, and comes into fellowship with the future. That figure of the city runs all through the Bible until you get the figure of John in

Patmos. He saw a city. Why was he sure of the city? Because he knew God. Why was his vision more detailed and more beautiful and wonderful than that of any other man? Because he had leaned his head upon the bosom of the Son of God incarnate, and had had fellowship with the Father through the Son. His song of the city was a song of the assurance of faith resulting from the proving of the things unseen. The proving of the unseen realities is the assurance of realized ideals. The proving of the unseen God is the assurance of the triumphing God. The proving of the unseen order is the assurance of ultimate compensation for all the strain and stress and sorrow. The proving of the unseen measures and weights is the assurance of the final victory of justice. Take away from me my certainty of God and of the unseen order and of the underlying justice, then I have no hope for the world. My hopes are not in parliaments, or in policies—and how much there is to shake a man if he put his hope there! London, Babylon, center of the world, celebrates the induction of its chief officer with military display and an animal feast that ought to shock civilization. When in the midst of London's poor, we can spend thousands of pounds on a feast such as that, I have no hope when I look at man. Underneath are the forces of eternity. The atmosphere of London is the fire of the ever-present God. The unseen things, men blunder through and never know them. God is not dethroned. He will build His city and bring in His triumph. Faith adventuring in obedience to the conception of the spiritual becomes certain of the spiritual and sings a song of hope on the darkest day that ever dawns.

Mark briefly in a closing word the effects of faith. Here again the chapter is better than anything I can imagine. The effect of faith is obedience. "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Let there be in the soul certainty of God, and faith will be obedient in circumstances of contradiction and difficulty.

Not only obedience, but endurance; "By faith he," Moses, "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible."

Endured, is the word. You say, That is an ancient story and perhaps it is not true. It is true in this house. There are men and women in this house who have done the same thing; they have forsaken Egypt, they are enduring misunderstanding, persecution. How are they doing it? "As seeing Him Who is invisible." Beyond that, the writer goes on with illustrations every one of which one would like to dwell upon. From verse thirty on, he mentions names and then deeds. We will not stay with the names, but listen to the deeds, "Subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens."

Then from the major music of that melody, the writer drops suddenly to the minor melody which has in it more of victory than all the rest.

"By faith... women received their dead by a resurrection." You say, That is not so now. I know it is so now. By faith women, the most seriously smitten in the hour of bereavement, wrap their loved

ones to their hearts and sing in triumph o'er the tomb. Faith is the victory. It is the inspiration of obedience and strength and might and endurance.

It is the spring of perpetual hope. Through rivers and seas of blood, men make their way onward toward the goal, lay down their life for lives in perpetual darkness of sin, lift their eyes ever toward the eastern sky though no streak of dawn be visible, and are full of exultation and expectation on the darkest day.

There is one other thing to say. Faith proves the unseen things not for itself only but for other men. By your faith you demonstrate the reality of the unseen to the world at large. You bring the unseen things into sight by your faith. By the victory your faith wins, you prove faith and prove the unseen things to the man of the world. By your strength in the hour of your agony, I come to believe in God more perfectly. By the magnificence of your overcoming, by the result of your faith, you demonstrate to me the reality of the things which you profess to believe. You say, God. I am not sure. But when you have ended your saying, I watch your doing; and I see that on the dark day there is light in your eye and a song on your lips, and I say, "You must be right; there is no secret for that triumph other than God." You demonstrate the unseen things by your faith. Faith brings out of your word a work, out of your creed a creation, out of your root, fruit full of beauty and sustenance; and men look on the work and believe the word, observe the creation and accept the creed, gather the fruit and are compelled to believe in the root. By your triumphs in the hour of pain and sorrow and agony, by your strength, by the victory with which you overcome in the pressing battle of life, you make men believe in the God you affirm to be the strength and sustenance of your life. By realization in personal life and conduct of victory, you prove to others the unseen things. Can I not put that in the simplest way possible? I put it so because it may help others. No man can ever persuade me not to believe in God, for this among other reasons. Had I no other reason, this for me would be sufficient to the end of my days. My father and my mother believed in God. Not because they said so did I believe in God, but because of what I saw their belief did for them. You cannot persuade me that they were mistaken. Their faith fastened upon facts, unseen, but facts, and I am trying to live as they lived, and I am demonstrating for myself the reality of the unseen.

So whether it be in the individual life, or in the life of the Church of God, or in the life of the world, faith is the victory. I am inclined to end tonight perhaps on your behalf, but certainly on my own, by saying to the Presence, the unseen Presence, in view of all the battle and all the sorrow and all the difficulties, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

Hebrews 11:6. The Conditions Of Coming To God.

Hebrews 11:6.

The Conditions Of Coming To God.

He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

Hebrews 11:6

The text is part of a verse which breaks in on the continuity of the chapter from which it is taken. That chapter constitutes the roll of honor of the heroes and heroines of faith. The second name on the list is Enoch, of whom it is said, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God." Then it is declared, "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." In this interpolation on the continuity of the chapter we have the one clear Biblical statement for the necessity of perpetual and fundamental Biblical assumptions. Everywhere the Bible assumes the two things that here it is declared must be believed if man is to come to God. The Biblical literature from its first majestic sentence, "In the beginning God created," to its very last sentence, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints," assumes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him. For these things it never argues. Of the men whom it presents to us, whether they be the great historical figures of the old covenant or the new, whether they be lawgivers, or prophets, or psalmists, none argues for the existence of God, none ever attempts to prove that He is a rewarder of such as seek after Him. This is supremely, finally true in the case of the one supernal figure, Jesus. He never argued for the existence of God. He never argued for the truth that God is available to souls that seek after Him. These Biblical writers argued for the love of God, for the justice of God, for the care of God; and some of them, in the midst of agony, questioned the love of God, questioned the justice of God, questioned the care of God; but none of them argued for Him, or for His availability to certain souls in certain conditions. The man who denies the existence of God is almost contemptuously dismissed, "The fool saith in his heart, There is no God." In my text, then, we are face to face with fundamental things.

Let us consider, first, the central idea suggested, that of coming to God; second, the declared condition in its twofold application; and, finally, the involved teaching which may be of profit to our own hearts today and always.

First, then, the central idea of coming to God. Simply add inclusively the thought is of approach to God, drawing near to God, or of putting oneself into communication with God. In expression and in experience the thought is of speaking to God in praise and prayer and of hearing God speak. Of these two exercises of the soul in addressing God, prayer is the first in experience, but praise is the higher. I believe that praise may become so profound and so continuous that there is hardly

any room left for prayer. But the experience of the soul in speaking to God is, first, of prayer, then of praise. In experience and expression, drawing near to God is not only speaking to Him, whether in prayer or praise, it is hearing God speak. That is the more difficult exercise, conditioned in silence and experienced in the reception of what God has to say. Of these, the second, the reception of what God has to say to the soul, is assured to all those who keep silence before Him. But again I say it is far harder to be silent before God than to speak to God. This is one of the lost arts of the Christian Church and of the Christian soul. We have almost forgotten how to listen for God. That is the reason why we so seldom hear Him speak. I would urge all young Christian people, at whatever cost—however busy the days with pressing duties, however important it be that you do something for God—not to fail to make time in which to cease praising and praying in order to cultivate the silence of the soul. That is the condition to which God addresses Himself directly and immediately. These are the highest aspects of the expression and experience of coming to God. Light on the conception comes to us from the context. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him: for he that cometh unto God must believe that He is." Immediately in connection with the great declaration we have this illustration: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." That is coming to God. "Enoch walked with God" in a godless age. Enoch was the seventh from Adam through Seth. The seventh from Adam through Cain was Lamech. Lamech and his sons were the originators of the arts and sciences, and of the enfranchisement of women. It was a wonderfully successful age, but godless. One simple soul walked with God in the godless age. That was coming to God. It involves leaving a good deal, cutting oneself off from many things; it means being out of date, peculiar, behind the times! Enoch walked with God in a godless age. With what result? God took him, took him out of the godless age while he was still in it, became his boon companion, making up for the loss of all such friendships, satisfying the inner cry of his soul, though all other things were denied him. At last God took him away from the age by translation, so that men sought for the strange, peculiar character who had been separated from all the progress of the age, and they found him not, for God had translated him. What was the deep secret of it all? Enoch believed "that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Answering his belief, he found God, he gained the reward; he marched with God through the weary years, and at last walked out into light and life forevermore. That is coming to God.

What, then, is the condition of coming to God? I pray you note the simplicity of the statement, and its sublimity. We "must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder." Nothing can be simpler in statement, nothing more sublime in conception; for to believe that God is, and to believe that God is a rewarder, is to have all life conditioned by that belief, to see everything personal, relative, social, national, racial, set in the light thereof. To believe that God is, and that God is a rewarder, is to have solved the riddle of the universe, and then to march along the line of the solution, knowing that presently every tangled web will be made straight, all the mists will melt, and the discords of the straining and the tension will merge into the last and final harmonies of perfect order and perfect music. It is so simple that a little child will understand it, and agree that no one will come to a person he does not believe exists, no one will come to a person he does not believe will receive him and reward him. It is quite simple; and yet fundamentally, finally sublime.

The inclusive condition is to have faith, Faith is infinitely more than intellectual conviction. Faith is intellectual conviction expressing itself in volitional obedience. To me, trust is a greater word than faith. Faith is belief, conviction; trust puts conviction into practice. There is a chair, I have faith in it; when I sit on it I trust it! I have an intellectual conviction that the chair will bear me, I could argue it, demonstrate it, lecture on it: that is faith; but when I sit on it I am trusting it. That is the faith that is demanded of men who come to God: not merely intellectual conviction, but abandonment of the whole life to the truth of which the soul is convinced—that is faith.

First, we must believe that God is. I have said in my introduction that it is never argued for in the Bible. I will stand by that declaration. Therefore, is it necessary, or wise, or will I do any good if I argue for it, seeing that the Bible never argues for it? Yes, I think it may be well to discover the reasons of our faith, for the faith demanded of us is not blind, foolish credulity. Therefore we will inquire if there be any grounds for this great assumption of the Bible.

I first declare that belief in the existence of God is the most natural activity of the human soul. Effort is required to disbelieve rather than to believe. Wherever you find a person who does not believe that God is you have a person who has come to that condition of mind as the result of effort. I am not speaking disrespectfully of such; they may be honest; the disbelief may be the outcome of agony, but it is the outcome of effort. The human soul naturally believes in God, in the fact that He is. Is there anything more beautiful or wonderful than the story of Helen Keller? She was blind, dumb, deaf from birth, a soul imprisoned; yet with infinite, beautiful patience another soul took time to communicate with that imprisoned soul. Without the aid of eyes, or ear, or tongue, but with the touch of tenderness and delicacy of sensation, Miss Sullivan at last found Helen Keller's beautiful soul. In the process of that training, Bishop Phillips Brooks was asked to see her, and communicate to her the idea of God. With patience the great Bishop gave himself to the business. After a long while Helen Keller responded. She said to the Bishop, "Oh, I know perfectly well what you mean; I have always known Him; but I did not know what you called Him." That is a rare illustration, but by reason of its rarity the more powerful; a soul shut up in prison always knew God. It is perfectly natural to believe in God. Every child believes in God, unless you in your unutterable folly have told the child there is no God; and even then it does not believe you at first. Every child believes in God. All simple souls believe in Him. I say it is the natural attitude of the human soul.

If you are not for the moment prepared to accept that, or it may be that in your struggle after truth you have got away from that, then there are lines of proof that it would be well for you to consider. I should be inclined to ask a man who told me he did not believe in God first to appeal to his imagination. I wonder how many of you young people have read Paley's Natural Theology. You young men, lay preachers, have you read it? I find no exercise more helpful when I am preparing a sermon than to get down some old book and read it again. I have been all through Paley's Natural Theology getting ready for this sermon. It was written in 1802, and contains the argument from design, which I am asked to believe is out of date. It may be out of date, but it has never been answered or refuted. The first argument, on which he bases all the rest, is the argument of the watch. Paley says that if walking across the moorland his foot struck against a stone, and he should inquire whence it came, it is possible that he might say, That has been there forever and forever, and not be able to demonstrate the absurdity of the reply. If, instead of a stone, he found a watch there, it would be impossible to say that it had been there forever and ever. The watch

argues a watchmaker. That has never been answered; it has been laughed at, counted out of date: today I do not know that there is a theological college or seminary in the world where it is studied; but it has not been refuted. I appeal, then, to my imagination. The fact that watches are improved and that the skilful watchmaker would laugh at the old-fashioned mechanism does not disprove the argument; the more complex the mechanism, the more secure is the argument for the man behind the mechanism. Since that book was written what strides we have made in our understanding of the universe! It has been discovered to us to be far more complicated, mystical, marvelous than our fathers ever suspected; but that does not invalidate the argument from design; rather this additional knowledge accentuates the argument and makes it powerful. If there can be no watch without a maker and a mind, will your imagination allow you to be satisfied to believe that the universe so rhythmic, so wonderful, so beauteous in its processes, so regular in its irregularities, so irregular in its regularities, is a mere accident, a creation without intelligence, an order without arrangement? Take a twig from an apple tree and look at it; the leaves are set in spirals, and number five is always exactly above number one. Why is number five above number one? I do not know, I have no idea; but it proves regularity, order, design. My apple trees, with their spiral blossoming, make it impossible for me to believe that there is no God. An odd number of rows will not be found in any single ear of corn, among all the multiplied millions. I do not think these things are accidents. If I try to think of creation without intelligence, of order without arrangement, of man, the most marvelous thing in all the universe, without the God Who thought him, created him, my imagination is in revolt. Consequently, my appeal to imagination becomes an appeal to reason. I declare that for myself it is far easier to believe that God is than to believe that He is not.

I make my appeal finally to the manifestation of God which He has made of Himself in human history in a Man named Jesus, Who claimed to be one with the hidden God, Whose influence through two millenniums has been to make men believe in the one hidden God, Whose most glorious victories in the two millenniums have been the victories of the growing beauty of man's conception of the God Whom He claimed to reveal. We cannot decide whether God is until we have dealt with Jesus of Nazareth, have listened to His claims, and have begun to consider the influence He has exerted. Countless millions of souls have walked with God because they have trusted in Jesus, have found infinite comfort in the Divine compassion because they have dared to follow the lonely Galilean peasant; have felt the force, the energy of God sustaining them in conflict and in suffering because they have loved Jesus. We must remember also that the great conception men have of God, even though they may be denying Jesus His Deity, has nevertheless come to the world as the result of His presence therein and His teaching of the sons of men.

But there must be more than believing that God is. There must be belief "that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." The general idea is that this means that man must believe in the moral government of God. Of course, that is involved. It is impossible to believe that God has abandoned the highest results of His creative power, man, and the moral element in man. It is impossible to believe that God rolls the seasons round, decks the sod with beauty, clothes the trees with verdure, maintains the equilibrium of all things in the great process of His order, and has nothing to do with man. It is impossible to believe that God cares for man on the physical side of his being and nothing for his moral nature. All that is involved, but that is not the declaration of the text. The declaration is of the availability of God to certain souls on certain conditions. Those souls and

conditions are revealed in the words rendered in the Revised Version, "them that seek after Him," and in the Authorized Version, "such as diligently seek Him." I think the Revised Version has lost something by omitting the word "diligently." As a matter of fact, there is but one word in the Greek, but it is a strong word, and we need something more than the ordinary word "seek" to convey its meaning. The word means to investigate, to crave, to demand. God is a rewarder of such as investigate, crave, demand Him; or, in the simpler words of Jesus, such as ask, seek, knock. The attitude of soul described is persistent determination to approach God. God is not found of men who indulge in dilettante fooling. When the soul feels its need, when the soul gropes in the night, and, knocking, inquires, then God becomes a rewarder, a Payer of wages—that is the word, a Remunerator, one who gives what is demanded, pays over what is asked. God comes to the soul that comes to Him.

What proofs have we that God is a rewarder of them that seek after Him? There are hours in which the soul seems unable to find God. Said Eliphaz to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." Said the man in his agony in reply, "O that I knew where I might find Him.... Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, when He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." The human soul knows that experience; but let us never forget that Job did find Him. Through the very process in which he thought he could not find God Job was preparing himself to find Him. By the strenuousness of his endeavor, by the stress of his agony, by the strong crying of his soul after God, he was preparing for the coming of God. The very pain and suffering and tribulation and unrest which seem to prove that God cannot be found may be the exercise of soul through which He will be found.

I find in the nature of man the first proof that God may be found. Man is made to ask, to seek, to knock. In her beautiful book, *Laddie*, Mrs. Gene Stratton Porter makes one of her characters say of man that he is a praying animal. Though he never prays, if he be in sudden peril of shipwreck, fire, or death, he will pray. Man has a natural capacity for prayer, and there is no half measure in this universe. Has that bird a wing? Then there is air in which to poise it. Has that fish a fin? Then there is water in which to use it. Does your soul go out in prayer? Then there is a God to pray to. Who will answer prayer.

Another proof that God gives Himself to such as seek Him is to be found in the experience of men. If testimony is to be accepted as evidence on any subject, why not on this? Why do men rule out the testimony of souls who declare that they have prayed and have been answered. It is unscientific to rule out such testimony. There are tens of thousands who know what it is to pray and to be answered, to ask and to have, to seek and to find, to knock and to see the door swing open. Their testimony is not merely the testimony of their avowal. It is also the testimony of their lives, transfigured by their belief, and made beautiful, pure, compassionate, glorious.

The final proof is the testimony of the Man of Nazareth, Who, whatever doubts we may have concerning the meaning of some of the things He said, has left no room for doubt that He believed, and intended men to believe, that God is available to souls, will answer them, will reward them, will come to them in grace, in succor, in strength, in love, in help—when they seek after Him.

To believe that God is, is to believe in One Who knows all, is infinitely wise, is always close at hand, is all powerful, and is love. If that be true, then how easy it is to come to God. There is

nothing to explain when you come, He knows it all. There is no journey to take to reach Him:

Closer is He than breathing,

Nearer than hands and feet.

Effort is unnecessary; in silence, and in the quietness of the soul that has ceased its struggling God makes Himself known. "Perfect love casteth out fear."

To believe that God is a rewarder is to believe, first, that He is interested in me. I can think of Him as interested in the universe, but to learn the corollary of that, that nothing is too small for His attention is the wonderful thing. God is great not only in the infinitude of immensity, but in the exactitude of littleness. Consequently, He is interested in me, in what I wear, in what I eat, in where I live, in my amusements. Think how easy it is to come to Him; no persuasion is necessary. That whole conception of prayer that declares we must persuade God is erroneous. Jesus gave us the figure of the importunate widow to prove that we need not be importunate. Importunity was necessary in the case of the unjust judge; it is not necessary in the case of God. Refusal is not possible in the heart of love, except that love will refuse what would harm us.

Nevertheless, the text reveals the need of urgency. The belief necessary involves conviction of the necessity for demand, craving, seeking. Such is the only condition to which God can give Himself.

Finally, do not let us forget the opening declaration of the letter from which the text is taken: "God hath spoken... unto us by His Son... the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." Christ stands to me in the place of God, and He is God. So that when I would come to God I come to Christ, the Man of my humanity, so that this frail imagination of mine may go out to Him apprehendingly. As I do so, I find I have included in the grasp of my comprehension the vastness of God and eternity. I come to God because I believe that He is, having seen Him in Christ; because I believe that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him, having seen Christ receive publicans and sinners, and heard Him say to them as they thronged to Him, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Believing these things I come to Him, and He comes to me, and we walk and talk together.

Hebrews 11:10. Christian Citizenship: The Building Of The City.

Hebrews 11:10.

Christian Citizenship: The Building Of The City.

The city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Hebrews 11:10

This is now the third Sunday evening that we have turned to the subject of Christian citizenship.

Speaking on the first evening from the words occurring in this same letter, "We have not here an abiding city," we considered the reason why men of faith have always had to make that affirmation; and have to make it still. The cities of men are cities in which the principle of selfishness is the master principle; and the law of life is that of the survival of the strongest; and the character of the citizens is to a large extent that of sordidness. The pilgrims of faith are those who have entered into life by self-death; who believe not only in the survival of the fittest—in that—but also in the possibility of the salvation of the most unfit; and whose law of life is that of sacrifice. Therefore, such can find no abiding city in the world.

We then considered the true attitude of the pilgrims of faith toward the cities of men. While it is true that "we have not here an abiding city," this also ought to be true concerning us, "We seek after the city which is to come"; not by gazing at the stars and waiting for the coming of a city; not by seclusion from the ordinary and everyday life of these cities of men; but by first seeing the vision of the ultimate purpose of God, and then by the response of life to all that vision means, the realization within the individual experience of the principles of the Divine Kingdom; and finally by earnest, actual, persistent effort in harmony with these things.

Now all this has seemed to be most excellent; but we are constrained to say: What of the chaos and misery in the midst of which we live? What of the sad habit of the Christian Church of withdrawing itself from the great centers of the life of the city? Or, what—and this is perhaps the question which overwhelms us most often—after all can be the value of our small contribution toward the building of the city of God and the bringing in of His Kingdom?

The answer to all these suggestions is contained within the compass of our text, "The city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." We shall surely be depressed and overwhelmed unless we learn the lesson which is crystallized into this declaration of the writer of this letter, that the Builder and Maker of the city is God. If that fact do but take possession of our hearts then we shall be content to live out our little day in the midst of the scaffolding, seeming to see very little of the beauty of the city, yet knowing that the plan is in His mind, He is the Architect; that the power is in Himself, He is the Framer; and that, therefore, at last the city must be built.

Let us remember as we come to this consideration, that the material city is but the shell containing the city itself. As today we speak of a school and think of the building, and yet know that the

building is not the school; as today we speak of a club, and look upon the building, but know that the club is not the building; or finally as today we speak of a church and think of the building in which we gather, but know that the church is not the building; so let us remember when we speak of the city, we think, and properly think, of an actual material city, full of glory and beauty, built in the ultimate economy of God; but the glory and beauty of the material will be the outcome of that life which constitutes the city. The remembrance of that at the very beginning of our meditation will enable us to see that things which seem to us full of discouragement, may after all prove to be methods of God, and the very slowness over which we lament in our foolishness is assuredly part of the process necessary for the creation of a life so strong and true and abiding that at last the material city will result.

Let us glance at "The city which hath the foundations," as it was revealed to the Seer of the Galilean Lake in the Isle of Patmos. If you ask me if I really believe that some day, somehow, out of the mystic distance of heaven, there will descend to this earth an actual city, I reply that I am not Sadducean enough to think that only the things I can see and handle today are the real and final things. Whether that be so or not, for today, in the midst of the spiritual conflict, we are to take this vision and find in it spiritual elements which are of abiding value; and therefore, I shall for the sake of brevity pass by the descriptions of the city as to material construction, all of which are valuable and I think full of suggestion. I want first to set that vision in relation to the whole movement of the Book. The city according to the story of that Book is not heaven. Neither is the city to be built in the millennium, but beyond it. I am particularly anxious not to enter into controversy with your mental convictions. The writer may have been mistaken. I am only reminding you of what he wrote. There are no detailed pictures of the millennium in this Book. There are descriptions of events, full of awe and sublime majesty and terrible judgment, which usher in the millennial reign; but the millennium itself is dismissed in this Book in three or four verses in the chapter preceding that in which we have the story of the city. At the close of the millennium John says that the devil will be loosed again after having been chained for a thousand years. Another period of swift judgment will then fall upon the earth; after which, the great white throne and final assize, full of awful majesty.

Beyond all that, as to order, will come the city of God. This city will not be built immediately. The ultimate victory is postponed; not that God has abandoned His work, He is the Architect, the Framers, and He is building; but the victory is not yet. I shall be able to do my day's work better, however, if I can see something of the ultimate victory; and to John was given this wonderful vision of the city that hath the foundations, flashing with the splendor of the precious stones of earth, which in their preciousness are symbols of principle suffused with passion. A city in its form pyramidal, lying upon its base foursquare; a city with walls, and those of jasper, the stone symbolic of conflict, full of beauty.

The subject of supreme interest to us as we look on, out of the midst of the conflict, is that of the conditions of its life. The government of the city is that of the ever-present God, influencing all its inhabitants. All the life of that city is worship. No temple therein; because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple; and all life has become worship, because all life is communion.

Every city, according to these Eastern figures had a burgess roll, and this city has its burgess roll. A burgess is one who inhabits a walled town, having a tenement there which is his own property. The burgesses of this city are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The

defiled of every class, such as work abominations and make a lie are excluded.

The vision of this city is that of the great Theocracy which is the true democracy. It is the vision of the true democracy which is the great Theocracy. All is of heaven; the ideal, the process, the realization. It is a city which comes out of heaven. The plan of it was not born in the brain of any man. It is a city entirely of the earth; the material is of the earth, gathered from the earth, returning to the earth. It is the city which Abraham saw but never reached. It is the city toward which all the pilgrims of faith have been looking, and in the building of which they have been co-operating with God by faith, but none of them have reached it. Abraham has not reached it yet. Moses has not entered into it yet. The great seers, and prophets, and psalmists of the past; statesmen, in the economy of God, who have seen it but have never found it. "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise." They saw the city, but they have not yet entered it. The goal toward which they ran was not their crowning in heaven, but God's crowning on earth. The city which they saw was not in a land beyond, this to which they hoped to go; but this whole earth, governed by God, from a central city, the metropolis in which God is King, and which therefore is the Theocracy, the people constituting the instrument through which in every age He makes known His will. It is therefore the final and ultimate Theocracy. All attempts to realize the Democracy apart from God will issue in the most disastrous failure; and every attempt to preach the Theocracy which forgets the Democracy, will issue in failure equally disastrous.

Of this city the Architect and Framer is God. The whole plan is in the mind of God. What that is, no man can see finally, perfectly. Some vision has been revealed from time to time to men of vision, and in the vision they have seen something of the glory. Abraham saw it; Moses saw it. Isaiah saw it. Luther saw the city of God. Cromwell saw the city of God. Mazzini saw the city of God. William Booth has seen the city of God.

To take that latest illustration; what drove General Booth into that method which some people, who are nearsighted, criticize, the method connected with the social endeavor? What made him want to care for the flotsam and jetsam of this great city of London and all the cities? What put into his heart the passionate discontent with unholy conditions of life? His vision of the city of God. All the discontent that is constructive is born of a great content with the ultimate purpose of God. To have seen this vision of the city is to be forever restless in every other city, and so "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come." The inspiring vision which has created the pilgrims and warriors and builders of faith has been the vision of the city which is in the plan of God. No man has seen it wholly. No man has been able, if he has seen it wholly, to communicate his vision to other men. The thing is too great to be finally stated. The vision is too great for two eyes to see and one mind, by symbols of pen or brush, to convey to the minds of other men. The city of God; not heaven, but the city according to the heavenly pattern; the heavenly city on earth.

Through all the processes of human history, God has been working toward this end. When Josiah Strong wrote that little book, *The New Era*, he used an illustration full of illumination as he reminded us of how, when Pilate wrote the superscription and had it nailed to the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he wrote other and better than he knew. That, which so far as Pilate was concerned, was only a method of annoying the priests, was the writing of God, and the method was of God. The superscription, "King of the Jews," was written in three languages, the Roman, the Hebrew, and the Greek. This, so far as Pilate intended, because Roman soldiers were

there and he wanted them to read it, and Greek merchantment and travelers would be there and he wanted them also to read it, that they all might mock and laugh at the priests. There was a profound significance in the writing of that superscription in the three great languages of the hour, the languages of the three peoples most powerful in the affairs of men. Hebrew was the language of spiritual religion. Greek was the language of intellectual strength. Latin was the language of imperial empire.

God was building by all those great world powers. God was at work, in the midst of the Hebrew religion, in the midst of Greek culture, and at the heart of Roman power. Through all these, there were operative in the world forces making possible the mission and mastery of Christ. Not idly does Scripture declare that He came in the fulness of times. Let me say a thing that I hesitate to say in this way, lest there should seem to lurk in it something of irreverence, but yet let me say it: Had He come sooner He would have come too soon; had He come later He would have come too late. He came when the Hebrew nation had prepared in the history of the world the great spiritual atmosphere resulting from the monotheistic doctrine of God. The history of that people is a history of persistent sin against God. Oh the greyness of it all. But there is wonderful sunshine in it too. My spirit has been elated in many an hour of study as I have seen the overruling of God, the chaos coming to cosmos; God forevermore making the wrath of men to praise Him, and restraining the remainder. However much the Hebrew nation failed, after the captivity they never again set up an idol. They went back to their land a broken, poor, miserable remnant only, under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; with no king, no prophet, no priest; but a people who had learned the lesson with which they started, "Hear O Israel Jehovah thy God is one." When that master spiritual truth was embodied in the world's history, the Christ came. God was building.

Or, if we turn to the Greek outlook, and think of the wonderful history of Greek culture and refinement, that history of intellectual giants which made it possible to speak of Athens as the fairest shrine of pagan humanity; if there be no other thing to be said, let this at least be said, the Greek had provided, for that time, a language which was of universal use, in some dialect of which, the story of the Christ could be written, in some dialect of which, the messengers of the Cross could preach through all the known world and be understood. God was building. Rome was the center of imperial power, and if you want to know the value of it, read again the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters and keep your eye on Paul; the restlessness with which he wanted to get to Rome, the eagerness with which he looked toward it, the haste which made him unable to wait, and compelled him to sit down and write the Roman letter. What was it that made Paul want to reach Rome? It was not the restlessness of the tourist. It was the passion of the missionary. He knew that from Rome, the strategic center of the world, there were roads leading out to all the known world along which her legions traveled; and he saw that they ought to be captured for the traveling of the legions of the Cross. All the forces contributed to prepare the way for His coming in the fulness of the times. God was building.

But there was the preparation not only of what these forces contributed; there was the preparation of their failure. Hebraism, when He came, was degenerate; the home of ritualism and hypocrisy; and the spiritual ideal was not enough to create spiritual religion. By the failure of the past the way was prepared for His coming. The history of Greek intellectualism had become the history of Greek bestiality. When Paul came to Athens, he found Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who knew nothing of Epicurus or the original Stoics; men who had degraded their philosophies. Then

He came, when the way was prepared for Him by this failure; and His evangel was presently published by the Hellenist-Hebrew Paul, and redeemed all that was best in Greek strength. Rome had failed; voluptuousness and brutality were the two facts of her government. By that failure the way was made for the building of the new empire, for the coming in of the Kingdom, for the proclamation of the new evangel. He came, and coming found the past had prepared for Him, the failure had created His opportunity; and in Him, all the essential forces of these three world powers were taken hold of, and their opportunity was created anew. The Spiritual religion; the opportunity for intellectualism; the method of true government, making for abiding strength, all came through Him. These things were the things after which men had groped, and by so doing had made way for His coming, and the imparting of His power. In that groping they had failed, and had made necessary the coming of Another; and He came, not only for the salvation of individual men; let us never make that mistake, for that He came, oh yes, but for more, to take hold of the essential world forces and to compel them to cooperate with the enterprises of God. So God was building, and has ever been building.

There is a great work waiting to be done among our young people. I want someone to write the history of England as Isaiah reveals the history of Judah. I do not think it would be popular in England, but it needs writing; the history of how God has been at work and is at work still, the history of the fact that amid all the chaos and break-up and disruption God is building; a history of the fact that through the centuries and today God is at work.

Ah, Habakkuk, thy trouble has been our trouble. What is God doing? I will get up to the watch tower and see. And he climbed, and God said to him, I am at work, but if I told you what I am doing you would not believe Me. I am bringing the Chaldeans to do My work. And Habakkuk was more amazed than ever; the Chaldeans are not in the covenant, the Chaldeans are people outside the privilege of the Divine government. How can God use the Chaldeans? Once again, I will away to the watch tower. What was the end of his watching? The great psalm, the psalm of a great triumph, a psalm in which a man could say amid the break-up and disruption:—

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail.

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Whose Builder and Maker is God.

This is a dark day, you tell me. There are disappointing things abroad, heartbreaking things abroad; Missionary Societies languishing for lack of funds, indifference spreading over the Christian Church. Away with you; God is building! That is the highest of vision, and if you deny it

me, then I will bow my head and die for very heartbreak. But if you will grant it me, I will build, and fight, and sing, because the city will be built, and God's victory will be won.

There are abundant proofs of the tending of humanity toward that ultimate city of God. Do not be at all alarmed at that statement. Some people are very much alarmed. Do you not think the world is getting worse? I am asked. Certainly! But do you not think it is getting better? I know it is! I mean that in all seriousness. Wheat and darnel, "Let both grow together until the harvest." Some men are always looking at the darnel and they say the world is getting worse. Some men see only the wheat and they say the world is getting better. The man who sees the whole field of the world, sees the darnel and the wheat, he sees that evil is becoming more evil and growing into clearer manifestation in all its dastardly devilishness; but he sees that the world is being prepared for the coming of the King. I affirm that there are abundant proofs of the tending of humanity toward the city of God. Compare the world when Christ came with the world today. Then the nations were in thralldom, class in bondage to class. Have you ever thought of this very remarkable statement in the gospel story. "There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be numbered, and it is declared that every man went up to Jerusalem." I do not know whether that impresses you, but to me it is an amazing thing. If they want to number us in this country, they have to come to us; we would not think of going up to report ourselves to be numbered. It is a very slight thing, but it is a revelation of the despotism that existed in those days, but which is gone in the countries of the world influenced by Christianity, and gone forever. Spiritual freedom is becoming civic liberty. Divine Fatherhood is whispering the story of human brotherhood. Laws are being made, or men are attempting to discover laws, for the ennoblement of the people. Care for the helpless is a new element in human history.

If you point to the evil that abounds, and tell me of the breakdown of these very principles to which I have been referring, then I tell you that as it was, so shall it be again. Not only the work of the great Hebrew, Roman and Greek people prepared for Christ; but their failure also prepared for Him. The very fact that failure is everywhere today is to me a revelation of the necessity for some new work of God in the world; and the corroboration of the great prophecies of Scripture, which declare that by another crisis, an advent in the history of humanity, He will at last establish His Kingdom.

Not consciously, any more than Greece or Rome of old did consciously prepare for His coming, but surely all the forces are preparing for that Advent.

"God's in His heaven," therefore ultimately, finally, "All's right with the world." Failure itself shall prepare the way for the coming triumph. He will again purge His floor and gather the wheat into His garner and burn the chaff. The city will be built, the victory won, God vindicated.

I looked; aside the dust-cloud rolled—

The Waster seemed the Builder too;

Upspringing from the ruined old I saw the new.

Take heart! The Waster builds again—

A charmed life old goodness hath;

The tares may perish—but the grain

Is not for death.

God works in all things; all obey

His first propulsion from the night

Wake thou and watch!

The world is gray with morning light!

Hebrews 12:1-2. The Cities Of Men And The City Of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2.

The Cities Of Men And The City Of God.

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

There is an irresistible charm about this passage of Scripture. The suggestions that lie within its compass appeal to us. The mystery of the cloud of witnesses; the strenuous reality of the description of the present experience of the saints under the figure of a race; and, finally, the lonely splendor of the Lord of Faith. It seems a ruthless thing to dissect and analyze a passage so full of beauty as this passage undoubtedly is; and yet this is in part what I propose to do, and that for a very simple reason—that it seems to me that a partial interpretation has robbed it of much of its spacious and far-reaching value. A very common and popular interpretation of the passage is that the writer of the letter is here describing the individual race of a Christian soul through this world toward the mystic and mysterious heaven that lies beyond it; that as the runner presses along his way he is watched in his running by great companies of those who have gone before; and that, in order to win his individual crowning, he is urged to lay aside weights and the sin that doth so easily beset. That interpretation I have referred to as being partial; I am inclined to use a much stronger word, and to say that it is wholly and absolutely inaccurate. I know something of the strenuousness of the individual race. I believe with all my soul in the ultimate glory of the heaven that lies beyond our vision. I am perfectly certain that it is necessary, in order to run that individual race, that there should be the laying aside of weights and of the easily besetting sin; but if the passage be taken, as it ought to be taken, in its contextual relationship, we shall see that the argument is wider in application.

The first word of the passage drives us in honesty to that which has preceded it. A passage commencing with the word "therefore" must of necessity be an appeal based upon an argument already advanced. The argument of this passage lies in all that has preceded it. Let us refresh our minds by passing over the content. The letter opens with a thunderclap. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." The writer of the letter takes two things for granted—God, and God's revelation of Himself to man. He then immediately begins the specific work of his letter. He is most evidently writing to those whose outlook has been narrow. The Hebrew people had come to think of themselves as the elect people of God, and imagined in their own unutterable narrowness and folly that God had forgotten or neglected the other nations of the earth. When

members of this nation passed from Judaism into Christianity, all the things that ratified them in their ancient convictions were broken down and swept away. They believed that their economy had been administered by angels; that their leaders had been Moses, who led them out of slavery, and Joshua, who led them into the land; that their system of priesthood and religion was lonely and final.

And now mark the method of the writer. He shows them how in Christ are realized the underlying principles which they have so largely lost sight of; and that all the things which they would make their own peculiar possession are fulfilled by Christ. Ministry by angels, he does not deny; but the Son is above the angels, and the new economy means the ministration of the Son. Led out by Moses, he does not deny; but Moses led out, and could not lead in. The new leader leads out and leads in. Led in by Joshua, he agrees; but Joshua, having led them in, could not give them rest. The new Leader leads them in, and, Himself entering into rest, makes rest possible to all who trust in Him. Have they imagined the priesthood was peculiar to them? Let them remember that Melchisedek was not of their tribe or nation, and yet was a priest of God; and the last priest of humanity was after the pattern of Melchisedek, and in His great Priesthood all other priesthoods are forever swept away. So he leads them to see that in the Christ all the things intended in the creation of their national life are realized. But he declares that these things are fulfilled for the sake of the whole world; and gradually, as the argument proceeds, in stately measure and in unanswerable logic, the horizon is put further back, the outlook becomes more spacious, and the light becomes more glorious.

Finally, approaching the appeal on the basis of the teaching, he leads his readers through that wonderful gallery of the heroes and heroines of the past, and comes to the words of my text.

This appeal is that of a master of method. Appeal is made to the whole man. First to the intellect: "Seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." At the center, to the will: "Let us lay aside"—"let us run." Finally, with a master touch, to the emotion at its highest: "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

I propose this evening to bring you especially to the central appeal. Let all the language of appeal to the intellect, and the tender language of appeal to the emotion—both of which we will return to in time—be out of sight. What is it the writer says? Brethren, he says a very simple thing, and this is it: "Let us run the race." What race? The burden of my message tonight is an answer to that inquiry.

In speaking of Abraham, he has declared: "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Of the others he declared: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth..." "God is not ashamed of them to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city..." "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

Thus it is evident that the race which he urges upon those to whom he writes is not a race toward a heaven out of sight, but a race toward a city. Now let me stand away a little from the letter to the

Hebrews and take the whole Bible as an illustration. My Bible opens in a garden, but it closes in a city. To me that fact is suggestive. A city expresses the result of a nation's dealing with a garden. In the heart of man there is a passion for the city. It is there because it is intended that it should be there. God's ideal of man is that he should take the garden and dress it, and bring out its final and ultimate result; and the last result of the garden of man is the establishment of a kingdom, the building of a city, the accomplishment of all the larger reaches of human life. And it is for that ultimate city that the men of the past have always hoped. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and set his face toward a city, not a city to be reached beyond the grave, but a city to be built in the world; not a beatific condition of life when the pathway of dust has come to an end, but the establishment in the world of a Divine order. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven. Thy name be hallowed. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done"—by men and women who have done with the world and reached heaven? No, a thousand times no! What then? "Thy name be hallowed. Thy Kingdom is come. Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth." The prayer which Christ taught us to pray—which summarizes all prayer, truly understood—is not a prayer that we may be able to pass through the world and win a heaven that lies beyond; it is a prayer that here, in this world, in the midst of its sin and its sorrow and its sighing, the will of God may be done, and the name of God perfectly hallowed by the coming of His Kingdom. In other words, the passion of the man of faith is not to hurry through the world and win heaven. The true passion of the man of faith is that God shall win the world and govern it for the blessing of humanity, for the healing of its wounds, for the ending of its sorrows, for the canceling of its sins, for the establishment of the reign of right and truth, and peace and blessing over the whole world. And as these men of the olden time, according to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, moved out into loneliness, leaving behind them established orders, they did it in order that they might find a new order—found a new order—in the world, and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. And every great movement and appeal in the history of national life has been in that direction. For, not only among the Hebrews did God work His will; not only them did He guide by the Shekinah; He has guided other nations. Long years ago a band of men went to a land across the sea. For what? So far as they are concerned—I am not dealing with the issue—to establish the Kingdom of God. And, slowly, through all the centuries, men have been looking for that.

I pray you remember the essential things of the final city. It is a city of exclusion and inclusion. What are the things excluded? The conditions. Tears, and mourning, and crying and pain. The character. The fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable. The conduct. Murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and liars. Night, the opportunity for evil; the unclean, the occasion of evil; that which makes a lie, the occupation of evil; the curse, which is the outcome of evil. And included within that city I find light, and life, and love, order and radiant beauty. It is a picture of the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world. The ultimate of faith's vision and desire is the establishment of the Divine order in the world, the setting up of the Kingdom of God on this earth. The race that we are called on to run is a strenuous race toward the building of His city, the setting up of His kingdom, and the banishing from the broad earth of everything that is contrary to His ideal and contrary to the well-being of those whom He has created and whom He loves.

The appeal of the writer is to rise above everything that is narrow in outlook, to see the broader purposes of God, to gather into the affection all the round world, and to hasten along the line of

earnest endeavor, the coming of the day when the city of God shall be built, and when men shall find in His perfect government their own final and perfect social order.

If that be the central intention of the text, I pray you now mark the preliminary word. In order to run that race the writer charges us, "Let us lay aside." What are we to lay aside? "Every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset." I think I need hardly tarry to speak of the meaning of the passage as to the weights that are to be laid aside. What is a weight? Anything that hinders running toward that goal. Love may be a weight, learning may be a weight. I am mentioning the highest things of set purpose, feeling that it is not necessary to discuss the lower. Anything that dims the vision of the ultimate, that kills the passion, is a weight. "Ye did run well. What did hinder you?" Well, that which hindered you is the weight, and, in view of this large purpose, in view of this ultimate victory, in view of this stupendous intention of God, beneficent, and glorious, and beautiful, the writer charges the men who name the name of Christ to lay aside the weights. Yet, brethren, I think he touches something that lies nearer to the center of the whole necessity, when he says, "and the sin that doth so easily beset." What is the sin that doth so easily beset? I recognize the difficulty of answering the question. I take that word and bluntly translate, "the sin in good standing around." I suggest to you that the word means just exactly that—that the plain translation touches its deepest meaning. Sin in good standing around, sin that is not looked upon as vulgar. The word sin here must be interpreted by its use throughout this letter, and the sin against which he warns those who would run the race is the sin of unbelief. In order to understand what the "unbelief" of this letter is, I must now inquire what is the "belief" that the letter enjoins. Not mental conviction of a truth. That is not the belief of this letter, or of the New Testament. What, then, is belief? The answer of the life to the truth of which a man is convinced. The Greek εἰς with the accusative suggests infinitely more than belief on. I may believe every word of the Gospel of Christ, and be an immoral man. But if I believe into it, if I answer its claim, and walk in its light, and obey its command, and trust myself to its infinite and gracious promises, that is the belief which saves. Unbelief, therefore, is refusal to answer the light, and that is the sin that doth so easily beset. It is sin in good standing around. Now, I say no word against that intellectual attitude that demands a reason, but I do say that if we are to co-operate with God toward the building of His city, we must lay aside the sin of unbelief. Unbelief in what? In God, in man, and in the ultimate building of the city. Kadesh-Barnea still has its lesson. They came to the border, and they sent up into the strange new country spies to spy out the land, and they brought back from Kadesh-Barnea their report. There was a majority report, and there was a minority report, and, as is usual in such cases, the minority report was the true one. What was the difference between the majority and the minority report? The difference in the placing of a "but." Hear, I pray you, the majority report. "The land is a fair land, and a good land; the grapes are luscious grapes; the rivers are beautiful rivers; the hills and the valleys are full of verdure and beauty, but there are walled cities and there are giants." The minority report put the "but" a little further on, and it said, "The land is a fair land and a good land; the grapes are luscious grapes; the rivers are beautiful rivers; the hills and the valleys are full of verdure; there are walled cities and there are giants; but God will give us the land."

We are going to make no contribution toward the building of the city, and the bringing in of righteousness, if we lose our clear vision of God; but we shall fight our fight, and sing our song, and put in our day of toil with hope and a song of gladness, if the vision of God be kept clear before the mind.

It is equally true that we must lay aside the sin of unbelief in man. The moment we talk about man as being hopeless, we are unfit to build the city of God. We can strike no blow for the delivery of man from the things we lament unless we can see clearly stamped upon every face the hallmark of the Divine image. Unless we see behind the ruin the capacity, unless we see as Christ saw that, however low man is, however broken, however bruised, however spoiled, he is yet worth dying for—unless you and I have that vision, we can do nothing to build the city. There must be belief in the coming of the city. Have you begun to say, It will never come? I remember twenty years ago hearing that prince among our preachers, Alexander Maclaren, of Manchester, say a simple and beautiful thing that has been an inspiration to me through all my work. "Let no man say, because the day seems as though it never would reach high noon, that therefore its light will never be perfect day. Let us, rather, say how fair will that day be on which the twilight dawn has lasted 1,900 years." That is the language of the man of faith. That is the language of the man who knows that at last the victory must be won, and the will of God be perfectly done. If we are to run that race we must lay aside the easily besetting sin of unbelief, and with firm confidence in God and in man, and, in the ultimate, we must give ourselves to the travail and the toil that makes the coming sure.

And now, in a closing word, in order to inspire these people with that faith, the writer of the letter reminds them of the cloud of witnesses. The writer is not describing witnesses who watch us, but those who witness to us. You say to me tonight, It is easy to condemn unbelief, but look at the slow moving of the centuries—the dark places of the earth. No, says the writer, see the witnesses! And I stop there, at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which you know so well. Abel worshiped, and Enoch walked, and Noah worked. Abraham obeyed, obtained, offered. Isaac and Jacob foretold. Moses, being preserved, chose. Israel had its Exodus, and came into possession. The writer goes on to say that time would fail him to tell of Gideon and of Barak, and of Samson and of Jephthah, of David also, of Samuel and of the prophets. And the surprising thing is the men he puts in. You would not have put Samson in there. You would not have put Jephthah in that list. O heart of man, take courage! Is there faith in thee? Even though thou dost blunder and seem to fail, thy faith is accounted for righteousness, for faith is something that helps towards the coming of the city. And then, as though deeds were most important, he masses them—"subdued," "wrought," "obtained," "stopped the mouths of lions," "quenched," "escaped," "waxed valiant."

The story is not ended. Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, seers, visionaries—the men of today at whom we laugh are the men of faith. The vision creates a passion, the passion becomes a mission, and the life is lived till eventide. But the city is not built.

The fog's on the world today,

'Twill be on the world to-morrow;

Not all the strength of the sun

Can drive his bright spears thorough.

Yesterday and today

Have been heavy with care and sorrow,

I should faint if I did not see

The day that is after to-morrow.

The cause of the peoples I serve

To-day in impatience and sorrow

Once more is defeated; but yet 'twill be won

The day that is after to-morrow.

And for me with spirit elate,

The mire and the fog I press through,

For heaven shines under the cloud

Of the day that is after to-morrow.

Seeing the witnesses, I take new heart and hope, and run my race.

But, last of all, looking not at the witnesses, but at the One Witness. Looking unto Jesus, the Author, the File Leader, the One Who goes first, Who takes precedence, and the Vindicator of faith—looking to Him. And if I look to Him, what do I see? I see One Who saw a vision, and for the joy that was set before Him, not the joy of escaping from the earth, but the joy of bringing God's government into the earth; not the joy of being away from the fight and the battle, but the joy of knowing that the issue of the fight and the ultimate of the battle is the establishment of the Divine order, He endured the cross, despising the shame.

Oh for the city of God! Oh for the coming of His Kingdom, for the healing of the wounds of humanity, for the ending of its strife, for the dawning of the last day, bright and glorious! If we would help it, we must run this race. There is no more pregnant or suggestive word in all the Gospel stories concerning our Lord than this. Hear it, I pray you, and I have done. It is a simple sentence, but unutterably sublime. "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." What did He see? Jerusalem, hostile, waiting to arrest and murder Him, but "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." What did He see? Jerusalem doomed by its own sin—the sword hanging over it, but "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." What did He see? Through Jerusalem, hostile and doomed, Jerusalem—the mother of us all, rebuilt—the order established, the victory won, and "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

All the cities of the world today are hostile, are doomed, but are to be rebuilt. And it is the work of the Christian Church of whatever name or nation to see that ultimate vision, and then to begin the building just where they are, knowing that He will bring on the top stone, and that we shall join in the shout of the ultimate victory. Amen.

Hebrews 12:27. Things Shaken--Things Not Shaken.

Hebrews 12:27.

Things Shaken--Things Not Shaken.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain.

Hebrews 12:27

The first value of these words is that they constitute a Christian interpretation of a phrase in a Hebrew prophecy. Their final value is that they reveal a perpetual method of God in His dealing with men.

As to the first of these. The prophet Haggai was looking back to God's shaking of the world by the giving of the Law, and he was looking on to the shaking of the world by the coming of Christ. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews had exactly the same double outlook. The letter was written to Hebrews who were filled with fear because the Hebrew economy was being shaken to its foundations by the Christian faith, and the writer reminded them of what their own prophet Haggai had said. By the giving of the moral law the whole world had been shaken with a shaking symbolized by the Mount which burned with fire. Then he reminded them that the shaking in the midst of which they lived, and of which they were tremendously afraid, was in fulfilment of the prophecy. God was indeed shaking; shaking the order of things that He Himself had made, but the purpose of that shaking was that things which can be shaken should be removed so that things which cannot be shaken should be seen to abide. The final value of this word, then, is that of its interpretation of this shaking. It is a revelation of a method of God. This method of God was recognized by all these old prophetic writers and as surely by the New Testament writers. Ezekiel thus gave expression to a Divine determination and so revealed the same Divine method; "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it:... until He come Whose right it is; and I will give it Him," the Whole fact was expressed by Paul in his Corinthian letter when speaking of God's anointed and appointed King, His own well-beloved Son, He said of Him: "... He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet." Not: He must wait, but He must reign. The word marks executive activity.

In these words, then, we have faith's outlook upon convulsion and upheaval. The facts of convulsion and upheaval are perpetually patent to all men, and they are variously described. We speak of change, we speak of revolution, we speak of calamity, we speak of catastrophe, or we sometimes use that so expressive expression, the deluge. I say these facts of upheaval, of convulsion, of shaking, are patent to all men. Faith sees all this, and faith feels all this, but faith sees far more. Faith is a volitional activity of the soul of man in response to a Divine revelation. It goes without saying that knowledge must precede faith. There must be some truth upon which faith can fasten. Knowledge makes its appeal to the intellect, and faith, not able to prove, ventures. The beginning is always with God. Whether the first approach of God to the soul of man is of

value, depends entirely upon the soul's response to that approach. When response is made to the first gleam of light, the soul finds itself admitted to the shining way which broadens to the perfect day, and so it comes to clear vision. This is the history of all prophetic interpretation of the ways of God with men. The words of our text reveal the distinction between the outlook of the man of faith upon the circumstances in the midst of which we are living and the outlook of the man who is merely the man of sight. Faith watches change and revolution, and calamity and catastrophe, yea, observes the sweeping deluge, and then says: God is shaking. The Lord sitteth King upon the water floods.

Let us, then, consider the conception in itself and attempt to make a present application of it.

I have said that here we have the vision of faith in the day of upheaval. What is that vision? It is, first of all, a vision of the fact that it is God Who is shaking the order in the midst of which we live. It is, second, a vision of the reason why God is shaking that order. Thrones are trembling, empires are rocking, battles are raging, and all men know that. But faith knows more. Observe the absolute accuracy of the prophetic word; notice the modern element in the writing:

... I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

That is the story of the things in the midst of which we are living, and that is how faith looks at it. Faith declares that it is God Who is shaking. Faith is conscious also, as men are conscious everywhere, of spiritual and moral disturbances. Ideals are shattered, laws have failed to fulfil their function, and policies everywhere have broken down. All men know these things, but faith, looking at the disorder, observing it, acutely conscious of it, yet climbing the height, says: God is shattering our ideals to teach us the vanity of them; God is so dealing with humanity that it bursts the bounds of laws and so learns the inadequacy of laws which it is able to make for itself; God is breaking down our policies and laughing at their folly in order that we may learn their futility.

So we come to the second fact which faith sees, and it is of supreme importance. Faith sees the Divine purpose in the shaking. God's shaking is for the destruction of the transient, whether it be good or bad. It is for the destruction of everything that is evil. God's shaking of things in a terrific hour of judgment like this, is His breaking of the bruised reed, His quenching of the smoking flax. I have of set purpose quoted those pictorial words of Scripture. We generally use them, and in some senses with perfect justification, as indicating the fact of God's patience. He will not break the bruised reed; He will not quench the smoking flax. That is true in so far as it goes. It reveals one method of the Divine activity.

But to make this the final meaning of these words is to be false to their intention. The declaration is that He will not break the bruised reed, He will not quench the smoking flax until He send forth judgment unto victory. When He sends forth judgment unto victory, He does break the bruised reed, and He does quench the smoking flax. The bruised reed and the smoking flax are not the emblems of frail humanity striving towards goodness. What is a bruised reed? Weakness weakened. What is smoking flax? That which has within it the element of its own destruction. God leaves the bruised reed in all its boastfulness and leaves the smoking flax to smoulder in its own fire until He send forth judgment unto victory. Then He breaks the one, and quenches the other.

God today has been sending forth judgment unto victory. He is breaking bruised reeds, and He is quenching smoking flax. He is working for the destruction of evil things and for the destruction of good things if they are outworn, because they may become hindrances though at one time they were helps. "Lest one good custom should corrupt the world," God will break through and destroy the custom. That is the atmosphere of the text. God shook the mountains in Sinai, and through the shaking of the mountains in Sinai, He shook the moral order of the world as He gave to humanity through His chosen people a Law. How good and great and wonderful a law it was is revealed in the fact that all modern civilizations have built their codes of ethics upon it. But in the fulness of time He came again, shaking that law, setting it at one side, sweeping away its ceremonial observances and symbolism, as He gave to the world the new moral ethic in the coming of His Son, and thus moved forward toward the final accomplishment of His will. He was working for the destruction of things which, having served their generation and His purpose in human history, might become, and, indeed, had become to some people, the very grave clothes that prevented their growth and advancement. Thus God is ever shaking to destroy the transient and to reveal the abiding, the things that are not shaken and which remain. The one Kingdom, which is His Kingdom; the one ideal, which is His ideal; the one law, which is the law of love; these are the things that are not shaken and cannot be shaken. In order that men may find them, turn back to them, God is forever shaking, disturbing. The things that are shaken are the things, either good or ill, which are transient. The things that are not shaken are the things that are eternal.

From that general attempt to understand the inner thought of the text, let us lift our eyes to the circumstances in the midst of which we live.

What are the things that are being shaken in the world today? Dynasties, thrones, national boundaries, international relationships. I might speak of all these. They are full of interest, but they are incidental and not essential. The insecurity of certain men upon their thrones, the change of the map of Europe in the matter of national boundaries, the new methods of international relationships; all these things are incidental, and I do not propose now to tarry with them. God has been shaking to their very foundations false conceptions of humanity, false methods in diplomacy, and false emphases in religion. In the understanding of these things, we shall at least gain some gleams of light revealing the need for constructive work.

False conceptions of humanity are being shaken to their very foundation. The first is that widespread conception which had mastered the whole of Europe—and more, of the world—which may be expressed in the statement that Humanity is self-sufficient. God has so dealt with us during this period of war that we are face to face with the fact of humanity's insufficiency as within itself to arrange its own course, or make its own plans, or conduct its own efforts to anything like success. We are being taught today that human cleverness is entirely at fault and that human strength at its uttermost is defeated. We are being taught this by the experience of our enemies and by our own. Everything of human cleverness has broken down. Every plan that was peculiarly of men, and peculiarly clever, has been smashed in the course of two years. The illustrations that come to us most readily are those of all the ingenuity and terrific cleverness and marvelous comprehensiveness of the thinking of the powers with which we are at war. Yet they made no single plan that has not already been wrecked so that it never can be realized. Then, when we think of ourselves, I wonder how far we are prepared to boast of our own cleverness. How have we been delivered? If it be true that there are gleams of light upon the eastern sky for us, if we are

beginning to feel a greater sense of security, if in our hearts we feel a new day is coming, how has this all come about? If we have learned nothing else, surely we have seen our smug self-confidence rocked to the center by the hand of God. If we have not seen this, then we are blind indeed.

Is there not, however, another false conception of humanity that God is shaking? The idea was prevalent that humanity was hopelessly degenerate; the idea that everything that was essentially fine had gone; that there was nothing left in man to which any appeal on high and noble lines could be made. Are we prepared to say that today? Are we prepared to say that for our own country as we look back? I confess I cannot altogether understand men who can look back over these two years without being made to think again in the presence of the quick and marvelous response to the high call, ringing out of the spiritual realm, that has characterized the going forth of our sons. Moreover, we have seen humanity able to endure the uttermost strain in its devotion to these high things. I am not saying for a single moment that anything that has happened in these two years is making any one of us think that we can do without Christ and His Cross. I will put the matter bluntly, as my own soul feels it when I say that as I look out upon these two years, I feel more than ever that His estimate of it is right, that it is worth dying for however much it may be bruised and weakened by the way. God is shaking us to the center, and so shaking these false conceptions of humanity.

Again, have we not seen, are we not living in the midst of the shaking of false methods in diplomacies? That is a great theme on which I dare not speak in detail. I speak as one who is looking out over the clouds and mists and trying to see clearly through any light that breaks through. Diplomacy has been conducted for many years under the inspiration of selfishness. Our phrases give us away. Here is one. Inferior races! That is a phrase we have heard in much of our diplomatic discussion, and because inferior races, they are to be mastered and managed, or let us tell the blunt truth for once, they are to be oppressed in the interest of the superior races. That has been the underlying inspiration of a great deal of diplomatic activity.

Or take another phrase that is not ours; we never made use of it although we did a good deal which seems to suggest that we believed in it. The superman! That means the right to conquer. These phrases reveal the inspirations of our arrangements. Our international plannings have been based upon the conceptions that there are such things as inferior races and supermen.

Where are we today? By the shaking of God we are coming at last to know that we have no right to speak of any race as inferior. We are at least beginning to think it is the superman who is inferior and that in every way.

Based upon these false conceptions, our methods have been the methods of cunning. The law of much diplomatic activity has been the law of outwitting someone else, quietly, secretly, no one other than the plotters knowing until it was done. God is shaking this to the very center, compelling us to a nobler way of thinking, bringing back to us words we have quoted day by day to our children but now applying them to national things and international:

The lip of truth shall be established forever:

But a lying tongue is but for a moment.

During these two years, false emphases in religion are being shaken to their very center. Our persistent and perpetual discussion of forms and media and channels is being challenged. We fight for the supremacy of some ecclesiastical form. The question of media has been considered more important than that of grace, and this has meant the destruction of the power of grace. One man says that grace comes through one media, and one man says it comes through another media. This man says that grace comes through certain forms and channels, another says that it does not come so, it comes directly. The matter of supreme import is not media. I believe that again and again grace is communicated to a man in connection with the laying on of hands. I believe that grace is found of some men through high ritual. But grace does not reach me that way. For the reception of grace into my own soul, I prefer the simplest place of meeting or the lonely quietness of some hillside. We of the opposing views concerning media quarrel with each other, and the result too often has been the destruction of grace!

Another false emphasis has been that of the finality of human opinion. We have been more concerned about formulae than about truth; about the things men say about truth rather than about the truth itself, and so truth has been hidden. God is shaking these things. But it seems to me that it takes a profounder earthquake to shake these things than any others. I see more evidences of hope as I look round on false conceptions of humanity, as I look round upon false methods of diplomacy, than I do in this realm of religion. Nevertheless, God is shaking to the very center these attitudes toward religion.

Are there any things that are not being shaken? There are, and they are the only things that matter. First, the relation of humanity to God is unshaken. He has the over-ruling of all human affairs. Take that map of yours and sit down and look at it, as it was, as it is, and, so far as you can, as it is going to be. Mark well the significance of what you see. Nation after nation is appearing before the bar of God and making its decision all unknowingly, and all unknowingly before that bar is receiving verdict and sentence. How many nations of Europe in these two years have chosen deliberately upon the basis of righteousness? How many nations of Europe within the last two years have chosen upon the basis of selfishness? I am not going to answer my questions. But this I say: God is judging. The nations have not escaped from the grip of God, and that impossibility of escape is the one hope of the dark hour.

The Lord still reigneth, and the fact of the reign of God is being demonstrated by the victories that faith has won. Take your eleventh chapter of Hebrews again. It is a wonderful chapter. I need not tell you that. The most wonderful part of the chapter is not that which gives names and shows us men, but the little brief sentences concerning the unknown heroes and the greatness of deeds. In the eleventh of Hebrews I find these words: "who through faith... waxed mighty in war,..." That is what has happened during these two years. That is the story of the hour. How have these armies of Britain been raised? In that glorious response of the earlier days what was the inspiration? Did your sons go out to bring more territory to Britain? Never! Those armies would not have been raised to accomplish that end. Did they leave university and court and office and desk in order to give commercial supremacy to Britain? Never! They would never have gone for such reasons. They went for righteousness and truth. They went by faith in God, and by the victories that are being won at cost of suffering and sacrifice enough to break the heart, faith is being vindicated and so the relation of humanity to God is being proved. That is something that cannot be shaken.

The supremacy of righteousness and truth as a national foundation is unshaken. Nations built thereon cannot be destroyed. All other ground is sinking sand. As national policy also it is unshaken. Nations acting thereby pass through travail to triumph. All other policies are folly.

Finally, I find unshaken still the centrality of the Cross as the way of human salvation. To this all spiritual ministry agrees in spite of forms or opinions.

All over the world the story is coming to us of men going back to the Cross who thought the world had outgrown it or been mistaken about it. The Cross is also found to be the law of victorious life, not armies or munitions, but the spirit of sacrifice in the consecration of high devotion to righteousness. These are the unshaken things.

For every shaking of the earth the man of faith thanks God. Only the things which are not vital can be shaken; only the transient can be destroyed. The real things of life abide; faith, love, and hope. Through the shaking these are manifested. Or, as Haggai said, through the shaking the desirable things of all nations come, which means that by this shaking comes the desire of the nations which is Christ Himself. By these shakings He ever comes. He comes again to take the kingdoms to be His own. May He direct our hearts into that patient waiting for Him that is born of our sense that the shaking of all things is of God, and that only that which can be shaken can be destroyed.

Hebrews 13:8. The Unchanging One.

Hebrews 13:8.

The Unchanging One.

Jesus Christ... the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever.

Hebrews 13:8

There is nothing more certain or more impressive than the transitory nature of all earthly things. We change our calendars, and become conscious as we do so, that we ourselves have changed. Then we glance around us, and we find that there has been change everywhere. And even while we are in the act of thinking, we have changed again, and all around us is changing even as we look.

Now, this fact of change is at once the salt and the poison of life. It is the salt of life preventing monotony, that deadly foe of the soul. It is the poison of life paralyzing effort, that vital ally of the soul. Change is of the very nature of life and is necessary to life. Change takes on the guise of death and checks the movements of life. Thus are we perplexed, and earnestly do we desire to find some center of permanence and some secret of perennial freshness.

We need a center of permanence, not an anchorage. An anchorage means limitation and monotony. An anchorage belongs to a ship and is a hindrance to the ship. The tug of the ship to be away from the shore and out upon the sea is of its very nature and being, and the anchor holds it back. We are not asking for anchorage. The only sense in which the figure of the anchor is warranted is when it is used, as it was used by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, in such form that it is contradicted in the very suggestions it makes.

In an earlier part of this letter he said: "... the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul,... both sure and steadfast." Yes! but let us finish the quotation! "... entering within the veil." In that phrase he has contradicted his own symbol finely, intelligently; not blunderingly. It is the figure of the anchor cast, not where the shoals are, but within the veil; the place of finality, the place of satisfaction, and eternity, and God. Thus the figure breaks down, but in the magnificence of its breakdown, it is fitting in every sense and at any and every time. The anchorage which we need must have some element, sure, unshakable, persistent, continuous; and because we are persons, let us at once say, some Person, never destroyed, never weary, never changing.

And we ask not merely a sign of permanence, but a secret of freshness; not excitement, that means reaction and yet more deadly inertia; but some element growing, developing, surprising the soul. And once again, because we are persons, we need some Person always alive, full of initiation, and ever equal to realization. Where shall we turn for these things?

We look within, and if there be one place where we fail to find the stability for which we cry out and the springing freshness we desire, it is within. We look to our friends, and the story is tragic. The

air is full of farewells to the dying. We look to circumstances, and there is neither anchorage that holds nor freshness that satisfies the soul. Where are we? Great God! Where are we? We must find anchorage in that broader sense of the word somewhere. Where shall we turn?

Such thinking inevitably recalls those lines of the last hymn which Henry Francis Lyte ever wrote, the hymn he wrote two months before he crossed the bar and saw his Pilot face to face; a hymn which in his intention did not refer to the closing of the natural day but to the close of life:

Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day!

Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away,

Change and decay in all around I see,

O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!

When Henry Francis Lyte wrote those lines as expressive of his own experience, he wrote a hymn for humanity; one of the few, rare hymns throbbing with the elemental things of the human soul and capturing the heart and conscience of men everywhere; we do not wonder that the hymn is sung today around the world.

What warrant had he to write that hymn? The warrant is found in my text. The man who wrote that hymn was a man who believed that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

In the declaration of this text is found the perfect answer to the two-fold cry of the human soul. Let us remind ourselves then of the eternal freshness of Christ. He is always alive; "... I am alive for evermore..."; always beginning some new thing, "I am the Beginning..."; always realizing and consummating that which He does begin, "... I am the Ending..." Let us remind ourselves of the unchanging nature of Christ. He is never destroyed nor can He be; never weary, however weary we may be; never changing, for love never faileth, and love altereth not when it alteration finds. He is unchanged in the fact of His perpetual freshness, so that no soul has ever found it to be monotonous to walk with Him or talk with Him or think of Him or sing of Him; He is perpetually breaking in upon the soul with new surprises, in some amazing and lightning flash, or as the freshness of a morning in the springtime. He is the same yesterday and today and forever.

The text is in itself the message with which I would greet and hearten my own soul and that of each of those who may be reached by my words. I do not propose to defend this statement of the writer. I affirm it anew and pray that its music may strengthen our faith, may brighten our hope, may deepen our love. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Let us then attempt to listen to the music as we consider Jesus Christ yesterday, Jesus Christ today, Jesus Christ forever.

Sometimes, in order to gain a better understanding, we must tarry long enough to be mechanical and so to catch the true meaning of the thing which is written. Therefore we pause to notice the peculiar title employed at this point by the writer of the letter. Jesus Christ! These were the usual names which this writer used in reference to our Lord but generally in separation from each other. In this letter, He is constantly referred to by the human name, the simple name of Jesus. In this letter also, over and over again He is referred to by the august and dignified title of Christ. Jesus was a Hebrew name. There were hundreds of boys who bore that name in Galilee and Judaea for it is but the Greek form of the old Hebrew name Joshua. The name had peculiar associations, setting it apart and differentiating it from all other names in that it was a name that was coined for the man who first bore it by his great predecessor, Moses. Yet it had become common, and so attention is fastened in the first case upon the fact that our Lord is essentially of our own nature and of our own being, of our own emotions and of our own temptations. Jesus is one of us. Our thought is first brought face to face with that fact. But we must remember that this name is not introduced in this letter until we reach what we speak of as our second chapter and ninth verse. The one referred to there as Jesus was introduced at the beginning of the letter in other terms and by other designations. At the commencement of this letter, He is described as Son of God, heir of all things, through Whom God did fashion the ages; the effulgence of His glory, the very image of His substance, the One Who upheld all things by the word of His power. So was He introduced, and then, presently, this Person is named Jesus! Another statement that will help us to apprehend the mystery is that of John, in what we call the prologue to his Gospel, in which he says: "In the beginning was the logos (Word); and the logos (Word) was with God; and God was the logos (Word); and the logos (Word) became flesh!" That is Jesus!

The other name, Christ, is the Messianic title indicating the fact of the office, the work, the mission of this mysterious Person Who was human and yet was infinitely more than human. He, the King-Priest, is introduced by this title at the third chapter and the fourteenth verse, having been introduced at the beginning of the letter in the way which we have already considered.

Now in this text the two titles are brought together, and the combination is rare in the letter. Only on two other occasions did this writer thus link them. When he spoke of the Lord as the One through Whom the will of God for our sanctification is accomplished, he called Him Jesus Christ. When a little later he spoke of Him as the One through Whom God makes us perfect to do His will, he called Him Jesus Christ. And here, when he was referring to Him as the unchanging One, he named Him by the human name and by the Messianic title. The Person to Whom he referred is the One Whom he had already introduced as Son of God, the effulgence of His glory, the express image of His Person, the One through Whom all things were made, the One Who fashions the ages. It is to this Person that we are introduced, and He is declared by the writer of the letter to be the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

If we are to understand Him, we must consider the yesterday in its limited sense and remind ourselves again of what are described in the New Testament as the days of His flesh. That is the focal point of revelation. The mystic and the infinite Son of God is revealed by this veiling of deity in human flesh.

I am impressed first of all by His appeal to humanity in itself, by what He was in Himself. I am not thinking now of His appeal to humanity in His teaching. Shall I not be accurate when I declare that

the teaching of Jesus Christ did not appeal to humanity and that it does not appeal to humanity yet? Humanity must be regenerated before the teaching of Christ makes any vast or powerful appeal to it. I know full well that there are certain parts and portions of the teaching of Christ, expressive of His outlook upon the ultimate purposes of God for this world, which make their appeal to humanity; but when He deals with those things of the soul in which He demands a purity which is awe-inspiring, when He begins to appeal to the human heart and to show it its own disobedience, humanity is still in rebellion against His teaching. There are a thousand men who praise the Sermon on the Mount for its broad outlines who dare not face its personal investigations. Not by the teaching of Christ were men attracted but by what He was in Himself. Today, two millenniums after His earthly manifestation, there is no literature in the world that appeals to men as do these gospel narratives. He came into the midst of human life making hypocrisy impossible while He stood confronting men. Men unveiled themselves, or unmasked themselves, in His presence. They could do nothing other than show themselves. They were often angry as they unmasked themselves, but they were compelled to the act. They were more often comforted as they unveiled themselves. But the supreme fact, the first fact that impresses us is that here was a Man Who moved among men and whenever they came into His presence, they were seen for the men they really were; veils were rent, masks were torn off, duplicity was at an end, hypocrisy perished; they stood naked in the essential facts of their character wherever He came! In His human nature, the very depths of humanity called to the depths in humanity, and the depths in humanity answered the depths of humanity. Moreover, His appeal was not that of a clan, not that of a tribe, not that of a nation, but that of the race.

I look back at Him once more, and I observe His appeal to humanity in its need. I will cover the whole ground of humanity's need by the use of two of the most commonplace words in our language—sin and sorrow. Observe how He appealed to each. He never excused sin. He never admitted that sin was necessary. There is not a single sentence in the teaching of Christ that suggests that sin is a necessary part of a process by which God is moving to something higher. He never excused it, never admitted that it was necessary. But something else is true. He never abandoned it. He never admitted that it was incurable. In the vocabulary of Jesus there never could have been such an absurd contradiction of terms as we sometimes make use of when we speak of "necessary evils." If necessary, not evil; if evil, never necessary. In the vocabulary of Jesus, such an absurd contradiction of terms as "hopeless cases," never could have been brought together with regard to humanity. No case was hopeless to His eyes. Of those men and women that came into contact with Him in His life, none were hopeless. When He confronted them, they were saved over and over again by faith, not theirs in Him but His in them and by His wonderful confidence in them.

As to sorrow, He never ignored it. It was a great reality to Him. Dear old Faber, that saint infinitely greater than his ecclesiastical convictions either before or after his going to Rome, sang the very truth as he sang that the sorrows of earth are most keenly felt in heaven. While Jesus walked the ways of men, all the sorrows of Palestine that His eyes looked upon settled on His soul and wounded His heart. But He never submitted to sorrow. He never admitted that sorrow was the final thing. In the world you shall have tribulation, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy!

He saw the dark clouds and the sweeping rain! But He forevermore said, "I do set My bow in the cloud!..." He knew the sun, and that the light of it flashed upon the rain drops, symbols of tears and

agony, made them radiant with the colors of heaven in hope and joy. Sorrow for Him was never final. It was real, graphic, terrific, evil. He knew it. He was "... a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:..." But he never bowed His head beneath sorrow and yielded to it, never came to despair. He moved breast forward against sorrow for Himself and humanity. He mastered it; He transmuted it!

I look once more at those days of His flesh, and I notice the perpetual surprises of those who were about Him. He was constantly surprising them. I think I may dismiss the whole story, for the purpose of our present meditation, by saying that He trained His disciples by surprise after surprise, surprise after surprise. They thought they knew Him, and they were glad they did and went with Him. Then He startled them by something He did or said. They were halted and then discovered its value and went on a little further. Now they understood Him! Then He wrought some new wonder and they cried: "Who, then, is this?" He was so human that they called Him Jesus of Nazareth. Yet out of that human personality there were always breaking lights and glories and powers and revelations and surprises. How are we to account for this? We account for it because of the longer yesterday. The "yesterday" includes all the infinite mysteries of the far-flung splendors of the ages about which we can only dream and about which we know nothing. In the beginning was the Word, and when tabernacled in human form, walking human pathways, mixing among human beings, lights gleamed, and glories flashed, surprising the heart of the men who were about Him. Jesus Christ yesterday!

And now what of Jesus Christ today? There is a difference, and we must face it. The difference is that He is now gone out of sight, as He said He would in those Paschal discourses from which our lesson was taken, and for a while we shall not see Him. He is gone out of sight. But He also said, "... a little while and ye shall see Me." In that promise there was no reference to a second Advent. He was referring to something that was to be immediate; something to which they actually did come and that soon. Those men who heard Him talk in the Upper Room, Peter, James, and John; Philip, Thomas, and Jude; the men who spoke in the Upper Room, those men lost Him. He passed out of their sight. Then came Pentecost, and they saw Him as they had never seen Him, though they could no longer see Him. He said to them: "... It is expedient for you that I go away...." I do no violence to the thought conveyed if I change the word. "It is better for you that I go away." Why better? Because this Eternal One, localized in flesh, was limited by that localization; because in the midst of His Ministry He was compelled to say, "... I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Passing out of sight, the sight of sense, in His coming again by the Holy Spirit to the consciousness of such as put their trust in Him, He came into nearer association, came to be the Companion of the spirit-life of men, that inner spirit-life which no man can see, either of himself or of his neighbor, by the eyes of sense. "No man hath seen God at any time...." We all agree that no man hath seen Him at any time. No man hath seen man at any time! Do you agree? It is true. You have never seen me, I have never seen you. We look upon these outward forms, these are but tabernacles. Thank God if we have learned the lesson, that the body, marred, spoiled, broken, laid to rest, was but the tenement house. Jesus said to these men in effect. "I am shut outside you by living in this body, while you live in these bodies. I will go away and come again, and come right into the true spirit-life of you and reveal Myself to you by the Spirit, as you never can know Me while I remain outside you." We can have closer fellowship with Jesus than with each other. I am shut out from the final fellowship of my nearest and dearest friend

in this world. I must wait for the larger spirit-life that lies beyond. I can have no final spiritual fellowship with my earthly friends, but with Him I can have full spiritual fellowship.

Thus He came again to these men and to us. He is known today through the writings, through spiritual interpretation, and through the saints who in their fellowship with Him are transformed into His likeness and reveal Him to other men. Thus, He is the same. The only thing that is different is the accidental. The essential abides. Through that which I have just described, not carelessly but carefully, as the accidental of the days of His flesh, the essential and abiding was revealed.

I look again to the yesterday, to the days of His flesh, and I declare that He is the same, making the same appeals to humanity. That is the deep secret of the victory of Christianity. All our hindrances are due to the fact that we quarrel about forms and methods of expression and neglect the central authority of the Christ Himself. Oh! shame on us! shame on us! He is the same. Let us remember that whenever we are tempted to quarrel!

He makes the same appeal to humanity. Take that little Testament of yours! Nay, take much less. Take Mark alone, the first and simplest narrative. Print it, give it away. Read it to men everywhere. Read it to them when they are quiet, when they are thoughtful. Let them look, let them listen. So let them see this Jesus. They will come to Him. He will attract them whether they are black or white, whether learned or illiterate, whether high or low, bond or free, rich or poor. When they see Him, they forget black or white, high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, for they have found in Him their own humanity. Humanity ever goes out to the humanity in Him. That is the story of the success of missions.

He makes the same appeal to human nature. He will not excuse sin. He will not excuse my sin. He will never allow me to say in His presence that I was bound to sin. We cannot say it, we dare not say it in His presence. We say it to each other. We say it to our own souls sometimes. "We could not help it." We know we lie when we say it! But when we are alone with Him we dare not look into His face and say we were bound to sin! We know it is not true. All modern philosophy in so far as it says that sin is necessary is a lie against which this Christ of God proceeds, and he will deny it in the human conscience ere His mission is completed. Man need not sin.

But it is also true that we cannot say in His presence that our sin is incurable. It is not incurable. He believes in us. He has perfect confidence in humanity. He is producing the same effects today as of old, effects which I shall not enumerate, but summarize in His own sweet word, "Rest." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In that word I find, righteousness, peace, joy, the things of the Kingdom of God.

He is the same today in His mysteriousness, still surprising the soul, still breaking out upon us at some point in life, amazing us and then explaining His own surprise and moving us a little further on toward the final knowledge.

So let me end, with only a brief sentence or two. He is the same forever. The phrase that the writer actually used was most suggestive. "Forever," is altogether too mechanical. It is trying to say everything. We cannot say everything. Let us dare to be poetic in company with the Bible. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and to the ages! They come, they pass, they go! The year has broken, the year has dawned. It is for us a new age, but a hand breadth, but a span; but it serves to illustrate everything that is suggested by the phrase, to the ages.

We are always at the beginning of a new age. Behind us are ages; before us are ages! Now the writer says that this One Who came into human history and human life, and Whom He names Son of God, Jesus, Christ, is the same to the ages! At the beginning of this letter he declared that this One fashions the ages, determines their nature, limits their duration, includes their forces.

Heaven will never be monotonous. There will always be new satisfaction for the heart. We shall never become satiated with the things spiritual. The unfathomed deeps and distances of the ages lie before us, but He will lead us through them. Therefore am I no longer afraid of the vastness of the outlook.

That Living One is in our midst now, calling us to rest. He is the center of all that is permanent, the spring of all that is fresh. Dare I be afraid? Amid the shock of battle, the stress of life, and the overwhelming perplexities of things, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

March on my soul, without fear or faltering, for the Pierced Hand holds the scepter of the universe!
All is well!

Hebrews 13:10. Our Altar.

Hebrews 13:10.

Our Altar.

We have an altar.

Hebrews 13:10

The majority of days in the lives of the majority of men are ordinary days. Nevertheless, all men have extraordinary days, red-letter days; and whatever may be the nature of the experience which makes them stand out from all the rest, these are the days that give character to all the rest. Men mark or celebrate such days in different ways. We very often reveal ourselves quite unexpectedly by the manner in which we celebrate them, and we reveal our God almost unknowingly. This fact may be illustrated in very many ways. There are men, quite irrespective of their educational advantages or social position, who celebrate any day that stands out from the rest by a drink or a feast. They are revealing themselves, and in the biting, scorching satire of the great Apostle we may say of them, "whose god is their belly." There are men of a much higher type who will celebrate the day of emotion, whether it be of joy or of sorrow, by a great song, a treatise, some expression of the inward life that others may know it. There are men who celebrate a day of tragic sorrow, a day of ecstatic joy, by a bequest, or by raising a memorial.

The men of the Old Testament turned all such days into opportunities for raising altars. It is very interesting to run through the Old Testament and see in what varied circumstances these men raised altars. According to the record, when Noah found himself in possession of the world he raised an altar. When Abraham, after some tarrying, found himself at last in the land to which God had directed him he raised an altar. In that ultimate and final experience of his soul, when after long processes and much fellowship with God, groping after Him and finding Him and coming ever nearer to Him, he at last reached the spiritual experience which was higher than that of desiring privilege, namely fellowship in suffering, Abraham erected an altar on which to offer his son. And in after years that son, a man of quietness and peace who stands out on the pages of the Old Testament as celebrated for digging wells and living by them, when at last he was left in peace after a commonplace quarrel between herdsmen concerning wells, he too raised an altar. When Moses had prayed all day with uplifted hands, and Amalek was defeated, he built his altar and called it Jehovah-nissi, the Lord our Banner. When at last Ai was reduced, after the defeat of the hosts of God as the result of the sin of a man, Joshua built his altar. When Gideon was going through the process of preparation for delivering his people from the oppression of Midian, he built an altar. When God had wondrously appeared on behalf of His people, and through a thunderstorm had discomfited the foe, Samuel built an altar and called it Ebenezer. When David sinned, and the people were visited by plague, and when the plague was stayed, right there, where it halted at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, David built an altar.

These men were always building altars. At a time of great joy they built an altar, in the time of sorrow they built an altar, if they were defeated they built an altar, if they were victorious they built an altar, if they sinned they built an altar, if they triumphed over temptation they built an altar. This rearing of altars by the old patriarchs was revealing. When the Mosaic economy came, careful instructions were given for the private raising of altars. Such was the instruction we read in the book of Exodus. In the ceremonial system the altar had its place, its central place; but the idea that was suggested by the altar was larger than the ceremonial system. For what we see in it is God accommodating Himself to, and answering, the human heart in its great need; and that which thus sprang out of the human heart came originally from God. So deep answered deep in the provision of the law.

The writer of this letter to the Hebrews took up the sacred things of their religion in order to show how all found fulfilment in Christ. In all this letter there is a theoretical value; it is a defense of the faith; there is also a practical value, for it is a revelation of the conduct resulting from that faith. From beginning to end the writer sees in the Son of God the effulgence of the glory of God, and in all the ministry and mission of the Son he sees the fulfilment of those things which humanity had been groping after. Almost at the end of the letter he said, "We have an altar."

Our meditation is intended to deal with the idea suggested by the altar rather than with the particular ritual to which the writer was referring. When he said, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle," he was dealing with the putting aside of all ritual method of the past; but he retained the altar, and thus retained the idea of the altar, and claimed that while the veil of the tabernacle had been rent in twain and all the Mosaic ritual had been superseded, the essential thing which the altar always symbolized remained, "We have an altar."

I have made this somewhat lengthy reference to the place of the altar in the Old Testament in order to say that in proportion as we are finding our way back into the habit of these men, the habit itself being cleansed, purified, fulfilled, made glorious in the light of the Christian fact, we are finding the true attitude to the day of crisis, to the day that stands out, to the day that casts its light or its shadow on all other days. Just such a day came to some of us last week, when all the light of life went out, or when suddenly there broke on a pathway that long had been shadowed a new and glorious light in which we rejoiced. There was that one hour last week in which, in spite of all professions and protestations, and sincere they were, we fell into sin, and the dark horror of it is on our soul, and all the days are threatened by the shadow of it. What are we to do in these days? These men of the olden days built an altar, and laid on it a sacrifice, and watched the material fire devour it, and forced their souls into the spiritual conception suggested by the fire, and so got back to God. There are days when we feel we would like to do exactly the same thing, get away to some quiet desert place and slay something and see it burn for the readjustment of spiritual things. But we do not do these things today. Nevertheless, as this writer says, "We have an altar."

Keeping in that atmosphere of the past, I want this morning to find out for my own soul's sake what these men meant, in order to discover what my attitude ought to be to the day which stands out, black or radiant, in order that neither the darkness nor the light may affect the other days in such a way as to spoil them. "We have an altar." Let us get back to these great men of the past. When they built their altars, what did they mean? Fundamentally the action was one of worship; actively, it was sacrifice; experimentally, it was readjustment and new beginning.

First it was worship. The erection of an altar was an expression of belief in God. The erection of an altar was the expression of the sense of need of God. The erection of an altar was the expression of desire for God. The erection of an altar was the expression of submission to God. If that analysis seems almost unnecessary, as though having said "worship" we have said all; yet these are elements that we have to remember. When that man is building his altar, watch him at his work; forget all that surrounds him, forget the immediate occasion of the building, and inquire quietly while he builds his altar what he is doing and why he is doing it. Building an altar means that a man believes in God, not that he knows God perfectly, not that he understands God adequately, not that he has anything like final fellowship with God, but that he believes in God. It means more; it means that the man not only believes in God, but is conscious within his soul that what he needs is that very God in Whom he believes. Whether for his joy or his sorrow, his darkness or his light, he needs that God. Not only does it mean that he believes in God and feels his need of God; it also means that he desires God. If one could listen to the deepest thing in the life of any man who is seen building his altar we should hear him say, One thing I desire, it is that I may find God and order my way before Him! There are occasional singers who actually utter words, words which became the inspiration of pilgrims through all the ages; but for the one man who sings the actual words there are a thousand men who are acting in harmony with the song which they cannot express.

The altar means more than belief, more than confession of need, more than desire. Whenever a man builds an altar he is expressing, imperfectly, inadequately, but nevertheless sincerely, his desire to submit himself to the God to Whom he thus builds. As I find my way through these pages of the past, with all their magnificent revelation of contradictory things in human life—passion, prejudice, pride, lust, love—and I see these primitive men, rough, unhewn men, building altars in all sorts of circumstances, making every new occasion in life the opportunity for building an altar, I see men worshipping.

But observe carefully that it is an altar each man builds, and that the meaning of the altar is always sacrifice. An altar built by a man who believes in God, needs God, desires God, and submits to God, is a confession of his consciousness of distance from God, and a confession, moreover, of something within him that speaks of the possibility of restoration to nearness, which must be based on some mystery of sacrifice and pain. Every altar means sacrifice.

Experientially, the altar as these men of the past raised it, meant as I have said, readjustment in all circumstances. The events giving rise to the altar were set in the light of the altar. The joy that fills the life and makes man raise his altar is now to be conditioned by all that the altar stands for. The sorrow that has overwhelmed him, out of the agony of which he has built his altar, is now to be put in the light of these essential things which the altar suggests to him. The altar forever speaks of the readjustment of life in the presence of God through the mystery of sacrifice.

The altar always meant more than that experientially in those Old Testament narratives. After the altar, there was the move forward, according to the things of the altar. I will not stay to illustrate it. Take your Bible and spend an hour or two going through the story of individual altars, and you will find in every case that after the altar there was a move forward, a line of progress; and everywhere the forward movement was the result of the readjustment of the life in the presence of the altar. The men who moved forward from the altar which they had raised in the hour of their solemn,

sacrificial approach to God carried with them in the forward move the things which gave occasion to the altar. Joy, sorrow, light, darkness, defeat, victory—the values were wrested from all these in that hour of the altar's worship; and the men marched forward, stronger for these very experiences as they were found and sanctified in the hour of worship in the presence of the altar.

"We have an altar." I need not stay to remind you that the whole subject of the letter to the Hebrews is that in the Lord Christ we have found all that men were seeking after, and seeing dimly by the altar and the priest and the sacrifice. In the Lord Christ we have that coming near to us of God, which means the discovery of the meaning of defeat, the answer of the desire of our heart after God, and the removal of all those things which prevented our realization of fellowship with Him. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says, "We have an altar," that is, an abiding altar, which in some senses we have not to erect, for it is always erected; yet an altar which in some senses we must ever erect, erect again and again, and bring to its measurement and its correction every crisis in life that appals the soul with fear or joy, with trembling or with a sense of triumph.

Let us go back again for a moment to the old story. Not without profound significance were the instructions which Moses gave concerning the erection of these altars. We have no means of knowing the form or fashion of them in those patriarchal days before these instructions. Moreover, we must not confuse the instructions of Moses here concerning the altar with those instructions on the great altars of the ritual which he received in the Mount. The instructions here were quite clear and simple, and, indeed, most astonishing, for they were for the man who desired to erect an altar for himself. It must be of earth, or if perchance it should be of stone, then it must be of unhewn stone; and, further, no steps were to help him in his ascent to the altar.

The altar was to be of earth; that was the first simple command. If some man should desire to raise his altar amid rocky fastnesses where perchance no earth could be found, then let him build it of stone; but he must not grave or polish his stone, or set any tool on it; he must erect quite simply a heap of rough stones, and he must not under any circumstances approach it by steps. Without any interpretation, we all realize the wonderful significance and suggestiveness of these simple requirements.

The altar is to be of earth, it is to be of the commonest, it is to be of that which every man or woman could find close at hand, earth, common earth. Build your altar of that; just make a heap of earth, that is all! Is that all? No! There is more. Listen: "In every place where I record My name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." Wherever a man shall thus erect his altar of earth God will come to him, and from that moment of revelation, man would understand the meaning of the altar he had erected in the twilight. Wherever a man gets earth together and erects an altar, God comes there, heaven touches earth, God is nigh at hand. His approach to the human soul is dependent on that desire of the human soul for Him which expresses itself in the sacramental symbol of the heap of earth. There, says God, I will come to him.

If the altar be of stone, then let it be of unhewn stone. No tool must be lifted on it; there must be nothing of artifice in the symbol of approach to God, nothing to create self-consciousness in the worshiper, no human workmanship. Note the appalling severity of the word. Who can doubt the accuracy of it: "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it"? No steps to the altar, no approach by climbing, "that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon." How appallingly human nakedness is discovered when by its ornate ritual it attempts to get near to God. This man

says—nay verily, let me be true to the context—this Church says, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing," and the Watcher with eyes of fire says, "Thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked." That is a Church climbing to the altar by steps carved and beautiful, by a ritual which is self-conscious and self-assertive. In these ultimate matters of the dealing of the soul with God, the altar must be of the earth or of unhewn stones, of such things that man can find in them nothing that ministers to his own pride. There will I meet with thee, says God.

"We have an altar." If the altar shall be seen to be the Lord Christ, then let me say the things that are in my own heart. The wonder of God's revelation of Himself in Christ is the simplicity of Christ, the humanness of Christ, the fact that in all the brief period of His revelation in human history He walked the plane—I hardly like the word, but let me use it—of the commonplace. If some of us had lived with Him as He then lived, we would not have spoken to Him. He had no social position. He was of the earth, the lowest of all the low, and the lowliest of all the lowly! That is the marvel. There are some of us to whom others will not speak, and we are angry. He was not angry. It is not only true that in that human life of His He was beneath the notice of some people; it is also true that He was perfectly happy there. If in His presence those who hold their fellows in contempt are rebuked, those who in turn hold in contempt those who hold them in contempt are also rebuked. Do not forget this. Again forgive the phrase—there is no meaning in it in this connection in Ruskin's sense—but here we find the true ethics of the dust! Christ is an altar for me of the common dust, the clay of my humanity! Yet, so help me God, I would not speak irreverently of that common clay of my humanity; that is the only glory I have. All other things are accidental trappings, to be destroyed in the fire, that eremacausis, the slowly burning fire of God, that is always destroying effete things. The accidental things that separate men are being destroyed in that fire, blessed be God!

When a man in the hour of crisis readjusts things his first business is to find himself anew in Christ in the common fact of his humanity, and to strip himself of all the ornaments and accidentals by which he thinks he rises—and by which he does seem to rise a little way above his fellows. Do you remember what Mr. Dooley said about the skyscrapers of New York? They are called skyscrapers, by everything except the sky! Let that be a parable, and there I leave it. When I want to readjust things in hours of crisis, of sin, or sorrow, or tragedy, my first business is to get to the altar of Christ which is of the earth, and, stripping myself of everything else, put my manhood by the side of His Manhood. That is the first thing, the great thing, the sublime thing. I never climb to God on the steps I have carved. I climb to God when I descend to the dignity of my naked humanity on the earth and in the dust; and when, lying there, I find the Son of Man, for there also I find heaven opened, for He is also Son of God. He will interpret my problem and heal my wounds and illuminate my darkness. There is no approach to God by climbing.

Heaven comes down our souls to greet,

And glory crowns the mercy seat.

I glance back once more over all the pages of the past, and find the altar was the symbol of human conditions. When the altar was neglected there was individual, social, national weakness. One of the first signs of true revival was repairing altars and erecting new ones. When the altars were whole, and used, there were times of prosperity.

I leave these larger applications this morning, for I am more occupied with the individual. Unless I take this crisis to which I have come to the altar which is also an altar of sacrifice, then it is going to harm me, whatever its character may be. A new joy having come into your life, my brother—a joy of God, and from God, and intended for you—which does not make you erect your altar, a joy in the experience of which you do not go back for readjustment to the altar, will work you harm, however beneficent it may seem. Let me now speak tenderly, but as faithfully as I know how. Some of you are brooding over a sorrow, nursing it persistently; you have never taken it to your Lord, you have never erected your altar, have never stripped yourself in the presence of the Man Christ Jesus and found in Him the solace of grace, and through Him your way to God. Sorrow like a bird of evil omen, with its black wings outstretched, is blighting your life, and, more, it is spoiling the lives around you. Let us fulfil the symbolism of the past in the light of the new, and erect our altar and find our way into that fellowship with God that comes through Christ.

We have an altar, not in Jerusalem, not in any official place, but outside the camp and on the earth. This altar is for every occasion of life, and especially for those that are marked as special, an occasion of joy or of sorrow, of victory or of defeat, of holiness or of sin.

I have said nothing of the appeal of this passage. I conclude by referring to it and asking you to consider what the writer of the letter said. There are two kinds of sacrifices which we are to offer on our altar. First, praises to God, and, second, "to do good and to communicate forget not," that is the giving of benefits to other men. To erect this altar is always to be constrained, first, to praise God, and then to be driven out on the pathway of beneficent helpful service.

If in this hour of sudden crisis, on this day that stands out from the rest by reason of sudden joy or swift sorrow, I cannot do that which sometimes one feels would be helpful, erect an actual altar and slay a victim and watch the fires burn it, still, let me remember that all the spiritual things suggested by that act are mine in Christ. He is the sacrifice, through Him burns the perpetual fire, and in Him the elemental things of my soul may be restored, purged, lifted, renewed, satisfied. Then let us who have the altar use it to the glory of His name.

Hebrews 13:13. Christian Citizenship: Co-Operation In The Building.

Hebrews 13:13.

Christian Citizenship: Co-Operation In The Building.

Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.

Hebrews 13:13

This is the final injunction of the letter to the Hebrews, and the final application of our study during these four Sunday evenings.

In our previous studies, we have seen that the ultimate passion burning in the heart of the men and women of faith, inspiring their pilgrimage, creating their battle, enabling their building, was not a passion for their own personal salvation, but for the ultimate victory of God in the world, that which is figuratively described as the building of the city of God. All these men of vision, revealed to us in the Divine library, were men who looked through the mists and fogs to the dawn of a glorious day, to the establishment of the order of Heaven on earth, to the completion of the city of God, to the restoration of the sin-blighted world to the Kingdom of God.

Because we also are pilgrims, warriors, builders of faith, we have no abiding city here, for the city has never yet been built in which the principles of the Divine government obtain full and perfect mastery. Nevertheless, we, pilgrims, warriors, builders of faith, do not spend our time in useless lament—we seek after the city which is to come. By the clear vision of it, by acceptance of all the principles of the government of God and obedience to them within our own lives, and then by definite endeavor we prepare for the coming of the Kingdom—we become workers together with God both in His battle against evil and in His building of His city. "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

The word is as startling and as revolutionary today as it was when the Lord first uttered the principle in the ears of Peter and the disciples at Caesarea Philippi. "From that time Jesus began to shew unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

Let us first reverently attempt to look upon the position of our Lord as indicated in these words, "without the camp." Quite simply they mean that our Lord was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem; that is the thought embodied in the hymn of our childhood, sacred to us all—"There is a green hill far away Without a city wall."

Now it is quite evident that He set His face from the beginning of His ministry toward death as the culmination of His mission. In His own heart, and according to His own conception, the ultimate warrant for all His teaching and all His doing was the Cross. When they challenged Him as to the right by which He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem, He answered them in figures of speech, which they could not then understand, but which were explained afterward by John: "Destroy this

temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; thus claiming that His right to cleanse the temple of God was the right of His Cross and coming resurrection. Passing over all the intermediate spaces in His ministry, we come to the final movements, and we see how with calm, definite deliberation, born of a clearly defined purpose, He set His face toward Jerusalem. The Cross lay before Him as part of the process leading on to resurrection, which was the culmination of His mission. Neither the ideals of His teaching, nor the splendor of His example, completed the meaning of His work; but always, in His thinking and deliberate intention, the Cross and resurrection. Apart from these, to use His own language, He was straitened, limited, and prevented from fulfilling His high and holy purpose. Therefore, as we see Him going out through the gate of the city, away from the center of the life of the people, outside the city over which He had wept, we are to remember He is going, out of His own deliberate choice and will, to the Cross arranged for and accomplished by the Lord Himself. That is the historic background of our text.

He thus left the city because of the sin within the city; because of its godlessness, its selfishness; because these things were not only manifest, but held mastery over every department of the city's life; the priests, the princes, the people, and the publicans, were against Him at the last. Against Him, not for personal reasons, but upon the ground of His presentation of the Kingdom of God, and His call to men to repent. Against Him, because His ideals were wholly spiritual. He touched life always at the spiritual center and from there moved out to all the suburbs of the mental and the physical. For that reason the city of Jerusalem, through its priests, its princes, its publicans, its people, was entirely opposed to Him. It was impossible for Him, in the city as she then was, to fulfil the Divine ideals. The whole movement of life was against Him. He gave Jerusalem His high ethic, and all His peerless example; but not by these things could He build the city of God or ransom the lost. It was necessary to move outside the gate, and beyond the camp, for the accomplishment of the work.

He went outside the gate, as the writer here says, "that He might sanctify the people." This was separation from the city in order to create an evangel for the city. It was the excommunication of a nation, in order to the making of a nation; the dooming of a city, in order to complete the building of a city; the passing out of chaos, in order to set at liberty forces which would restore the cosmos.

Then mark the nature of His activity; "He suffered without the gate." Look back upon the scene. If we could only see it in all simplicity as it actually happened; He was crucified as a malefactor between two thieves. To the ideal presented, to the ethic enunciated, that is man's answer; the answer not of those whom in our foolish pride we describe as the lower orders; but the answer of light and learning and intelligence; of the highest intellectual capacities in Jerusalem. "Outside the gate... without the camp."

There through suffering He created a new center. The old was to be destroyed because of its departure from the Divine. He returned to the Divine, and made possible the new. In Exodus we have the same principle illustrated. When the people had sinned, Moses came into the midst of the camp, and carried the tabernacle outside the camp and pitched it there. He said in effect: "By your sin you have exiled God, and by this act you are all excommunicated; there is but one way back, it is that you find your way to the new center created; for God Whom you have exiled can only return to you as you return to Him in obedience and repentance."

At the moment when our Lord turned his back upon Jerusalem and passing through its gate, suffered without the camp; He excommunicated the nation, put an end to the temple, abandoned the economy; but He did it in order that He might make a new tent of meeting, a new tent of testimony, a new point at which God and man should come together, a new center where God and man could be restored to fellowship with each other.

In the mystery of that hour, outside the city, outside the temple, in His suffering and His dying, He was standing, in the eternal economy of God, inside the veil as the great High Priest, accomplishing for humanity that infinite mystery of sacrifice whereby it should be possible for man to return to God, and God to return to man.

It may be that in the mind of someone listening to me the question may be arising, What have these things to do with our Christian citizenship in London? Everything. In the first sermon of the series, we saw that the city cannot be our abiding place because it is contrary to godliness; in the next we considered our responsibility of seeking the city of God, in preparation for the coming of the King; in the third we saw that God Himself amid all the chaos is working toward the cosmos and building His city. The present study shows that we can only be workers with God, and builders with Him, as we pass by the way of separation and sacrifice to the place outside the city gate; the place without the camp, where is to be the new center of the new city; because there new forces are operative by which individual men, and so the city, the nation, the race, can be made fit in the economy of heaven.

If we are to help God in the building of His city, we must be men and women outside the city, discontented with the city as it is; so living that the city becomes discontented with us.

Has the offence of the Cross ceased? It has not ceased. If we know nothing of the offence of the Cross, it is because we have not yet followed Him without the camp bearing His reproach. With absolute sincerity it may be, but with appalling ignorance let me also hasten to add, we may hope to reconstruct the cities of men apart from the Cross of our Lord. We shall never do it. The only way is that of resurrection and ascension; and that is the way of true fellowship with Him in separation to the offence of the Cross. The offence of the Cross abides. The Cross of Christ is as offensive today as it ever was. It is foolishness still to the Greek, a stumbling-block to the Jew. I spoke last Sunday evening of the great world powers represented by Pilate's superscription. What does the Cross mean to them? What was the Cross to the Roman? A gibbet, a gallows, a thing utterly offensive. What was it to the Greek? Foolishness. What was the Cross to the Hebrew? A stumbling-block, something devoid of power, over which men stumbled, and which they were determined to be rid of as offensive to fine religious instincts. The Cross has been the power of God unto salvation for nineteen centuries, and there is no other power of God unto salvation. Men today are as surely offended by the Cross as ever they were; offended by the idea that man can only be redeemed through suffering which has its symbol in blood; and offended by this deepest fact of Christianity, because acceptance of redemption that way, and fellowship in redeeming others that way, involve personal communion with and in the Cross. Yet this is the appeal of the text, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp." Let us become disinherited men and women, suffering the loss of all things, content even to suffer the loss of rights if by loss of them we can help other men; men and women abandoned of all the powers of the world. The power of the world said to our Lord, just ere He passed through the gate away to suffering, through the

Roman Procurator, "Art Thou then a King?" "What is truth?" The culture of the world looked at the Cross and said it was foolishness. The religion of the world looked at the Cross and said the Cross was a stumbling-block. The reproach of the Cross, the offence of the Cross. Only as we get into fellowship with that reproach, that offence, only as we are willing to be at the end of that pride which affirms the possibility of reconstruction apart from that Cross, shall we ever be workers together with God for reconstruction.

Of course, I am dealing with reconstruction; with the necessity for it in human nature as I find it. If you have a nature that needs no redemption, if you were born of such as need no redemption, then do not be angry with the preacher, but listen; Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If it may be granted that there are men and women who need no repentance, righteous men and women, then let them remember that they must not take the Christian name, for Christ said He did not come after them. His business in the world is with sinning men, with ruined men; with chaos, in order that He may restore it to cosmos; in order that He may save—gracious word, never to be dropped out of our vocabulary—that He may save the sinner; that He may remake the flotsam and jetsam, until it is beautiful for the palace and home of God; that He may build the city that never has been built by reason of human sin; and build it by so dealing with sin at its devilish heart as to cancel it and break its power forever. That is the mission of Christ.

The appeal of this series of sermons, and of this evening's sermon, is to souls that desire to be with Him in that work, the work that is necessary wherever you look. My comrades, you cannot get very near to this world's heart without getting very near to its agony; and you cannot get near to the world's agony without getting near to its sin; sin underneath all the veneer of the West as well as patent in the vice of the East.

Sin; how will you deal with sin? With the liar who tells you he is a liar, and hating it cannot end it; with the polluted man dripping with filth, who hates his filth but cannot break away from it? How are you going to deal with these men and women, for Christ's mission is with such; "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

When I look at the city of God—at the vision of which we glanced last Sunday evening in the Book of Revelation—there are two things that fill my soul with wonder. On the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel, and on the foundations the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. We have missed the significance of the symbolism of that great vision if we have thought that these are the names of men of naturally fine and noble character upon the foundations. Nothing of the sort. Let the man whom some of us most admire tell us—for I verily believe that Paul's name is among the apostles of the Lamb,—he says of himself that he was "chief of sinners." On the gates of the city are the names of a failing, disobedient crowd of men who handed on the forces of failure to their sons. The names on the foundations are those of men who were sinning men, and who chant the anthem of redemption as they say, "Who loveth us, and loosed us from our sin by His blood; and He made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father." The city of God is a city of ransomed, redeemed, regenerated humanity, the work of One Who came into human history and laid hands upon the chaos in order that He might restore cosmos. If we are going to help to build that city, we must go with Him by the way of His Cross.

To speak only of the Cross is not to deliver the whole of the Christian message. Said Paul, "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead." It is that "was raised" which is the final word of the Christian evangel. If I leave the city and find my way to Him without the camp, I am coming to a new center of humanity. He looked on to the Cross, and in the midst of a great multitude of men, in answer to the inquiry of the intellectual Greeks as represented to Him by two of His own disciples, He said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." What did He mean by "now"? To what was he referring? Read the context and it will be seen that He spoke in anticipation of His Cross. By the way of the Cross is the judgment of the world, is the casting out of the prince of the world, is the drawing of humanity back to Himself, and the consequent building of the city of God. If we go forth bearing His reproach, we come to this new center of discrimination, of judgment; this new center of repelling power over the forces of evil; the prince of this world cast out; this new center of attraction and healing. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."

Mark the sacred, holy paradox. To come with Him without the camp is to come with Him within the veil, to the very heart of the sanctuary, into true fellowship with God. To come with Him through the gate, to the camp, to the place of reproach; is to find our way into the place of peace, of communion; is to find our way to the dynamic center from which the forces flow, for the doing of that which cannot be done in other ways.

That is one reason why I read not merely that one passage in the thirteenth chapter but that which is a part of it in the twelfth chapter, "Ye are come," not merely you will come, not merely the ultimate and final victory, but "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

To follow Him outside the gate, without the camp, to the place of reproach is to come to the center of actual present accomplishment of the purposes of God; and to assurance of their ultimate accomplishment, to the widest bound and reach of the universe of God. We come to a new center. We pass within the veil. We come to a place where the old ideals are reborn and the old forces are renewed and remade. We come to the place which in the history of the world will finally result in the acceptance by men of the truth that government cannot be by might, but that it must be by right; we come to the place where the culture of the world will be reborn; science, art, music, literature were through that Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ born anew. Whatever there had been of these before the age in which He came was decadent and ruined. The great philosophy of Socrates had withered, and men were disobedient. The idea of Epicurus that men should get back to the simple life; or that of the Stoics, who aimed at high ideals of virtue; these things were perished, and even while the words of the ancient philosophies were upon the lips of the Greek teachers, the vital forces were at an end. But they were reborn in the Cross. With all its rugged severity it demanded forever more simplicity of life and strenuousness of life in order to bring about the fulfilment of being and to cooperation with the purposes of God. At that center, outside the city beyond the gate, spiritual religion was reborn, and by way of that Cross men have come to know that neither in Jerusalem or in any mountain set apart do men find God; but wherever they turn to Him and meet Him at the trysting-place of His love as revealed in His Cross,

there do they find Him.

The urgency of the appeal is this, there can be no sanctification of the people or of the city save by cooperation with Christ in this method of self-sacrifice; this consent to fellowship with Him in His Cross. Here only is the place untouched of storms, for here was the center of the whirlwind. Here only is the place of action with God, in the building of the city.

If we are truly pilgrims of faith, warriors of faith, builders of faith, then let us remember we cannot dwell in Jerusalem sharing its life, and by talking of the Cross, redeem it. We cannot dwell in London and be of London, of its desire and of its amusement and of its philosophies, and save it. There must be utter separation, with a clear line of demarcation between those who have seen the vision and are walking the way of God toward the victory, and those who are content with godlessness. That is the first requirement for being able to help the city, or to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom or to cooperate in the building of the city of God.

Our only business as Christian men and women in London is that of missionaries. "What," someone says, "are you saying that all we have to do is to preach this gospel at the street corners, and preach this gospel by the distribution of literature?" No, nothing of the kind. Every relationship is our opportunity for proclaiming this evangel and bringing men into fellowship with this Christ of the Cross; our business by our strict integrity therein, and even by denying self therein for the sake of the man who is struggling by our side is our opportunity for building. That is Christianity. In social life and in municipal life, by standing for the crown rights of the Lord Christ, we build the City of God. We are to be separated to these things on six days of the week as well as on the seventh; by definite, honest, sacrificial toil, declaring the evangel; and by getting hold one by one of broken, bruised, battered men and women, and leading them to this Christ.

It is very little in the great whole that I can do, or that you can do, my brother. Thank God for the great whole; but do not let us forget that there is no great whole of God if we neglect our little. He has chosen, in an infinite mystery, which is also infinite wisdom, to limit Himself in His work for the restoration and salvation of men and of the race, to those who name His name and wear His sign, and share His life. Thus, the final appeal is the word of the text: "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Hebrews 13:14. Christian Citizenship: No Abiding City.

Hebrews 13:14.

Christian Citizenship: No Abiding City.

For we have not here an abiding city.

Hebrews 13:14

It is reported that the great German Chancellor, Bismarck, declared on one occasion that great cities are great sores upon the body politic. I do not suppose any of us who are at all familiar, experimentally with the cities of today, or from our reading, with the history of the cities of the world, will be inclined to differ from that opinion. The history of cities has through all time been the history of the gathering together of men, and the presence among them of forces which destroy. We are perpetually confronted in our dealing with human nature with two apparently contradictory impulses. The first is that of the gathering together of men into the life of the city; and the second is that of the ceaseless and almost restless desire to be away from the city.

"We have not here an abiding city," wrote this teacher of the Hebrew people, and the words, as you will remember, occur in the midst of the great argument concerning faith; its nature, its operation, its rewards; and the postponement of its final victory. The words of my text are taken from that chapter in the letter which is, as to the argument, the continuation of the teaching commenced at the close of the tenth chapter, running through the eleventh, and continuing until the close of the treatise. If we remind ourselves of the underlying teaching of that entire paragraph, we shall come to a better understanding of the meaning of our text.

The letter to the Hebrews is a letter written in order to warn men against the specific sin of unbelief. It illuminates for us, therefore, as perhaps no other writing in the Bible does, the true meaning of faith. It reveals the fact that faith is not merely intellectual apprehension and conviction of truth; and shows that faith is the assent of the will, and the yielding of the life, to the claim of the truth of which the mind is convinced. It is the letter, if I may say so, which more than any other writing of the Bible gives Biblical force and warrant to the suggestion of the title of Professor James's essay, "The Will to Believe"; showing forevermore that belief in its profoundest sense is not conviction merely, but conduct proceeding out of conviction, and harmonizing with the conviction. From beginning to end the writer has but one sin in mind, the sin of unbelief; that is, the sin of refusing to yield obedience to the claim of the truth, when the truth has brought conviction to the mind.

The positive teaching of the letter is that of the superiority of the Christian economy to all that had preceded it; the superiority of the revelation by the Son, to the ministration of angels; the superiority of the leadership of the Son, to that of Moses who led the people out but could not lead them in, and to that of Joshua who led the people in but could not give them rest; the superiority of the priesthood of the Son, to that of Aaron who perpetually repeated sacrifices which brought no

peace to the conscience. After these arguments we have the illustrations of those who by faith, that is, by yielding to the claim of the truth, wrought righteousness, subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire; and marched through seas of blood and through ever darkening perils to victory; and who by their activities of faith laid all the ages under debt to them for their triumphs. In the course of that great illustrative chapter, the central thought is that these pilgrims of faith, warriors of faith, builders of faith, were forever moving forward toward the establishment of a city. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees because in it he could find no rest, and he left it seeking a city whose Builder and Maker is God. That chapter is gathered carefully around that central word of revelation; and thus we discover that the march of these men, their pilgrimage, their warfare, their constructive passion, were inspired by the vision of a city, a city established, a city of perfect order, a city Whose Builder and Framer is God.

The eleventh chapter of the letter closes with this very significant declaration, that while these men of faith of bygone days saw the city afar off, set their faces toward it, made persistent pilgrimage to reach it, fought opposing forces on their way, yet they never reached the goal toward which they ran, or saw the city built. "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

It would be possible to write a continuation of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews; we could gather the names of apostles, confessors, martyrs, reformers, statesmen, prophets, preachers; and if we did so, thus completing the list of the pilgrims, warriors, builders of faith; then of all those who have crossed the borderline and are out of our sight, we should still have to say, the goal is not yet reached, "these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise."

Now in order that we may take this first part of the larger text and understand it, I must tarry a moment longer to add something to that already said concerning this pilgrimage, this warfare, this passion of the men of faith. What, according to this whole contextual teaching really is the goal toward which these men ran; and toward which men of faith have ever been moving through the centuries? The hymn we sang together will mislead us unless we are careful.

I am not saying we should not sing it; there are values in the hymn and we shall continue to use it; but the idea of our hymn was that the pilgrim hosts are moving toward the heaven that lies beyond.

We are travelling home to God,

In the way the Fathers trod.

They are happy now, and we

Soon their happiness shall see.

That is not the teaching of this letter. I am not denying the reality of the heaven that lies beyond. Some day by God's good grace and by the merit of the Saviour I hope to reach it. But that is not the pilgrimage, that is not the warfare. We are not fighting to build heaven. The living Lord passed out of sight saying in infinite tenderness and pity and love and compassion to His fearful followers, "I go to prepare a place for you"; and that He will assuredly do.

What then is this pilgrimage, what is this warfare? What is the consuming passion of the men of faith? I answer that inquiry superlatively, that I may state it briefly. He has gone to prepare a place for us beyond; our business is to prepare this place for Him. The city which Abraham went to seek was not a city postponed beyond this world; but the city of God established on the earth; the city of God, the symbol of the whole wide world subdued to the Kingship of God. Toward that the men of faith have ever moved. Toward that the men of faith are moving still today. The supreme passion of faith is not the selfish desire to win heaven, but the self-emptying desire and devotion to win the earth for God.

It is not my intention now, or indeed on the three subsequent Sunday evenings in which I propose to tarry with this line of consideration, to deal with dispensations and methods; all these are interesting and valuable, but they are not within the province of the present consideration. We are looking at the ultimate desire, the ultimate passion, of the men of faith. It is a passion for the establishment of the Divine order, or in figurative language, for the building of the city of God. To this the whole Bible bears witness. You open it, and you are introduced quite quickly to a garden scene. You read through it, and you journey in spirit along the way of the wilderness, over which there is a highway, a way of battle and of turmoil and of strife. You come to the closing book; and you find the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem; not heaven, but a city descending out of heaven; and while you look, you hear the all-inclusive anthem, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." The Bible is a mirror giving us human history from the Divine standpoint, and revealing those methods of God with men, and those methods of men with God, whereby from the garden man comes ultimately to the city.

In every human being there is a sense of the city, and the desire for the city. However much we would if we could—and let me say it quite bluntly, we would if we could—keep our young people away from great cities, and let them live in the country; we cannot keep them away, the lure of the city is in the heart of the young, they crowd toward the city. I am not discussing the question from the economic standpoint, but from the human standpoint. The underlying passion for the city is according to the Divine purpose, according to the Divine will; one of the primal forces of life, one of the elemental things of human nature, from which there can be no escape.

Whether you count the Scripture lesson of this evening as poetry or history, for the moment I care nothing, I am after its central lesson. The first city the Bible names was built by Cain, a murderer, a self-centered man, whose offering was refused because he was refused. That is the first city to which the Bible refers. The naming of names will be enough to help us to see the history of cities since; Sodom, Babylon, Nineveh, Carthage, Rome, Paris, London, New York; a long, continuous succession, and always the same thing, the city expressing human failure as nothing else can; startling the ages, and inevitably passing and perishing; in the time of their existence places where evil gathers, and where Satan's seat is; then crumbling to decay.

Man is always attempting to build a city; he has never yet built a city. Why? Because man has been attempting to construct a city out of a garden, in forgetfulness of the God of the garden, and the laws of his own life in relationship to that God.

"We have not here an abiding city." Why not? Let us answer that question first, by reminding ourselves of what the Christian character really is, and what it therefore demands.

The first essential element of the Christian character is the death of self—so easily said, so imperfectly understood, so little realized—the death of self; not the destruction of self, but the death of self, so far as self is a separate personality thinking only of itself and making all outside forces minister to its own well-being and advancement. The Lord Christ begins by saying to men, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself... and follow Me." That is the central fact of Christian experience, denial of self.

The result in the economy of grace is holiness of character; purity of motive; holiness and righteousness, the two sides of the one great pure Christly character; holiness, rectitude of character; righteousness, rectitude of conduct springing out of rectitude of character. Add to these two things that one inclusive word which has in it the fire of holiness and the passion of self-denial, the great word love. These are the distinctive elements of Christian character.

What is the result wherever these things are realized? A new refinement; life finding self realization according to the original purpose of God through self denial; life set free from all the vulgarities that spoil, and coming into realization of all the refinement and beauty of character which once had its manifestation in human history in the Person of our Lord Christ, the Man of Nazareth. And not refinement only; but that permanence which defies decay, which realizes that the things of past failure are things of no moment; which enables a man to think of death as transition merely, and to challenge the rider upon the pale horse, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

What are the resultant needs of the people who share this character? A dwelling place in harmony; the congregating together of like characters; enterprise inspired only by such motives; the City of God. The presence and work of our Lord in the world was for the creation of these characteristics, and of this character. I go further, and say that the presence and work of our Lord in the world has resulted in the creation of these characteristics and of this character. Dealing with individual men, He communicates the dynamic force which produces the change; and those who are so converted, turned back again to the Divine ideal for humanity, born again, find their life centered no longer in self but in God, and are conscious of the passion for holiness without which no man can see the Lord, and feel within them the thrill and throb and driving of this great eternal life. Those who partake of these characteristics become men and women who are constrained to say, "We have not here an abiding city." The men of faith are homeless in this world, having no place where they can perfectly rest; having no place where the surroundings are in harmony with the mysterious and mighty forces of their own life, as created by their contact with this Lord Christ Himself.

Turn from that first consideration, and think of earthly cities. We have already glanced at them in general outline, having named several. Plato declared that the origin of the city was the desire of man to protect himself against marauding and wild beasts. Aristotle declared—and came far nearer to the deepest truth—that the city was the outcome of the social instinct in individual life. Moses, in the chapter I read, does not attempt to give us a philosophy; but tells the story of the building of a city; it was an attempt to make out of a garden a city, and an attempt to do it without God. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, by which the writer did not at all attempt to suggest a localized Deity, but in figurative language spoke of a man who turned his back upon God and chose his own way, determined to carve his own fortune, and be independent of the

Divine government and instruction. He went out from the presence of the Lord and built a city. In that case the city was the outcome of social instincts on the lowest levels; and men still look upon cities as opportunities for self-aggrandizement, and for ministering to covetousness. What is the history of London at this moment? Write it in one brief and burning word, the survival of the strongest—not the survival of the fittest, the fittest is not always the strongest. If you doubt it, stand any Saturday night upon the Embankment with our men who are doing work which is perhaps the most sacred of any we are trying to do, touching the flotsam and jetsam of the city, unemployable men, many of them; but mostly men unemployed as the result of the grind of brute strength flinging out weakness. If you could be divested of your accidental—or if you prefer the word providential—resources, and put down here in this great city with its tides of life and its abundant wealth, what would you do? In spite of all your education and ability, you would be ground with the rest. London is selfish to its heart and core. It is not peculiar in that. That is true of every city in the world today.

Perhaps, after all, there is no city more eloquent to the man of faith than Rome, the eternal city—oh, the irony of it! Those who have stood in Rome will understand what I mean. Rome is in three layers, pagan, ecclesiastical, modern; and the weakest of these is the modern. I am speaking materially of course. There was a strength in pagan Rome which abides until this day in spite of the overlaying of ecclesiastical Rome. There was the strength of awful cunning in ecclesiastical Rome, that abides in hoary magnificence in spite of the newer Rome that is arising. Three layers of failure; perpetual memorials of man's inability to build an eternal city without God.

Whatever city you come into, throughout the world, you will find the same thing. Why? Because of the man who builds; because the man attempting to build is self-centered and not God-centered; because at the heart of city life, varying its expression, changing its garments, altering its methods, there always sits enthroned the individualism of selfishness. Look at the advertisements on the hoardings or in the newspapers, and listen to the song of self! The Greatest Boon ever offered to the Public! The Greatest Discovery on Earth! The Largest Retail—something—in the World! Buy of Me: Take My Wares: They are the Best! What does that mean? Make me rich, whatever other man may suffer. Selfishness is everywhere.

If these are the incidental symptoms, the essential malady is godlessness, forgetfulness of God. Have you given up the story of Babel? Restore it to your Bible for it is the veritable truth. Let us make us a name! Let us be a confederacy independent of all men, and of God Himself! That is the ancient story of the Bible; but you can find it in tomorrow's newspaper in the last Trust formed, the newest monopoly cursing the earth: Selfishness! That is the history of the city. Self in its lowest forms, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life; with a neglect of all those who are unequal to the strife and the struggle. Great cities are great sores upon the body politic.

"We have not here an abiding city." And again, why not? Because there can be no harmony between the principle of self-death and the principle of selfishness; between the method of sacrificial service and the mastery of covetousness; between the determined proclamation of the evangel that declares salvation for the lost, and the determined propagation of the philosophy which is expressed in the words, the survival of the strongest. The two things contradict each other necessarily and perpetually. We have here no continuing city for we are men of faith; men who believe in God and in holiness and in love. The cities of earth are built by men of sight, attempting

to do without God; who speak of sin as though it were an infirmity which does not very much matter: who prate of love but never practice it in commerce, statesmanship, or social life.

Here we have no continuing city. The conserving elements are lacking, and the corrupting elements are regnant. "Change and decay in all around I see." How often we glibly sing it; it is true also in this wider sense. We might write it over cities everywhere, over the cities of today. We may pull down our barns and build greater; but if God only comes into the life by an after-thought, by the use of the disjunctive conjunction "but," of what use are the barns and the produce laid within them, and the things in which we make our boast?

Here we have no continuing city, because the men of faith are a continuing people, those who are to put on incorruption, which cannot dwell in corruption. It is only when the elements of corruption are eliminated, and the leprosy of sin is dealt with in human life, that the city of God will be built. "Here we have not an abiding city."

What one would like to do is to preach next Sunday evening's sermon at once, for all this is preliminary. I would not like anyone to go away saying that the preacher has declared the aloofness of the men of faith; that they have no continuing city, and therefore, that they have nothing whatever to do with the cities in which they live; that they have no responsibilities concerning the cities of today. That is not the teaching of the passage, and I pray you listen to the rest of the verse, the sermon will matter little, "we seek after the city which is to come." Not we seek one that lies beyond, but we, the men of faith, discontented with things as they are, seek the city of God, moving ever towards it.

Whatever the future may have in store for us, today we have no home on earth as a people. I am convinced that the first lesson of powerful service is that of the separation indicated by the Abrahamic indices of tent and altar. There, at the center of the Hebrew line of worthies rises the great figure of Abraham who left Ur of the Chaldees and went forth to seek a city. What were the signs of his attitude? The tent and altar. The tent; easily struck, easily carried, easily pitched, and as easily struck again. The altar, wherever there is a tent, a place of worship, a place of recognition of God, a place to which to come for the renewing of vision and the communication of virtue. These two things are the symbols of the life which leads on to victory.

The measure of the separation of Christian men from the maxims and methods and motives of the cities of men is the measure in which they are able to correct the things that are wrong; to destroy the forces that destroy; to construct the city of God. We men of faith make no greater mistake than when we take up our abode in any city of earth saying: "Here are we, and of this city we are citizens"; saying in contradiction to the great word of the letter, Here we have found our abiding city! No, the tent is the symbol of the life of the man of faith; always ready to be disturbed by the Divine government, always ready to respond to the command to move away to bear witness somewhere else. That is the first lesson, but not the last, not the final one.

There is much to be done while we sojourn in the tent. We shall have to pray for Lot and for Sodom; we must go out and fight for the rescue of Lot; but there will always be Melchisedek, the Priest to meet us on our way, and minister to our needs. The first lesson is that of the tent, side by side with the altar.

The Church of God—speaking now in more general terms—can only help the nation, as she is composed of pilgrims, warriors, builders of faith who dwell in tents, and erect altars, and work with sword and with trowel for the building of the city of God.

Our only true content should be in our abiding discontent with everything unlike God. That is but another way of saying all I have been trying to say. The measure in which we sit down in the city, and are content with it, and rejoice over it, and are satisfied with it as it is, is the measure in which we have lost our vision of the City of God, and personal fellowship with the God of the city.

Out of our supreme content and rest in God and in His will, arises the restlessness of perpetual protest against everything that is unlike God. That is the driving force which will enable us to destroy the destructive, and to help in the building of the city of God. Pilgrims, warriors, builders, "We have not here an abiding city"!

Hebrews 13:14. Christian Citizenship: The Search For The City.

Hebrews 13:14.

Christian Citizenship: The Search For The City.

For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come.

Hebrews 13:14

On Sunday evening last we took the first part of this verse, "We have not here an abiding city." This evening our subject is the second part, "We seek after the city which is to come."

The "We" of the writer refers to the men of faith, those who live by faith in God, those who share the vision of the ultimate victory of God in human history.

The declaration occurs in the letter which is preeminently intended to warn the men of faith against the perils of apostasy; the letter in which no specific sin is dealt with, but from the beginning to the end of which the one all-inclusive sin of unbelief is the only sin in the mind of the writer; the letter that perhaps in some ways more wonderfully than any other writing in the Bible sets before us the movements of the Divine economy, and shows how they all center in the Son of God; the letter which opens with the magnificent thunder that announces the fact of God, and proceeds immediately to the all-inclusive declaration that the God of the universe has not left men without witness and without testimony, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son"; the letter that from that first and wonderful declaration proceeds to show that the speech of the Son is superior to all preceding it and absolutely final; superior to that ministry of angels whereby the ancient economy was initiated; superior to the great leaders of men, to Moses who led the people out and could not lead them in, to Joshua, who led them in but could not give them rest; superior as Priest, abiding forever, Priest in the power of an endless life; superior as the File-leader of the men of faith, going first in the great procession, taking precedence over all others by reason of the clearness of His vision of the ultimate issue, and by reason of the splendor of His devotion to the process of travail and pain by which the triumph will come.

It is in this letter that the writer says, speaking of faithful souls, adventurers upon the great highway, those who have seen the promise but never yet have realized it, "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

Our Bible opens with a garden; it closes with a city; and the garden and the city are alike of earth. The final vision is that of Jerusalem—not heaven, but coming down out of heaven to earth, as a bride adorned for her husband; and the great anthem that celebrates the coming of the City is "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them." Between the garden and the ultimate city, we find all the tragedy of human sin, human failure, human inability; and all the magnificent processes of God's government, forever moving, to our seeming with great slowness, but with infinite sureness, toward the ultimate goal of the establishment in this world of His own

Kingdom, and the realization of His own purpose among the sons of men. Between that garden and that city, there is a long succession of pilgrims of faith, visionary souls, fanatics in the thinking of the men among whom they lived, leaving earthly cities to seek one they saw, but no other saw; abandoning the values of the passing and perishing, because convinced of the values of the eternal and permanent. Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees to seek a city of heaven that lies beyond, to establish a heavenly order in the world, until at last in those wonderful hours when the seer of blue Galilee beheld the ultimate things of the processes of God in the affairs of men, he saw Jerusalem from on high coming out of heaven, and the mystic glory of the established Kingdom flamed before him. If we are of the number of those who see that vision, and hope for that result, who believe that the victory must be won, then we are of the number of those who have to say, "We have not here an abiding city."

What then shall we do? We are men and women who by God's good grace are men and women of vision, who see the ultimate; and understand that the supreme words descriptive of the ultimate are words made precious to us by the ministry of our Lord; men and women who understand, that at last, in the established Kingdom of God and city of God, love will be the all-inclusive reason for activity, light the sufficient intelligence that men may not stumble, and life the energy equal to obedience to love in the power of light.

What shall we do? Shall we wait for the city that is to be, in the sense of selfishly desiring it? That were to deny our Christianity. Then shall we have conventions and conferences and gather ourselves together for the deepening of our own spiritual life, and in order to sing about the heaven to which we shall go when we have done with the bearing of burdens? That were to unfit us for heaven, and demonstrate our unworthiness to enter in. Shall we retire from all the busy activities of the great cities of the world, and shut ourselves within stone walls, and give ourselves to meditation and prayer? That were to miss the very purpose of our life in Christ; that were to cut the nerve of prayer, for men can only pray for the world's woe and wounds as they live near to them, and enter into constant comradeship with them. What then shall we do, for here we have no continuing city?

"We seek after the city which is to come." "We seek!" If I could only fasten that one word, so old and so familiar that it has almost lost its power of appeal, upon mind and heart and conscience, I should thank God for the opportunity given me. Seek! Did the writer of this letter mean that we are to be looking for the heaven that lies beyond? Surely not; for death is the way to that, unless our Lord shall come to gather us to that great and spacious life which lies beyond. That is not the thought at all. That is not the argument of the writer. That is not the master passion that moved pilgrims of faith in the past. Reverently, let me declare it, knowing I am touching upon supreme and superlative things, that was not the master passion that sent our Lord with face set toward Jerusalem, the faltering, falling city. What then does the writer mean? Does he suggest that we should look for some unknown earthly land where we may build this city; that we are to seek some Eldorado? That, my brethren, were in itself of the essence of selfishness. Wherever men have attempted to find some tract of country hitherto unoccupied, in order there to build a new state, a new city, the result has been the condemnation of the method, for the impulse behind such activity is merely that of finding a safe city into which the privileged may gather, and be free from the stress and strain of all the things of conflict. You cannot find me any settlement of men which has attempted to escape from the burden and battle of the actuality of life in city, village, or town, that

has ever justified its own aim or object or been a success; for God lays upon all selfish endeavor the paralysis of His disapproving touch.

The word "seek" has occurred before in our hour of worship. We heard it from the lips of our Lord in the midst of that great Manifesto of the King, wherein everything as I full well know and would perpetually enforce, was spoken to His own disciples and not to the mixed multitudes. To them He said, "Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In that wonderful passage, in which He revealed to men so much of the Father heart of God, showing that God cares for the flowers and the birds that have no ability to think and plan and arrange, and argues that He will therefore much more clothe and feed those to whom He has given the ability to think and plan and arrange; that passage in which He shows the unutterable folly of the man who sets his heart wholly upon treasures that are of the dust, and with a fine touch of sarcasm, mingled with pity, reminds men that moth and rust consume, and thieves break through and steal; that wonderful passage in which He puts into contrast in a way that surprises us the more, the more we study it, with its revelation of His perfect understanding of human nature and the tragedy of human sin, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon"; in that passage we hear Him say, "Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness."

The particular word made use of by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is an emphasized form of this word which our Lord used. It suggests strong passionate desire, accompanied by earnest effort in the direction of the desire. Seek; not merely gazing, in the hope that we may see; not merely superficially looking for, and expecting; but seek. "We seek after the city which is to come."

The thought suggested is not merely that of looking to see if we can find a city built; it is that of fellowship in the process of building the city. We do not merely turn our back upon Ur of the Chaldees, and go wandering forth in the hope that somewhere, sometime, we may discover a city in which the principles of righteousness and truth may obtain; but we turn our back upon Ur of the Chaldees, in order to seek the righteousness of God and His Kingdom, in the establishment of that Kingdom, and the building of that city.

I am not now entering into any discussion as to whether or not there may not be an opening heaven, and the actual descending of a city. I am not Sadducean enough to deny these things. I believe there will be startling surprises when at the crisis of His Advent our Lord will bring all things into subjection to Himself.

I am speaking now, however, of the present responsibility of pilgrims who have no continuing city. As we look back over the long line of heroes and heroines of faith described for us in this letter; or as coming away from them, we track the footway of others through the centuries since the time of our Lord Himself, we find that these men of the pilgrim character, these men and women who found in the cities of earth no permanent resting place, became pilgrims with tent and altar, and sought a city of God by exerting in the cities of men those influences which were possible to them by their comradeship with Christ Himself.

The nature of the seeking is suggested by the words, "The city which is to come." Not the city to which we go, but the city which God is building, and between the building of which by God and the seeking for which by His people, there is the most intimate relationship.

From these most general statements as to the meaning of the text, let us turn to practical application. How can we help toward the establishment of this Kingdom and the building of this city of God? First, by inward and personal realization of the principles of this Kingdom. The citizen of London, who is a Christian man, will help toward the building of the city of God, first by absolute personal abandonment of himself to the Lordship of Christ, by recognizing that Christ is infinitely more to him than an ethical teacher, infinitely more than a great pattern of human life, infinitely more than a Saviour from the punishment of sin and from sin itself.

All this is He, this Lord Christ of ours; ethical Teacher, speaking as men never spake, with a severity so terrible that even today I cannot read the words of His ethical requirement without trembling; perfect Pattern for human life, so that the nearer I come to Him the more I recognize the distance between Himself and myself, perfect Saviour, so that I know in the deepest of me that He has pardoned my sin.

But He must be more than all this to us; He must be Lord and Master of our lives. If I have received from Him the gifts that He bestows, and render to Him absolute obedience, I can cooperate with Him in the building of the city of God, in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God into the world. Everything else will follow when that first principle is realized and yielded to; but nothing else will follow until it is so. There can be no larger seeking for the Kingdom of God until the Kingdom of God has come in our own lives. In other words, we cannot divorce private and public life, and declare that a man can be an influence and instrument for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, if in his own life he is impure. I can strike no blow against the powers of darkness which will tell, if I am allowing them to hold high revel within the citadel of my own personality. In beginning to build the city of God, I make my contribution, first and fundamentally, when I see to it that all my own life is under the Lordship of God's anointed and appointed King.

When that is granted, what next? The search for the city of God within the cities of men is first the result of the presence within those cities of pilgrims of faith who can find no abiding place within. "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world." Salt has no power to change corruption into incorruption. Salt has power to stay the spread of corruption. Salt is aseptic rather than antiseptic. In this great city of London we seek for the city of God as we are true to the life which our Lord has communicated to us, and as salt, purify, preserve, and give to goodness its opportunity. I am particularly anxious that this principle should be recognized by young men and women who name the name of Christ, and have seen the vision of the city, and desire to help in the search for it. You are salt of the earth, your life absolutely yielded to Jesus Christ, in the office, in the warehouse, in the college, wherever you may be, is a life that makes difficult the spread of impurity, that gives a chance to the aspiration after God that is born in the heart of the young man at your side.

Light; I do not think our Lord used His figures carelessly when, illustrating His own word, He said, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house." The city on the hill is for the illumination of vast expanses. The lamp in the house is for the irradiation of private places. Wherever these pilgrims of faith live with their tent and altar; pilgrims, ever ready to be disturbed; men of faith, never disturbed in the midst of disturbance; there is the light, revealing God to men, by revealing all that life means when men have found the Kingdom of God and have entered into it for

themselves. By such living we make contribution to the coming of the Kingdom. By such living we seek for the Kingdom of God; and only by such living.

Why was it that Lot did not save Sodom? He could not help Sodom because Sodom knew that his motive for living there was selfish; that of gaining, getting. So also the Christian man, when London knows he is simply in the city for his own selfish gain, is unable to influence London for God. Unless London can discover beneath the legitimate exercises of life the passion for righteousness and truth; beneath all the activities of the passing days, the search for the Kingdom; that man has cut the nerve of his own endeavor. We seek for the city of God as we live the life of loyalty in the cities of men.

But further. There can be no such life that will not find opportunities for definite activity. The basis of all our activity must be love and light; not as though they were two things; they are but the two sides of the one great experience of fellowship in the life of the Son of God. God is love; it is an all-inclusive word. God is light; it is an all-inclusive word. They are not mutually destructive. They reveal the two qualities of the essential life of God. Love and light, passion and principle merging forever more in great and awful purity. In the proportion in which men are living that life of fellowship with God in the city, there will be activity, and it is only activity which proceeds from that inspiration and is governed forever more thereby that is powerful. The reason of all that we do if we would help must be love; and the method must be light. Our activity must be love inspired, but it must be light instructed. Love which is mere sickly, sentimental, humanitarianism, may destroy instead of building. Unless the love we feel for men is love illuminated by the awful purity of God that insists upon His holiness as well as His mercy, we cannot help men. Rose water is no medicine for the malady of sin. We never can understand love until we realize what it means, in the presence of the awful, brutal Cross of Christ which is His insistence upon holiness, and upon love. These are the things which are to master our activities if we are to seek the city of God. Alas, that we so often blunder into some selfish kind of desire to help men, forgetting these things! Take up the New Testament and see how these writers never forgot to relate the truths of everyday life with the fundamental truths of holy religion. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." Thus in one brief, burning sentence, home is saved and sanctified, and the flaming sword of the Divine anger is against all attempts to loosen the divorce laws of the country.

If we seek the city by the revelation of God and of man, and the interrelationship between them in our own lives, and thereby actual, positive endeavor inspired by love and light, which are of the essence of the life of God, we shall help toward the coming of the city.

Love will be angry in the presence of sin, in the presence of all oppression, in the presence of everything in our own city which is opposed to the city of God. Love is of the very essence of anger. Someone has said during recent years in writing of one of those old Hebrew prophets that the severity of the opening part of the book makes it impossible to imagine that the tenderness of the latter part was written by the same pen; that the man whose attitude was characterized by awful thunder could ever have merged into the infinite love song that describes Jehovah as singing over His people and resting in His love. That opinion is not true to the revelation of God. It is the severity of God which demonstrates His goodness. It is the goodness of God which creates His severity. It is the son of thunder who becomes the apostle of love. If we would help to build the city of God, we shall need the driving rage of a great anger. Do not forget that when Paul, the great

embodiment of the Christian temper, came to Athens he was in a paroxysm, his spirit was provoked within him.

Our contribution toward the building of the city of God will be a great anger against sin and all that is opposed to the will of God; but it will become a great tenderness toward the sinner. These are the things of which a man cannot speak; he can feel them though he cannot say them. Anger with sin, but tenderness with the sinner; that is the Christian mystery. We caught her in the very act! What will you, pure Teacher, say to this woman taken in adultery? What did He say? He looked at them and said, "Let the man that is without sin, cast the first stone." And when they had filed out, single file, He said to her, "Where are thine accusers gone; did no man condemn thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

Do you think by that word He condoned adultery? You know He did not. His fierce and awful word abides forevermore, the most fierce and flaming thing ever said against adultery; but for the woman taken in the very act, He had a great compassion and a great pity. O God, that I may be a man something like that, fiery, angry with sin; forever patient with the sinner. So the city will be built; so the Kingdom will be prepared for the coming of the King.

Where shall we begin? At home. We need that word in England today. At home. Oh the perils threatening us! The first of them is the break-up of home life, the failure of Christian men and women to maintain home life. Let us begin there. You can have a city of God where you live. Your house can be the city of God. The amount of the rent does not matter. The kind of furniture does not enter into the calculation. Your house can be the city of God. On thirty shillings a week, someone says? Yes, if that is your income. Your Father knows you have need of these things, and if you really needed more He would give you more. Remember, He has only promised you sustenance. Your bread and your water shall be sure. Home with Jesus King, and the law of His light forevermore recognized, and the law of His love forevermore yielded to is the city of God.

There is nothing this land of ours needs more than the multiplication of Christian homes; and the Christian home is not a home that bolts its door when all its own members are in, and excludes all others. The Christian home will leave its door upon the latch and welcome the homeless—and there are hundreds of them in London who for lack of a home which will give them, not charity and patronage, but home life, are drifting away. Let your home be God's city.

Then the Church, that must be God's city. The Church, a hospital for all spiritual malady and disease, a nursing home for all the weak ones; a barracks into which men shall be brought to be trained for fighting; a base of operations from which the army shall march, terrible with banners against the things that oppose. That also is the city of God.

If we begin at home, and continue in the Church, then where next? In your office tomorrow morning. If you are a member of Parliament, in the House, and God hasten the day when it may be true—I say it because it is on my heart—that not at the beck and call of any party whip, but under the control of the Lord Christ, men shall speak for Him and be true to Him in Parliament.

In other words, begin to build the city of God where you are. Do not sit down and sigh, wishing that you might be somewhere else, in order that you might help. You can help where you are. George Herbert's philosophy is the philosophy we need to understand, that it is possible to sweep a room and make that and the action fine; and the maid in the house of her mistress tomorrow, who after

this service will do that sweeping a little better for Christ's sake, is as surely helping to bring in the Kingdom of God as is the preacher in the pulpit here or anywhere.

This is Christian citizenship. This is seeking for God's city, and this outlook and conception will correct many popular fallacies such as that the Christian Church should catch the spirit of the age. A thousand times No! The business of the Christian Church is to correct the spirit of the age. Or that more manifest fallacy that when you are in Rome you should do as Rome does. Nothing of the kind. When you are in Rome do right though you violate all the conventionalities! Then there is that most devilish of all fallacies: It is no use, we must let things alone! That is what the devil wants us to do. That is what the devil said to Jesus; "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee?" Our answer must be His answer, "Come out"; and in His name we are to be out upon the great campaign. Pilgrim of faith, soldier art thou, builder art thou!

Thine to work as well as pray,

Clearing thorny wrongs away;

Plucking up the weeds of sin,

Letting heaven's warm sunshine in.

Watching on the hills of faith,

Listening what the Spirit saith,

Of the dim-seem light afar,

Growing like a nearing star.

God's interpreter art thou,

To the waiting ones below;

'Twixt them and its light midway

Heralding the better day—

Catching gleams of temple spires,

Hearing notes of angel choirs,

Where, as yet unseen of them,

Comes the new Jerusalem!

Like the Seer of Patmos gazing,

On the glory downward blazing;

Till upon earth's grateful sod,

Rests the city of our God."

May we be builders with Him, as well as warriors and pilgrims.

Hebrews 13:17. Watching For Souls.

Hebrews 13:17.

Watching For Souls.

They watch in behalf of your souls.

Hebrews 13:17

"Watching for souls" was a common phrase in the speech of our fathers. It has largely fallen out of use in the Christian Church in the present day, or it is carelessly used, with sad ignorance of its Biblical sanctions and its proper values. It is, nevertheless, an illuminative and forceful phrase warranted by the whole Biblical revelation, and remarkably focused in my text, "They watch in behalf of your souls."

While, incidentally, the statement constitutes an argument giving urgency to an appeal, essentially I find in it a revelation of the responsibility of spiritual leaders. I propose, therefore, to come to the consideration of the text, not in its incidental relation to the context, but in its essential revelation of the responsibilities of Christian men and women.

We shall consider, first, the Biblical sanctions of this word of the writer of the letter, and, second, some of its immediate applications.

Commencing with the Biblical sanctions, we are, first, quite simply and necessarily arrested by the central word, the word that gives thought and meaning and direction to the whole conception, "They watch." What is it to watch? If I take the word translated "watch," and feel my way into its heart I find that it suggests sleeplessness. Thayer says that the word has in it "an image drawn from shepherds," and at once, if we recognize that fact, the ampler atmosphere into which we are introduced is suggested. As a sprig of heather suggests the Highlands, or a spray of edelweiss suggests Alpine heights, so this word admits us into the atmosphere of the Divine conception and method.

What, then, is that conception, and what that method? The Biblical relations I endeavored to indicate in measure by the readings of the evening, that majestic word of the Twenty-third Psalm with which we started, "Jehovah is my Shepherd; I shall not want," the graphic picture which Ezekiel drew of the failure of the shepherds and the scattering of the sheep, that tender passage revealing the compassion of the Master's heart in the presence of the scattered sheep; that superb language in which He claimed for Himself the function of shepherdhood, "I am the good Shepherd," and yet again the tender light of the Galilean shore, when He commissioned Peter and through him all disciples to feed the lambs and shepherd the sheep, until we reached the focused light of our text; and I believe that in the reading there broke on us a true conception of what it is to watch for souls.

The fundamental thought is full of august majesty and broad with the beneficence of Deity. "Jehovah is my Shepherd," said one lonely singer millenniums ago; and down the millenniums and through the centuries his song has been taken up and repeated in lonely hours, in the midst of the rush of life, and as men have crossed the desert where no water is. It is the profoundest word concerning God in His attitude toward the sons of men in their sorrow and in their sin. It is a word which has within it all the other great facts concerning Him. It is the synonym for His Kingship. It is the revelation of the meaning of His Fatherhood. So we start with that fundamental truth that Kingship in the Divine economy is Shepherdhood, that God is King because He is Shepherd, and that His activity of sovereignty is forever the activity of His Shepherd heart. That is fundamental.

We turn from that fundamental word of the psalm and go through the prophetic writings, selecting one only from the mass of material—that in Ezekiel, perhaps the most graphic of them all, in which we have the picture of the sheep scattered, and hear the thunder of the Divine denunciation, not of the sheep but of the shepherds. Those who should have bound up their wounds and healed the sick and sought the lost, and folded the flock and fed them, all these, said Ezekiel, had fed themselves instead of the sheep, had clothed themselves with the wool while the sheep were left to starve and to be scattered on the heights. Therein lay the supreme condemnation of the false shepherds.

I pass from these Old Testament Scriptures with the fundamental song of the Shepherdhood of Jehovah, through that stern denunciation of the men who had failed to fulfil their function as shepherds of the people, and I come to the New Testament. I read that when Jesus saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion, and the reason was that He saw them as sheep having no shepherd. I go a little further on in the days of His public ministry, and hear Him in that wonderful discourse which John alone has chronicled, describing His mission in this selfsame figure, "I am the good Shepherd." The hireling—mark the infinite scorn of it, the satire of Jesus—the hireling "fleeth because he is a hireling." The good Shepherd Whose own the sheep are enters into conflict with the wolf, grapples with the evil beast that spoils the sheep, and dies in the conflict. In that infinite mystery which is the heart of Christianity, exhausting all figures, He declares, "I lay down My life for the sheep.... I lay down My life that I may take it again," thus prophesying the resurrection whereby He is able not merely to slay the wolf, but to communicate to the sheep the virtue and force of His own life that they themselves may be made strong against the marauding wolf. Finally, interpreting the word of Jesus to Peter by all the symbolism of the ancient economy and the attitude of the heart of Christ, I hear Him charge the Christian man that it is his work to be a shepherd, to watch for souls. Such are the Biblical relations.

From these let us attempt to deduce the Biblical conceptions that are suggested in my text. "They watch in behalf of your souls." The first conception is that of the Kingdom of God under the figure of the flock. There is one verse in the New Testament to which we have often drawn attention, and doubtless you have often noticed its peculiar beauty. Speaking on one occasion to His own disciples, Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." In the economy of God the Kingdom of God will be the family of God; the family of God will be the whole flock of scattered sheep folded under the one Shepherd, Jesus; or, as He Himself did say, at last, when He has found the other sheep, there shall be one flock and one Shepherd. So that beneath this phrase, which seems to us so simple, we discover the ultimate purpose, the folding of the sheep into one flock, the gathering of the children into one family, the building of men

into one ultimate, glorious Kingdom of God. That is the underlying conception.

Glancing again at these Biblical quotations, I find another truth, an immediate and present one—that the Kingdom is not established, that the children are not yet at home, or, to return to the line of our thinking, the sheep are still scattered. Jesus went through all the cities and villages preaching, teaching, healing, and He saw the multitudes, the multitudes of the cities, villages and hamlets, rich and poor, high and low, learned and illiterate, massed humanity. In some senses it would be a most inaccurate thing to say that Jesus never saw whether a man was rich or poor; in some senses it would not be true to say that He was unconscious of the phylacteries that were on the garments of the Pharisees or of the rags of the beggar; but in a profound and deep sense I do affirm He was unconscious of all these things. He was not attracted by wealth, He was not attracted by poverty. Let me change the tense to the present. Christ cannot be the Head of a labor church, He cannot be the Head of a capitalist club; but He is in the club where wealth gathers, He is present when poverty is arguing its necessity and grappling with its problem. He is attracted by humanity, indifferent to the false divisions in His passion for humanity and His determination ultimately to destroy the divisions that separate, and to create one flock and one Shepherd, the very Kingdom of God. He was conscious, and He is conscious today, of the scattered sheep, the fleeced, wounded sheep, the harried, worried souls of men. That is the condition that Ezekiel saw, the condition that Christ apprehended, and which exists until this moment. This London of ours teems and throbs with agony and unrest, sheep having no shepherd, the prey of wolves that raven, marauding by night and prowling by day, and stripping men of the things most precious to them. This is Christ's outlook: the Kingdom is not yet, the children are not home, the sheep are not folded. That vision of the condition of humanity is part of the light focused in my text, "They watch in behalf of your souls."

Tarrying yet a moment longer with these Biblical conceptions, I find the revelation of responsibility involved in the meaning of our text. What is it to watch for souls? Let us go back to Ezekiel and remind ourselves of the things that the shepherds did not do. Ye did not feed My flock, ye did not strengthen them, ye did not heal them, ye did not bind them up, ye did not restore them, ye did not seek the lost! Watching for souls is doing these things. Or I turn from the message of Ezekiel and come to the final, inclusive word of the incarnate Son of God, and I ask, in the light of that great passage in John, What is it to watch for souls? First, it is to enter into conflict with the wolf, and then, at personal cost and suffering and sacrifice, to be patient with the sheep as we lead them back to the fold and to the one great, only Shepherd of souls. Watching for souls demands sacrifice, expresses itself in sleepless vigils, in untiring activity, in going out after those that are lost, and bearing them, in the virtue of expended strength, back to the fold and back to the Shepherd.

So far, I have attempted merely the interpretation of the Biblical sanctions that lie behind this great text. Now, in the second place, I desire to turn to the practical, immediate application of the truth. In this letter occur the great words, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever," and I want to crave your patience for a moment while I say that thing again, asking you to consider whether you really believe it, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever." I am not at this moment interested in the last stupendous word "for ever." I am intensely interested in "yesterday" and "today." What He was He is, what He felt He feels. I ask your patience while I emphasize that. Do we believe it, do we act as though we knew it and believed it?

Are we not in awful danger of imagining, somehow, that this crowned Lord of all of Whom we sing is removed far away from the actuality of human pain and suffering and human sin? Have we not some subconscious conception of Him, as in a land of glory where no shadows fall, removed from immediate consciousness of human agony and immediate sympathy with human pain? The proportion in which we are mastered in our thinking of Christ by any such conception is the proportion in which we are misunderstanding Him, and are cutting the nerve of our endeavor in dealing with other men. We have to commence by reminding ourselves that He is the same, His vision of the ultimate is the same, His vision of the present condition is the same, His conception of the responsibility resting upon Himself as the Servant of God in the compulsion of His own nature of infinite love is the same. He has not changed. Did He see the multitudes in the olden days harassed by wolves, fleeced and fainting by the way? So sees He the multitudes of today. Was He moved with compassion then? So is He now. May God deliver us from any false and blasphemous idea that God has no sorrow, that He is impassive and unmoved in the midst of His universe, in the presence of human sorrow resulting from human sin. That is a libel, a lie, a contradiction of the whole Biblical revelation. Faber knew the heart of God better. He sang truly when he sang, "There is no place where earth's sorrows are more keenly felt than up in heaven." At this moment all the surging sorrows of London and the world are focused in the heart of the Son of God. We must start there. To fail to believe the great truth that He remains the same is to be so out of sympathy with Him, so out of touch with Him, as never to be able to watch for souls.

Let that be granted, and then I may proceed. The first thing we need if we are to watch for souls is a clear vision of the ultimate. The responsibilities of the immediate result always from the nature of the ultimate. Watch a builder at his work, at his one small corner of the building! Why that accuracy of eye and the corrective precision of the plummet that every single brick be truly laid? Because, if not to him, at least to the architect under whose inspiration he labors, the ultimate building is in view. That was what Michael Angelo meant when he said that trifles make perfection. That was why he spent so many hours perfecting the curves in the marble. He had seen the angel in the marble, and every movement of the chisel and hammer was directed toward the final, the ultimate. I am more and more convinced that one of the perils of our day in Christian service is that we are so occupied with the immediate that we fail sometimes to lift our eyes and look toward the ultimate, we lose the vision of God's final victory, and so we fail to do the finest work.

The ultimate in the work of Christ is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth; the ultimate in the work of Christ is one flock and the one Shepherd. It is when that ultimate glory had broken on the soul and possessed it, when that gleaming splendor of the final day of God has surcharged the life of the shepherd; it is then that the immediate becomes instinct with meaning, and that, to quote the Apostle Paul's great word, we labor "that we may present every man perfect in Christ." I pray there may come to every preacher and teacher, to all Christian men and women occupied in service, a very clear vision of the goal toward which God is moving and toward which He calls us to move in comradeship, fellowship with Himself. Christ's work for this world will never be done until there is one flock and one Shepherd, the end of nationalities in the one nation, the necessary cessation of war in the reign of the Prince of Peace, the last of strife and weariness and sin and sorrow in the final victory of the Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep.

The process leading to that ultimate includes a method of judgment as well as a method of mercy. There is a day of vengeance. He will not quench the smoking flax until He send forth judgment

unto victory. But that day of judgment is not within our responsibility. We have nothing to do with it. This is the day of His seeking, the day of preparation for the Kingdom, and we are to work consistently in our watching for souls with the vision of the ultimate before us, realizing that every man won back to the Shepherd, every little child fed as a lamb of the one great flock, is a contribution to the dawning of the morning that waxes to noon and never wanes to eventide, when the "kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ."

If in order to achieve fulfilment of this ideal of watching for souls a vision of the ultimate is necessary, then also a vision of the immediate is necessary. Here I would speak with great carefulness and with great sympathy, and with strong conviction. What is our view of the men who are without our Christ? Has it ever occurred to you that the word to which I have referred describing Christ's vision of the multitudes is a very strange word, and that it certainly would not have described His disciples' view of the multitudes at that time? It is still more certain that it would not have described the multitudes' conception of their own condition. Remember, it was He Who saw them as sheep not having a shepherd, sheep scattered. They did not so think of themselves. Blindness had fallen on them, hardness of heart, that terrible hardness which is failure to appreciate one's own condition. It was His eye that saw them so. His vision—mark this carefully—of the scattered, fleeced, failing condition of the multitudes was born of this very vision of the purpose of God. What measurement do you put on humanity in order to understand it? If you once see humanity as God intended it to be, then you will understand how far it fails and comes short. Look out over the world today, look out over our own city, our own land today, and we see multitudes; we meet them every day, pass through their midst on the highways of the city, gaze on them when they are massed for sport or spectacle, or tragedy. How do we see them? Comfortable, respectable, fairly moral? Are we satisfied with the condition of the multitudes? Then we have not Christ's vision, and that because we lack the life that makes the light as we look. There are some men today who look out on the multitudes and speak to me only of the magnificence of humanity. There are others who speak only of the depravity of humanity. In each case it is a partial vision. The vision of Christ was one that clearly saw the magnificence and possibility of humanity within the economy and purpose of God, the glory of the race; and that clear vision of the dignity of humanity, of the worth of one soul, of the splendid possibility of human life, created His vision of the ruin and the failure of humanity. You and I will never be watchers for souls of men until we see the glory of God's thoughts for them, and in the light of that see the awfulness of their failure. The Kingdom is unrealized, the family is broken, the sheep are scattered! That vision also is necessary if we are ever to become watchers for souls.

Let these things be granted; then the measure in which the life of Christ is our life, the measure in which we have surrendered ourselves to His indwelling, so that His life gives the vision and creates our sensitiveness to the need of humanity, is the measure in which we are prepared for our service.

What, then, is our service? What, then, is our responsibility? If we see that ultimate, if we see this present condition, what is our responsibility? To bring the sheep to the Shepherd. I think perhaps if I stay for exposition I shall rob that statement of some of its power. That is the inclusive declaration of the responsibility of Christian men and women in order to establish the ultimate Kingdom of God, in order to meet the present necessity, to

Lead them to Thy open side,

The sheep for whom their Shepherd died.

It should be true of all Christians, "They watch in behalf of souls," and that watching means that they are incessantly laboring at sacrifice to gather the sheep to the Shepherd.

From these general words of application let me pass, in conclusion, to some particular words. We must recognize, in the life and work of this church and of all churches, that this is our business. Our business is to attach men to Christ. Here are the perils which threaten us in Christian work—the peril that we should attach men to ourselves, and the peril that we attach men to our church. The peril is that the preacher should imagine that when he has gathered a crowd about himself he has done Christ's work. No. I know how this thing searches, how it creates the doubt whether there may not be failure in the very fact that men and women gather about a ministry. I must be true to God and my soul. If I do but gather here men and women to hear me, I am of all failures the most terrible; unless through the things I say I can lead you to my Lord, how I fail! Unless I can attach you to Christ, and bring you to the one and only Shepherd of souls, then I also am a "blind mouth," the most terrible of all human failures. It is true of every teacher in the Sunday school. It is true of the whole Church. You tell me that you have erected your buildings, and that they are now being crowded with men and women who come to the socials and attend the clubs, and you are getting on! Are you leading them to Christ? If not, you are failing utterly. It is not enough to throng the building with multitudes, to crowd classrooms and club rooms with interested, patronizing men and women who will take the material things and imagine they are Christians. Unless you are bringing men to Christ, into first-hand relationship with Him, you are failing.

If that is our business we must prepare ourselves to the enterprise. We must partake of the Shepherd nature, have the Shepherd heart. It is through manifestation of the Shepherd that we must lead souls to Him. It is only as Christian souls constitute the media that they can be avenues of approach to the Shepherd. I must be like Him in my passion, in my patience, in my purity, or I cannot do His work.

Our responsibility is also that of availing ourselves of the resources at our disposal. If I am to feed the flock of God I must be familiar with the sustenance of souls. I must be a student of the Word of God, not merely of its technicalities, but of its dynamic. I must be a man of prayer, or, as I prefer now to put it, a man often talking with the Shepherd Himself if I am to help Him in His shepherd work.

Then it is not merely necessary that we recognize this as our business, and not merely necessary that we prepare ourselves for this enterprise; we must actually give ourselves to the business. That is the business of the preacher in his study, in his pulpit, in his social relationships. Woe be to the minister of Jesus Christ who establishes social relationships with his people of such a nature that he is not able to talk to them about their souls! Woe be to any man in the ministry who becomes so friendly with a member of his congregation at the club that he cannot grip him on the matter of God and eternity when occasion arises!

That is true of the teacher in the class. Dear fellow worker in this great enterprise, teacher in the Sunday school, what are the children and young people gathered about you for? They create your

opportunity to lead them to Christ. It is true of all office holders in the church. It is true of the men who seat this congregation; it is true of the choir; it is true of those who preside over the finances of the church. The ultimate reason of everything must be to lead men to His open side, the sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

It is true of the church in the neighborhood in which it exists and in its world relationships. The Church has nothing to do with social relationships, apart from its insistence on the necessity that men shall find their way to Christ. If men want me to come out and help in their fight to get better conditions, I will come, provided always they will crown my King. My business is to present men to Christ and Christ to men in individual life, and then, on the basis of regenerate humanity, to reconstruct society.

This is the business of every church member. This is your central responsibility at home. Fathers and mothers, the supreme word of your parenthood is this—watching for souls. If I have fed my bairns, clothed and educated them, and have given them a start in life, and nothing else, God have mercy on me! Unless I have by some form or fashion, principally by example, led them toward my Saviour, then how I have failed!

It is the business of Christian men and women in their business life. You are responsible, my dear Christian lady, for the servant girls in your home. They are not employes merely. You are responsible for the men you pay wages to—at least, that your influence may be Christian, that you show by your character that you are related to the Lord. It is a blasphemy of the worst kind to say you employ a hundred hands. You employ a hundred men, and for each man who is spirit, mind and body, who is coming into contact with you, you are responsible. By your attitude toward him, by the graciousness of your character, you ought to lead him toward Christ.

Watching for souls, a phrase of the days of our fathers, fallen largely into disuse, misinterpreted in a narrow, mechanical method all too often today, is yet a great phrase, indicating the responsibility and the enterprise of the Christian Church.

May that God Who is the Shepherd of humanity, and Who has revealed Himself in the One Who is the good, the great, the true Shepherd, lead all those of us who rejoice in His Shepherdhood into such fellowship with Himself that of us also it may be said, "They watch in behalf of souls."

1 Peter 1:3. An Easter Meditation.

1 Peter 1:3.

An Easter Meditation.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

These are the first direct words of this letter of Peter, following, as they do, immediately on the salutation. They constitute an outburst of praise. Undoubtedly, this letter was written by Peter in obedience to his Lord's injunction, "Do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." He wrote "to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," and he wrote for the one purpose of strengthening them in the midst of severe trial and great difficulty. The letter thus intended to strengthen opens with this great doxology. One can understand how these words of Peter came from a very full heart. They are distinctly autobiographical. While expressed in that plural number which associated all the saints with himself, those to whom he wrote as well as those who had been his immediate companions in the early days of discipleship, there can be no escape from the conviction that he was writing very much out of his own experience. They were the words of one who had passed through deep waters because of manifold temptations and severe proof of faith, manifold temptations in the midst of which he had faltered and failed, severe proof of faith in the process of which his courage had failed, though his faith in his Lord personally had never failed. They were the words of a man who had passed through these experiences and had proved his Lord's power to deliver. They were words written, as we have already indicated, to such as were then passing through trial, so that he spoke to them almost immediately of the manifold temptations through which they are passing, and referred to that trial of their faith which was indeed severe, but which had its values and place in perfecting their character.

In a letter from such a man to such people we are at once arrested by the initial outburst of praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

In these words we have Peter's own account of what the resurrection of Christ did for him and for the first disciples. That is the narrowest application of the text; but, in proportion as we appreciate it, we shall be prepared for the wider application. I repeat, Peter was writing out of a personal experience. He was thinking of the past, of the first meeting with Jesus, of the mystic and marvelous influence he felt when his Lord looked into his eyes and said to him, "Thou art Simon... thou shalt be called Rock." He was remembering how, there and then, he yielded himself to the irresistible glamor of that personality and went blunderingly but courageously after Jesus. He was remembering all the days that followed, the weeks and the months, the wonders and the teachings, the dreams, the revelations, and the aspirations; he was remembering the gathering of

the shadows, and the darkness that settled on him, and the dull despair, and then that strange and mystic light which broke on his astonished spirit when—we know not where or when—his Lord, having risen from the dead, found him all alone and talked to him. In that hour, he now declared, we were born again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Here again we may consider Peter, as indeed we constantly have to do, as the representative man. Interpreting his declaration that he was begotten again unto a living hope by his experience as it is revealed to us in the gospel stories, we may consider in what sense this was true. Such a meditation will serve to reveal to us the true value of that glorious event which we celebrate this morning, the resurrection of our Lord.

We shall consider, then, first, Peter's experience of Christ before resurrection; and, second, the difference which the resurrection made.

First, the experience before the resurrection. We will confine our attention to the man who wrote this letter, Peter, looking upon him as a representative man. We need not dwell on the earlier incidents to which I have already made reference, but only on those of the later months of our Lord's ministry, the incidents occurring in that last, mysterious, shadowed portion of the time.

In the earliest days and months of our Lord's ministry He was the center of attraction to all sorts and conditions of men. We cannot but have observed in our reading of these gospel narratives that there was a very strange sifting process which went on from the beginning of that public ministry: gradually men and women who had been irresistibly attracted to Him withdrew from Him. Indeed, I should almost be prepared to say that they were driven away from Him by the very severity of His terms and the strange and almost appalling manner in which He repelled them. Our theme is not that of the attractive, or the repelling power of Jesus, but it is important that we remind ourselves of it. At the commencement of His public ministry multitudes crowded after Him; at the close of His life's mission not a single man stood by His side. The tragedy is ultimately expressed in words that always flame with fire when we read them, "They all forsook Him and fled," for these words refer to His own disciples. The course of the ministry was one of attraction and sifting as within the infinite wisdom of God; it was part of the Divine economy. In the course of our study of the life of the Lord we become impressed with the fact that in about two and a half years this hostility became very patent, criticism became more definite, men were evidently plotting to silence His voice, to take His life. They are seen working against Him, spreading the net, in order to capture and destroy Him.

Let us listen to three things that Peter said in that shadowed period, for in those three things I think we shall be brought face to face with his experience of his Lord. As the result of all the training, all the teaching, and all the gracious ministry of the years, he said three things, not to be undervalued, but for the moment simply to be observed. Without staying to turn to the actual passages, which are amongst the most familiar in the New Testament, let me refer to them and group them.

The first is recorded in the Gospel of John. We have the account of a certain hour of criticism, in the midst of which our Lord delivered discourses recorded by no other evangelist. In that hour of profound teaching, men drifted away from Him, and at last He asked the disciples, "Would ye also go away?" Then Peter spoke, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

That was Peter's first great confession.

A little further on, so far as one is able to follow these events in chronological order, perhaps three months later, we have that very familiar scene at Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus, having gathered the disciples away from the multitudes, questioned them on the result of His ministry, and at last made the question personal to them: "Who say ye that I am?" In that connection we find Peter's second great confession, "Thou art Messiah, the Son of the living God."

So far as time is concerned, almost immediately following, perhaps within the next few hours, for Matthew carefully links that which follows to the story of the great confession, our Lord began to unveil to these men the method by which He would pass into His Kingdom, and told them of the coming Cross and resurrection. Then Peter looked at Him, and we have now no confession, but a voice full of anguish and anger. We have hardly dared to translate this passage accurately; that may be a somewhat bold thing to say, but those who are familiar with the Greek will agree. To catch the real significance of the word of Peter on this occasion we need to express what he said in the most colloquial language. In effect, he exclaimed in angry protest, God help you, that be far from Thee!

In those three sayings of Peter—all uttered within the space of three months, in the period when the method of ministry of our Lord was changing, and He was moving toward the ultimate passion—his experience of Christ is revealed to me.

First, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Then, "Thou art the Messiah." Finally, God help you, not that, not the Cross, not suffering! That was as far as Peter went in experience before the resurrection, and it was a long way.

The occasion of the first was that of gathering hostility. There was a deeper tone in the teaching of Christ as He attempted to direct the attention of the crowds from the material miracle to the spiritual suggestiveness, and the very disciples were offended in Him; and of them who had followed Him, "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." Then came the hour in which Jesus looked at the twelve and said to them, "Would ye also go away?" That is, do you wish to go? He gave them the opportunity to do so. There was in that question a touch full of severity. It was as though He had said, If you wish to go, the way is open. Do you desire to go? Then Peter looked at Him and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." This was a remarkable reply. Oh to be able to get back into the actual atmosphere! Think of these words for a moment, not from the Christian standpoint, but from the Hebrew, remembering the mental outlook of the man who uttered them. It is only as we do so that we shall understand what he meant. In that word of Peter spoken to Jesus he declared his conviction that the teaching of the Lord was authoritative and life-giving. In other words, in that confession of Peter, I find the declaration of his conviction that in the hands of Jesus were the keys of prophetic ministry, the keys of the true interpretation of the moral order, that His word was final as the law of life. In effect, Peter said at that moment, In Thee we have found the Prophet for Whom we have long been waiting: "Thou hast the words of age-abiding life."

We pass on, a few months perhaps, to the next crisis at Caesarea Philippi, and hear the challenge of Jesus, "Who say ye that I am?" answered by that old and familiar confession, "Thou art the Messiah," for of set purpose I adopt the Hebrew word for interpretation of the Greek word "Christ."

Once again, oh, to be back in the actual atmosphere and listen to the words as they came from the lips of Peter. What was it that he really meant? What was the Hebrew idea of Messiahship? It was that of kingship. In the second psalm we find the light of the Old Testament conception focused. The Hebrew was looking for a king to sit on the throne, and administer the affairs of the kingdom in order to realize the great ideal of the Hebrew nation as a nation, to make it the Kingdom of God. Peter looked into the eyes of Jesus and said, "Thou art the Messiah"! I can never quite make up my own mind whether there and then the conviction became final, or whether some little while before he had come to this conviction. I am inclined to think that it was in that moment when he was challenged that all the thinking, all the previous processes of his mind, crystallized into conviction and he said, "Thou art the Messiah," recognizing that Christ held the scepter.

Thus Peter saw Jesus not only as the Prophet for Whom men had long been waiting, speaking the words of ultimate authority; he saw Him also as the King for Whom men had long been waiting, holding in His hand the scepter of perfect government. He had discovered in Jesus the King to Whom all the prophets had given witness. This meant that his heart was full of hope, hope for the establishment of the Kingdom, the realization of the Divine purpose, and the fulfilment of the aspiration of his own people for generations; hope that in the King-Prophet there should be the enunciation of the final, perfect ethic, hope that the Kingdom would now be established.

Immediately we pass to the third word of Peter. The third word was spoken following the two confessions: the confession of Peter of which we have been speaking, and the confession of Jesus answering that of Peter. The confession of Peter was, "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God"; the confession of Jesus was, "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In this word of his Master there flamed before the surprised vision of Peter the glory of the established order, and then immediately that deeper secret of the Cross, which Christ had never explicitly mentioned before to His disciples, for the evangelists are very careful to tell us that after this Christ began to show that He must suffer. This secret He had nursed within His own heart; it was the ultimate movement of His mission, the passion, the exodus! Of this He had never until now been able to speak; but "from that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

It is well to notice in this connection that every passage in the Gospel narratives which records our Lord's foretelling of His death records also His foretelling of His resurrection. This is a matter of supreme importance, because we are sometimes told that this foretelling of death was the result of Christ's yielding to circumstances, that He was so heroic that He would not turn aside from His path although He knew that men would kill Him. That is not the New Testament teaching. The New Testament does not reveal Jesus going to death as a victim, but as a Victor.

After the confession of Peter, then He told the secret for the first time to Peter and the rest of the disciples, that He must die, and that He must rise again. It was then that Peter uttered his passionate word of protest.

The more I ponder these stories, the less I am inclined to criticize Peter, and the more perfectly I come into sympathy with his protest. I do not say that it was right, but that it was perfectly natural. The Church of God still only half believes that the way to crowning is the way of the Cross. There

never yet has emerged the Christian nation that is ready to die for the sake of right in the hope of resurrection into new life.

Jesus now looked at this man and said, You have found that I am a Prophet; you have found that I am a King; now let me tell you the secret of how I am going to utter the deepest truth, and of how I am going to build the Kingdom. I must go up to the city, I must be bruised, killed, and rise again. If we put ourselves in the place of Peter we shall understand his protest, made in anguish and anger. There is no escape at all from the fact that Peter was angry. He took Jesus aside, and began to rebuke Him, that is, to chide Him. God help you! That be far from Thee! In that moment his hope was overshadowed. If He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, what about the words of age-abiding life? If the Teacher dies, the words will be dead! In that moment the shadows fell. If we read the story carefully and chronologically so far as we can, we see what happened from that moment until the Cross. Peter never came near to his Lord again. This is true of all the disciples. They followed Him all the way, they were amazed, they dared not ask Him questions. Over and over again we have the account of how He tried to tell them about His Cross, and every time—oh, the tragedy of it, and the wonderful unveiling of human nature there is in it—every time He spoke of His Cross some one of them broke in upon the conversation with practically the same question: Lord, who is the greatest among us? In those final days hope was dying. The disciples never ceased to love Him, never ceased to believe in Him and in His intention; but they lost all hope. Hope died, until at last they could bear it no longer, and they all forsook Him and fled. There at last He hung on the Cross, the brutal Roman gibbet, done to death; and the sun went out of the sky, the light faded from the horizon, and despair surged through their souls, and who can wonder? And now let us listen to the doxology:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The text tells its own story, but for a moment or two let us meditate on it, that we may discover the difference which the resurrection made. Do not forget the unutterable, immeasurable, unfathomable darkness of those days and nights, especially to these men—the Prophet dead, therefore the teaching impracticable; the King dead, therefore the Kingdom impossible.

Then came the strange news of the morning: "Certain women... came saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive"—I never read that without feeling that these men did not quite believe the story, because the women had told them! Then somewhere, somewhen—I am always thankful there is no record of the where or the when—Jesus found this very man Peter. When the two arrived from Emmaus eager to tell the assembled disciples that Jesus had walked and talked with them, before they could tell the story, the eleven told theirs, and this was what they had to tell: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." When, or where we do not know. When he was massing the evidences of the resurrection of Jesus, Paul referred to it, but neither he nor the Evangelist gives any details. This is one of the sacred, powerful silences of the New Testament. Somewhere the Lord met Peter. It would be almost sacrilegious to paint the scene, yet I feel that I could paint the picture of that meeting. At least, in this doxology we find the effect produced on Peter:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It was the dawning of a new day in the rebirth of hope. The resurrection began its work at the point where this man had broken down. He had discovered the Prophet; the King had been revealed to him: Prophet? yes! King? yes! Priest? no! That he had not understood. He had seen the keys of moral interpretation in the hand of Christ and had said, Thou art a Prophet. He had seen the scepter and had said, Thou art a King. But he did not understand the wearing of the ephod, he did not apprehend the need of the Priest. The Cross had filled him with fear. In that moment when he saw the risen Christ, the first effect was on his conception of the Cross; the Cross was transfigured before his eyes! He had seen the hand holding the scroll, and the brow on which rested the crown; but now he saw, not first the King, not first the Prophet, but first the Priest wearing the ephod.

We are all familiar with Watts' great hymn:

When I survey the wondrous Cross.

In it there is a verse which is generally omitted from our hymn books today, why I do not know. It reads thus:

His dying crimson like a robe

Spreads o'er His body on the tree,

And I am dead to all the globe,

And all the globe is dead to me.

Why have we cut that verse out of our hymnbooks? If it is the sign of a theological movement, that movement was not born in heaven.

His dying crimson like a robe

Spreads o'er His body on the tree.

That is the robe of priesthood. Peter now looked at the Cross through the resurrection light; and the Cross that had shamed him, that had filled him with fear, flashed and gleamed with the splendor of mercy: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to his great mercy..."

The Cross was now seen as the propitiatory, the place of priesthood; there was the altar, the sacrifice, and the priest; there sin was dealt with. Before Peter was far on with this letter, he wrote: "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ."

Go back to the other side of Resurrection and stand with Peter. Death? God help you, no! That is murder and defeat! Come to this Resurrection side and look back. The Cross is no less vulgar—the vulgarity of the Cross is the vulgarity of the sin that erected it—but the Cross flames with light. The light of the glory of the grace of God, who took sin into His own heart and canceled it in a mystery of pain that can be expressed in human history only by blood-shedding, is shining from the Tree! The Cross is transfigured: "Who according to His great mercy begat us again into a living hope." By the way of that Cross the Evangel of forgiveness, which is the moral basis of the

Kingdom, is made possible. The word of the prophet is the law of the Kingdom; the scepter of the King is the government of the Kingdom; but the Kingdom is a lost Kingdom, despoiled territory, a people in rebellion. How can it be restored? Only by building on a moral basis, by reconstruction, regeneration, repentance, renewal—all great Christian words born of the fact of the Cross. In the morning after the resurrection, when the Lord sought him, Peter saw in the transfigured Cross the first gleam of hope, the hope that had perished when the Cross was erected, and he was begotten again unto a living hope. Hope springs from the Cross, it begins the flush of a new morning, it inspires the anthem of the ultimate victory, it composes the song of undying hope.

In the Cross Peter saw the throne established, and he saw the King, still holding the scepter in His hand, and knew that authority was vested in Him. Presently Peter heard Christ say, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and disciple the nations," and by the witness of Resurrection Peter knew that in the King were vested all resources of power for the establishment of the Kingdom.

When the risen Lord spoke to him that morning, Peter heard the final word of revelation. He had seen the keys in Christ's hand before; but now the truth was perfectly published. Thus the hope-restoring vision was, first, that of the Priest; second, that of the King; third, that of the Prophet enunciating the laws of the Kingdom, and every word full of force and power and life because of the victory won in the midst of the mystery of the darkness of the Cross.

Take away the resurrection, and what then? It is surely a work of supererogation to argue it in this assembly. Deny the fact which we celebrate today, what then? Then the Cross was the ultimate tragedy. If Christ was murdered and there was nothing in His death other than the victory of sin, then that is the severest reflection on the government of God of which I know anything; no other moral problem compares with it. If there was no resurrection, then that was of all tragedies the most tragic! No resurrection! Then that King with high vision, noble aspiration, is dead! No resurrection! Then the Prophet was mistaken when He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," mistaken in all His high ideals! Then where am I? "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching in vain, your faith also is vain... ye are yet in your sins."

It is altogether too late for arguments of that kind. The results demonstrate the resurrection. Spiritual and moral reconstruction by the way of the Cross, the fact that men have seen, and still do see, sin when they come to the Cross, and confess it when they kneel before the Cross, and know the breaking of its power when they yield themselves to the Christ of the Cross, these are the facts that prove the resurrection.

The King is alive and known, exercising His will in the hearts of individuals, creating magnificent heroisms today, so that men are venturing forth in obedience to Him on high and holy enterprises, counting not their lives dear unto them, that they may be obedient to His will. The prophet is vindicated in the growing victories of His teaching.

Our hope is living, for these things are the result of the resurrection, they demonstrate the resurrection.

If for a while we are in the midst of conflict, and the noise of battle is about us, we know the victory is already won. Armageddon was fought in the hour of the Cross, the prince of this world hath

been judged, and at last the victory shall be complete.

So that, with this song of hope in our heart, we also, born to a living hope by the way of the resurrection, trust in the Priest, follow the King, and obey the Prophet until His Kingdom shall come.

1 Peter 1:3-5. Our Hope And Inheritance.

1 Peter 1:3-5.

Our Hope And Inheritance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

1 Peter 1:3-5

This is a great doxology. It immediately follows salutation, and merges into consolation. This method of introduction is the more remarkable when we consider the condition of those to whom the letter was addressed. Peter, faithful to the compact he had made with Paul to devote himself to the circumcision, was writing to Jewish Christians in Asia Minor who were then passing through a time of "fiery trial." They were charged with being "evildoers," enemies of the State. Their very name, "Christian," brought them persecution and oppression. Writing thus to these his brethren—his brethren after the flesh, and his brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ, writing to them to establish them, as his Master had commanded he should do when once he himself was turned back again—he began his letter with a vibrant note of praise and doxology. It is hardly the usual method. It is hardly the method that we should adopt ourselves. When we write to someone in fiery trial, misunderstood, oppressed, persecuted, we do not often begin with Hallelujah! But that is what this man did. His sentences are positively vibrant with joy.

The doxology consists of a celebration of life, the life from which it springs. What was the reason of the doxology? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who... begat us." The life so begotten was the inspiration of the song, and the song celebrates that life out of which it springs.

Observe the movements of the doxology. God is praised, is worshiped—for that is the significance of the word, "Blessed be God." It is the language of a soul prostrate before Him, not in fear, but in courage; not in despair, but in hope; not in cowardice, but in high and holy confidence. It is praise for life, for life as the outcome of the mercy of God by the way of the resurrection, "Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and for life having a twofold value—"unto a living hope," "unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Thus we may say that the exultation of the singer centers in the abounding mercy of God, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus as the medium through which this mercy of God flows out toward men, and confesses the twofold benefit resulting from the outflow of that mercy by way of the resurrection.

Our theme tonight, selected from the many themes which the great passage suggests, is the relation of the resurrection to mercy and life. I propose two lines of thought only: first, what the resurrection of Jesus Christ meant to God; and second, what the resurrection means to us.

What the resurrection meant to God we will first state, and then attempt to consider. The suggestion is somewhat startling, that the resurrection in itself could mean anything to God. Yet, if one thing is most clearly revealed in this passage, and, indeed, in all the New Testament writing, it is that God had great gain by way of the resurrection, that the resurrection made possible in the activity of God that which apart from it had not been possible. We here view the outworking in time and into visibility of the profound fact by which God was enabled to do, what apart from this fact He could not have done. Take Peter's words once again, leaving out the subsidiary clauses: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... according to His great mercy begat us again... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The declaration of the apostle is that by the resurrection God created the possibility for the outflow of His great mercy in the gift of life to needy souls.

This assumes, first, the fact of the mercy of God. That mercy was not created by the resurrection. The resurrection made a channel through which it could flow. It also assumes the restraint of the mercy of God. It could not move; it could not act according to its own desire. By that of which the resurrection was the symbol in time all the barriers were broken down; and the eternal fact of the mercy of God found restraint ended, and the consequent possibility of outflow toward the sons of men.

What is mercy? Our word is a rich and beautiful one; but in order that we may make no mistake, in order that our interpretation may be neither too narrow nor broader than is warranted, let us see what the word really means which here is so translated. It is a primitive word whose history is unknown. It always had one particular significance, being always used in reference to compassion in activity. There may be compassion which never becomes active, which is always passive, the nursed sorrow of the heart; but that is not mercy. Mercy is compassion struggling and determined to reach out, and become active. The root significance of the word translated mercy in the Old Testament is apparently at the first a very simple, insignificant one; it means to bend, to stoop, to bow. Mercy is compassion bending, stooping, bowing.

Mercy, then, presupposes a state of need in those toward whom it moves, or over whom it stoops. Herein we distinguish between love and mercy, between grace and mercy, between compassion and mercy. I grant that apart from love, grace, or compassion there can be no mercy; but there may be love and grace, and even compassion, without mercy. Love does not necessarily connote sorrow or suffering in the case of the one on whom it is set; but mercy does. Love becomes mercy in the presence of the suffering and sorrow of the soul on whom it is set. Without love, there is no mercy; but whenever we employ this great word "mercy" we are conscious of a shadow over the brightness, there is a sigh and a sob, the sigh and sob of need; and mercy is that effort of love to go out to the needy one and lift and heal and bless. The mercy of God, then, is God's desire to heal and help, to deliver and save those who are wounded and in need, who are bound and in the place of destruction.

The apostle writes of the "much mercy of God." Here is a case in which all grammar is defeated. When I went to school I learned, positive, much; comparative, more; superlative, most. Which is really the greatest of these three? The superlative? By no means. The superlative is only the ultimate in comparison. The positive is the greatest, for when left alone it admits of no comparison. We may speak of the most merciful God when we are thinking of someone else; we think of God

as being most merciful when we think of ourselves. When we think of any quality of God comparison is impossible. There is nothing with which to compare it. In that phrase "the much mercy of God," so easily passed over, the apostle has brought us face to face with the fact that God suffered; and suppose—a supposition which is entirely unwarranted, but in which I will indulge for the sake of argument—suppose God had found no way of saving men, He still would have mercy, compassion reaching out toward need. "The much mercy of God." None is unreached by that mercy, so far as it is desire on the part of God to save. If you rather question that statement I will enforce it by another Biblical quotation, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

But there is a sense in which that "much mercy of God" must be, and is, held in restraint; there is some reason why it cannot flow out to men, some reason why it cannot act on behalf of those who are in need. This reason consists in the impossibility of conferring benefits on those who are in sin, that is, who are in rebellion against holiness, and under the mastery of evil. God cannot give the gifts of His love to souls who are under the mastery of sin. This restraint is not the operation of justice as opposed to mercy; it is the operation of mercy itself, and of mercy in the interest of its own object. To bestow benefits on such people would be to defeat the intention of mercy. An angel is seen with a flaming sword at the gate of Eden guarding the way. Why? "To keep the way of the tree of life," lest man should eat of the tree of life and live forever. You say, That is judgment! No, it is mercy! To confer the gift of life on a man who has sinned would be to perpetuate his sin, and his pollution, and his paralysis, and his agony. Guard the way to the tree of life, and guard it by a flaming sword; and that flaming sword is mercy delivering men from the unutterable penalty of continuity in the condition into which they have brought themselves as the result of their own sin. Mercy is not weakness, not sentiment, not mawkish sympathy. Mercy will never try to deal with sin by the application of rose water! The old Hebrew singer understood this:

He smote Egypt in their first-born;

For His mercy endureth forever.

He smote great kings;

For His mercy endureth forever.

And slew famous kings;

For His mercy endureth forever.

Sihon, king of the Amorites;

For His mercy endureth forever.

And Og, king of Bashan;

For His mercy endureth forever.

The mercy, the going out of God in desire to heal, cannot confer blessings on men in sin. The gates of the city of God which the Seer of Patmos beheld were of pearl, every several gate was of one pearl; and the infinite significance of the pearl is its purity. The flashing splendor of the gates of the city of God forever says, Nought that defileth can ever enter here! Why? Because if that

which defileth be permitted to enter into the city of God, then the very city of God is insecure, and the very conditions which mercy seeks to establish are denied and made impossible. By reason of the profundity of the Divine mercy, by reason of its intensity, of its marvelous greatness, it can make no truce with sin. The much mercy of God is, therefore, held in restraint.

Listen, then, to the doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus." What, then, was the resurrection of Jesus? First, the resurrection of Jesus was the necessary, inevitable sequence and culmination of the Cross of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus was the perfecting of that which took place in the mystery of His passion, of that passion wherein sin was dealt with in a way so profound that we have never been able to understand it perfectly, but in a way so Divine that two millenniums have rejoiced in the experience of it. The resurrection was not something separated from the Cross, or in opposition to the Cross; it was part of the Cross, the completion of it, the last movement in it. To that conception of it all the references of the Lord Himself give witness. Whenever He spoke of His Cross, the last thing He said was about resurrection. We cannot find a single occasion on which Jesus spoke of His Cross but that He ended by speaking of His resurrection. The evangelist tells us that when Jesus and Elijah and Moses met on the mount they "spake of the exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." That is more than the Cross; it is the Cross and the resurrection. When Luke tells the story of Jesus going to the Cross, His determination to journey to Jerusalem to die, he does not say Jesus is going to die, he says, "When the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Jerusalem was an incident by the way, the Cross was part of the journey, the resurrection was its completion. In that hour of resurrection, therefore, we come to the culmination of the Cross, and so to the ending of sin, the breaking of its power, the canceling of its obligation, the quenching of its fires, the disannulling of its bonds, the devitalizing of its poison. When that is done, the abounding mercy of God can move out toward suffering and needy humanity.

The second thing has been involved in the first. The resurrection was the initiation of a new and living way. The resurrection was that which, resulting from the Cross, meant that the life taken from the dead, having been voluntarily laid down therein, was now at the disposal of others. Christian life is Christ's life, communicated, shared, and mastering our own lives. That is the new and living way open for men, made possible for men. Mercy can operate, indeed operates in this very activity, and brings men into the new and living way. The sinner is cleansed from that with which God can make no terms, and energized for that which God demands in His holiness because He is a God of love. The sinner is lifted from the depths, loved out of the pit of corruption, and saved, in the full and gracious sense of the word. The resurrection stands in human history for our eyes to look back at its light and glory, and know that through it, that is through all those infinite and spiritual mysteries and wonders of which it was the outward symbol, God has gained a way by which His great mercy may flow out for the help of such as are in need.

What the resurrection, therefore, means to us is revealed in the doxology by two co-ordinate clauses, each one beginning with the word "unto," one before the declaration as to begetting, and the other after it: "Unto a living hope... unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

"A living hope" is a hope that is alive, that is not mortal, perishable. Hope always deals with things unseen, with things which are not demonstrable to the senses. What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? We are saved by that hope. What, then, is hope? What I have said about hope I might surely say about faith. Indeed, it is difficult to keep the two things apart. Yet there is a difference. Hope is a greater word than faith. Faith does not always involve hope. In the first place, God has conditioned our salvation on faith. Hope is not always involved in faith. When faith operates simply it grows into hope. Faith is always involved in hope. Hope is therefore to me the greater word. Hope is the element of joyful expectation in faith. A man can have faith by a strenuous effort of the will. When faith has a song at the center of it, a song of assurance, then it becomes hope. Our word is a beautiful one, coming from the Anglo-Saxon *hopa*, which meant not merely anticipation of something ahead, but the effort of the life to reach it.

In what sense has the resurrection given us a living hope? Hope, as we have said, deals with unseen things which cannot be proved by the senses, not being demonstrable to the senses. Let me name two such. The resurrection of Jesus is a new interpretation of personality, such as the world had never had before, such as the world has never had, apart from the resurrection, and the works which our Lord Himself did work. Do not be foolish enough to try to get rid of the last two chapters in John's gospel. They are absolutely necessary to the interpretation of the gospel. Do not try to get rid of the post-resurrection stories. You need them. Think of them as a whole. What do you see? Jesus the same, and yet different. Human personality is revealed as superior to physical death. He died, but is alive. By that sign and token our heart is sure that the last word has not been said about personality when over the sacred dust we repeat the words, dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes. We are referring then to the transient abode of personality, but not to personality. We know, moreover, that personality means continuity of essential individuality. It was the same Jesus they had known before Whom they knew after. Shall we know our loved ones in heaven? Surely, absolutely yes. There is no question about it. That is what these post-resurrection stories show. He was the same, the same Jesus. Yes, but there is more in this new interpretation of personality. I see in the risen Jesus change, and enlargement of capacity and potentiality, even within the realm of that of which, for lack of a better term, I speak as the material. In the resurrection the body of Jesus was raised; it was such a body that He was able to light a fire on the shore and prepare breakfast for tired fishermen who had been out all night, such a body that He was able to sit down with them in the upper room and eat of broiled fish, yet so different a body that He was there in their midst without the shooting of a bolt or the opening of a door, so different that for a long way along the road to Emmaus He could walk with two of them who knew Him well without allowing them to discover Him. So much the same that when He so chose, they saw and knew that it was the Lord. Are these stories speculations? No, they are revelations; your philosophy cannot explain them, no human philosophy can; but God has given us this one picture of personality beyond the grave for the cheer and courage of our souls. The grave does not end everything. Beyond it we continue the same, yet with a personality so changed, enlarged, and beautified, that as they read the story men are inclined to doubt. I do not wonder. Do not treat these stories as though they were in any sense small. Some man says: Do you really think that someone came into that room without anyone opening the door? Do you really believe that? I reply: Would not you like to be able to do it? I think you would. I think you often sigh within the confines of this material body. I know there have been moments when I would have given anything, not to be out of the body, but to be suddenly present where I could not come by

traveling. That is only a rough and almost brutal suggestion. We have no definite, detailed revelation; but here are great whispers, wonderful whispers, giving us gleams of personality beyond the tomb. I think Jesus tarried those forty days with bereaved souls in order that straining, tear-bedewed eyes might know that the life on the other side is the same, only ennobled, glorified, beautified.

The resurrection is also for us the pledge of our redemption. The death of Jesus was vicarious. He died for others. The resurrection of Jesus was vicarious. He rose for others. Men die in Him and live in Him. This is the great value for time with its vicissitudes, for earth with its limitations. We are born again unto this living hope.

The text, then, takes us across the line, and suggests to us the things that lie beyond. "An inheritance." That means a place and possession in the heavens, interpreted, as I have said, by the risen One, and guaranteed by the ascension of that risen One. Let us pause ere we call in question the accuracy of the declaration that this Man ascended as Man, and that this Man, as Man, sat down at the right hand of God. If you deny me that, then I am not sure about myself and the future. While that remains to me as a truth in the power of which I live day by day I have hope indeed. At the right hand of God—the mystic phrase suggests a definite location—is Jesus of Nazareth even now, not limited in His Deity by His location, but located in His humanity, while by the Spirit His Deity is with us everywhere. In that ascension of the Son of Man I have man's guarantee of place and possession in the life that lies beyond this: where He is we shall be also.

That inheritance is reserved by the power of God. Reserved, what does the word mean? Withheld! That does not sound quite so pleasing. It means something else. Secured! The infant in the eye of the law to the age of twenty-one does not enter into his inheritance and patrimony, but it is reserved for him. Withheld from him in the days of infancy, it is secured to him at the period of his manhood. So the ultimate in our life in Jesus Christ is withheld from us for the present; but it is secured to us; it is reserved for us. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

The experience is reserved for those who are kept. The picture here is that of the power of God on sentry duty, the power of God watching over us and guarding us, keeping us for the inheritance which is withheld from us, but secured to us in Jesus Christ. Kept by the power of God through faith, that is through faith operating in that power, trusting it, and obeying it.

The apostle employs language full of poetry as he gives us the characteristics of the inheritance, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." There is something of the poetry lost in the translation. As he wrote it, there is a beauty and dignity which we miss in the translation. Our inheritance is unwithering, unsullied, unfading! Unwithering—that speaks of its deathlessness, nothing is in it of the element of destruction; it cannot die; that is eternal life. Unsullied—that speaks of its sinlessness, nothing is in it that prevents the perpetual development of the Divine life; it is perfect in purity. Unfading—nothing is in it that dims the glory or tarnishes the beauty; it is fadeless.

Lift your eyes, ye sons of night; for ye are also sons of light! On beyond the gloom is the gleam of the glory! Beyond the fiery trial is the day of emancipation! A larger and more stupendous life lies

beyond!

For today amid the strife we have a living hope. An inheritance is reserved for us in the undying ages and limitless spaces of eternity. To these things He begat us when His abundant mercy was enabled to flow forth through the resurrection of His Son.

The theme is a very pertinent one for today. I have found it so in meditating on it. This is a time of fiery trial to Christian souls. So far we are preserved from physical suffering; but these our sons are enduring, and we also with them. Our spiritual and mental stress is great. We need some great comfort of God today. Moreover, I think there is another line of similarity. It seems to me that it is even so that prophets of Christianity are in danger of being called enemies of the State today. There is a subtle peril abroad of supposing that Christianity should be postponed to some more convenient season. I hold no brief for Dr. Lyttelton. I have not read his sermon; but from what I gather from the criticisms of it I agree with him almost entirely. I think that very probably he was unwise in some of his illustrations; but if Christianity is not to be proclaimed in the Spirit of Christ today God have mercy on the Church and the nation. We are in dire peril lest we be afraid to say the great things of our faith because we shall be supposed to be enemies of the State. It is also certainly so that in some quarters the very term "Christian" is suspect. We need comfort, we need help. Where shall we find it?

This Easter day has come to us in the midst of fiery trial, misunderstanding, difficulty, perplexity, and agony. If Easter day does nothing else, it should bring to us the capacity for singing a great doxology. Mercy is the inspiration of judgment. While God's judgments are abroad in the earth men are learning righteousness, and that is the purpose of mercy. God will, and does, remember mercy in the midst of wrath. It is the reason why His judgments are operative. Our hope today is still living. No slaying can destroy it. No grave can hold it. Our inheritance is still reserved, and through death, defilement, and decay, we move ever onward toward the unwithering, the unsullied, the unfading. We look, as Peter said in another of his letters, not alone for the things that lie beyond, we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

We march listening to the music of the reserved inheritance; we march in the energy of the living hope, to both of which we have been born anew in the much mercy of God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead.

1 John 2:3. Fellowship With God.

1 John 2:3.

Fellowship With God.

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:3

The great word of this passage, which at once arrests our attention, is the word "fellowship." While not exclusively so, it is peculiarly the word of John; and as I find it in this letter, and in the two brief ones which follow, I am always impressed with the thought that these letters are the result of that wonderful thing Jesus said to His disciples in the farewell discourses, part of which we read this evening, "Henceforth, I call you not servants, but friends." It ever seems to me that the word fellowship, as John makes use of it, is the peculiar and particular word of friendship.

It is an interesting fact, which some of you have doubtless noticed, that in these three letters John never speaks of Jesus as Lord, and never speaks of the disciples of Jesus—believers in Him—as servants. I do not mean to suggest that John forgets the relationship which he and his fellow-disciples bore to Jesus as His bond-servants; or that John ever forgets the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ, that He was, indeed, the Lord; but it is an interesting fact that he does not speak of Him as Lord. These are peculiarly the letters of a close, and intimate, and personal friendship with Jesus.

This word "fellowship," therefore, is an illuminating word concerning our friendship with God and our friendship with Christ; our friendship with God through Christ.

I have already said that the word is not exclusively used by John; Paul uses it, it occurs in the fundamental proposition of his first letter to the Corinthian Church, "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The word thrills us, with all the deepest, and the sublimest, and the tenderest things of our relationship to Christ, and in Him to God.

It is a rich and spacious word, full of suggestiveness, almost impossible of full and final translation. That is borne out by this fact; the word which is here translated "fellowship" is translated in many ways in the New Testament—"fellowship, contribution, distribution, communication, communion." Or, if we turn from this actual word, which is an abstract noun, to the common noun, it is translated "partakers, partners, companions."

I believe that all these are needed in our language if we are to have any idea of the richness of this one great word; the word which is descriptive of the great and gracious fact of our friendship with God and with Jesus Christ.

If we tarry for a moment longer with the word, it is only that we may inquire if there be any illustration of its simplest meaning. I think we can find one in the Acts of the Apostles. It is declared

that in those early days of apostolic love and fervour, the disciples had all things in common. The word so translated is the root from which the other word is derived, and in that translation we get nearer the heart of its suggestive meaning than in any other word in the New Testament.

What is fellowship? Having all things in common. What is it to have fellowship amongst men? To have all things in common with them. What is it to have fellowship with God? Although the statement is a stupendous and amazing one, I am constrained to make it—it is to have all things in common with Him. That word is the one that indicates the perfection of our friendship with God, and my desire this evening is to lead you along a line of quiet meditation as to what our fellowship with God is, for the sake of encouragement for those who are the Lord's, and, perhaps, to win, and woo, and allure those who lack this friendship; that before this service ends they also may become the friends of Jesus, the friends of God, henceforth to know what fellowship with God does really mean.

I shall, therefore, select from these different words two, which mark two phases of the one great fact. I will take that rich word of the Church "communion"—fellowship is communion—and I will take one of those common nouns, rendering it in its abstract fashion, and say the word means partnership. Why make the difference, for they signify the same thing? Because in our use of these words we use them in different relations. We use the word communion in the realm of friendship; we use the word partnership in the realm of business; and for that reason I select these two words, because by so doing we shall come to a better understanding of what this fellowship with God means. Fellowship with God, then, as to privilege, is communion with Him; the actuality of friendship and fellowship with God, as to responsibility, is partnership with Him. I almost hesitate to say this because it is so incomplete and unworthy a method of presentation; but for the purpose of arresting thought and fixing it here, I will say that fellowship with God means we have gone into business with God, that His enterprises are to be our enterprises.

Let us first dwell on our fellowship with God as communion; our fellowship with God as friendship.

I will take three simple illustrations of what friendship is on the earthly level, in order that we may climb to the higher height, and understand what is meant by our fellowship, our friendship, with God.

I propose to give three quotations, which have appealed to me personally, as setting forth most perfectly the ideal of human friendship. I begin with these words from Mrs. Craik's *Life for a Life*.

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort, of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

Is not that a perfect description of friendship? How many people are there in company with whom you can pour out everything in your heart, say everything, say anything? Very, very few; for God does not give us many friends in this world; many acquaintances, and we value them all. But that is a perfect description of friendship. With your friend you think aloud, there is no restraint; there is no need to keep up an appearance—the blunter thing would be to say, there is no need to play the hypocrite. You pour everything out, knowing this—your friend will sift between the chaff and the grain, and with the breath of kindness will blow the chaff away, and keep only the grain. That is

friendship on the human level. And it described what true friendship with God is—that is on my side of the fellowship. With God it is my privilege to pour out everything that is in my heart, chaff and grain together, saying anything, saying everything I am thinking. But have we learned that lesson? Do not we think altogether too often our conversation with God must be that of carefully prepared and often stilted phrasing? I think we never so grieve His heart as when we attempt to speak thus with Him. Conversing with God reaches its highest level when, alone with Him, I pour out in His listening ear everything in my heart; and the manner in which I have learned that secret, and live in the power of it, is the measure of the joy and strength of my friendship with God.

It is perfectly true, it may be done. I can say, and I do say, when alone with God things I dare not say in the hearing of other men. I tell Him all my griefs, and doubts, and fears; and if we have not learned to do so, we have never entered into the meaning of this great truth concerning fellowship. He will take out the grain, and with the breath of friendship blow the chaff away, only we must be honest when we are dealing with Him. I believe that if your heart is hot and restless about the way God is dealing with you, and you force yourself to the singing of a hymn of resignation, He spurns it; but if you pour out your anger as Martha did when she said, "I know he shall rise in the last day," then He will be patient, and loving, and gentle; and out of the infinite love and gentleness of His heart He will speak some quiet word of comfort.

How much do we know of this fellowship? How much have we practiced talking to God of everything in our souls?

Or take another illustration. Goethe speaking of his friendship for one with whom he held conversation, said this:

For the first time I carried on a conversation; for the first time was the inmost sense of my words returned to me more rich, more full, more comprehensive from another mouth. What I had been groping for was returned clear to me. What I had been thinking I have been taught to see.

Is not that even a more subtle and delicate definition of friendship? Not only can I pour out all the things in my heart; but my friend will say yes, and repeat the thing I have said, and repeat it definitely better than I could ever have hoped to say it.

Here again is the revelation of what friendship with God means to those who know and practice it; and even though this may be a more delicate and wonderful definition, I think we all understand it perhaps a little better, for there have been moments when we have struggled to say things to God, and have heard Him saying them again to us better than we could have said them. Is not that what Paul meant when he said: "We know not what to pray for as we ought"? Is not that the supreme inspiration for high and prevailing prayer—the consciousness of inability to make prevailing prayer? But Paul added: "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," that is, He says the things for us, and we know that God is praying prayers we fain would pray, and answering our imperfect articulation with the perfect words that prove His perfect comprehension.

Or once again, Dryden, describing his friendship for his truest friend, said:

We were so mixed up as meeting streams, both to ourselves were lost. We were one mass. We could not give or take but for the same, for he was I, I he.

What is that but Dryden's method of declaring that he and his friend had all things in common? And dare we take that last illustration and use it of friendship with God? Without a doubt. Here we touch the real meaning of fellowship; here we are at the heart and center of the great idea.

Let us now consider the other aspect of fellowship as partnership; mutual interests, mutual devotion, mutual activity.

Fellowship with God means mutual interests: God interested in me, and I interested in God. The overwhelming sense of the heart, as these things are uttered, is that of the inequality of the friendship. That I may be interested in God is understandable; the infinite marvel at first sight is that God can be interested in me. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him." Fellowship with God means that God is interested in my being, is all its parts; in my spiritual life, in my mental ability, in my physical need. Be not anxious about what you shall eat, or drink, or put on, for your Heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things.

Now, would to God, brethren, I knew how to say this thing as it ought to be said. Presently, the evening service will be over and the day of worship and rest done, and most of you will be back in the midst of all the everyday things we speak of as the daily task, the common round. But fellowship means that God is as profoundly interested in a man on Monday in his office and store as when in the sanctuary; that there is no part of the life in which God is not interested. I only pause for lack of words to express a thing so sublime and yet so simple. The difficulty in business, the perplexity that burdens the mind—all these things He is interested in. God is interested in me, and in my development! Oh! let us begin where it is always best to begin—interested in the growth of the child. Just as interested as you are, infinitely more, in the physical development. Are you interested in the manifestations of your child's opening mind; in the questions and problems of your child? God is also interested.

I shall not be misunderstood when I say this: that while I personally differ profoundly with what is known as Unitarian theology, I am conscious we owe a good deal to Unitarians if it only be that they have brought us back to the consciousness of the nearness of God to human life, as revealed in the perfect manhood of Jesus. And do not let us forget it for our own comfort, our own strength. Brethren, we do not leave our God here when the Benediction is pronounced. Are you dreading tomorrow? Remember, God will be with you there, as profoundly interested in the piece of work your hands have to do, in the problem your mind has to face, as in the sanctuary at this hour.

Yes, but it is equally true I am to be interested in the things of God, in His ultimate ends and His present enterprises; that as His heart and mind are set upon my perfection, upon that ultimate realization when I shall be presented perfect before His throne; so also this fellowship demands that my eyes are to be forevermore upon that goal. If God will find His rest in me when I am perfectly conformed to His will, I should never find my perfect rest until His kingdom is established and His glory perfectly come.

Partnership also means mutual devotion. God's resources are all at my disposal. And now I must speak, I fear, in the language that indicates duty—my resources ought all to be at His disposal. His resources are all at my disposal; His knowledge, His wisdom, His power, are all at my disposal. How small a demand we make of Him! How often we settle down in our own wisdom and neglect asking for aught, while He is waiting to give! How constantly we dishonour Him because we do not

appropriate all He has put at our disposal! All His resources at our disposal!

But have we responded to the other fact that all our resources are to be at His disposal? All of them, not a tithe, not a tenth. Oh! tithe your possessions if you will, but let your tithing be the evidence that the nine-tenths are also His. The man who takes his income and says, One-tenth is God's and nine-tenths are mine, is a bad Jew, and certainly not a good Christian. All belongs to Jehovah, just as the one day in seven is the symbol of the fact that the seven days belong to Him. All our resources at His disposal. That is the law of friendship, and if He put all His at my disposal, and I keep back part of the price, how unworthy I am of this great fact of fellowship with God.

But partnership means also mutual activity. God accommodating Himself to my weakness and I rising by that accommodation into cooperation with His mind and with His strength. Of these two things, the one to emphasize is that of God bringing Himself to my weakness. "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Do you remember George Matthieson's description of gentleness? He declared that when you speak of a brook running down the hillside, and away through the meadows, as a gentle brook, you are using a false term. He says there is no gentleness in a brook, but that if you watch the mighty ocean when it kisses the golden sands, and does not harm the child at play, then you may speak of gentleness. Gentleness is strength held in reserve, and placed at the service of weakness—"Thy gentleness hath made me great." Why does not God move more quickly? Why does not God accomplish His purpose in the world, and put an end to all the things that fret and puzzle us? Count that the long-suffering of God is His patience. Remember, that it would be possible, as we believe in God, for Him to end everything with a crash. But where would some of us be if He did so? Vulgarly is in a hurry; omnipotence is never in a hurry. All His processes are slow, as they appear to us, because of the gentleness of God. He waits for men. If it be a marvelous thing that Enoch walked with God, it is a more marvelous thing that God walked with Enoch, waiting for him as for a weak little child along the way. Just as you, father—strong man, equal to great speed—walk by the side of your little child that is just beginning to walk, accommodating your strength to the child's weakness, your speed to the child's slowness; so God forever accommodates Himself to our halting pace.

I wonder if that brings to your heart the comfort it brings to mine! I look back over my own life tonight, and see how wonderfully it is true; He is waiting, always waiting. Ah, I have kept Him waiting when I ought not, but He has waited even then. Always waiting—so patient with my foolishness, my weakness, my fear. Our fellowship is with God, and fellowship is friendship, and friendship means that partnership which, on His part, is the accommodation of His strength to my weakness.

But the gentleness does make us great, and by comparison with the pace we once had, how much quicker the pace is today; and by comparison with what we once were able to do, how much more we are able to do today! Let us not be afraid of boasting in the Lord, but say: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." He leadeth us everywhere in triumph. When you think of the "all things," and the triumph, in comparison with God's ability, then you will remember again the slowness and weakness; but when you think of what He enables us to do in comparison with what we would have done without Him, then we marvel at the victories and accomplishments, for He is enabling us.

If God accommodates Himself to us in gentleness, He enables us to rise to new activity with Him, in almost overwhelming power.

Our fellowship is with the Father. The fellowship of the friendship that says everything, knowing that He will listen and blow the chaff away; the fellowship that says its best, and hears repeated by the friend the inner meaning of the best; the fellowship that merges into such identity of interest that we discover that God and we are in every deed in partnership with each other. He is committed to all the things that pertain to the fulfilment of my life, while I am committed to all the things that pertain to the fulfilment of His purpose and of His glory.

And yet, brethren, there is another test of friendship which goes beyond these, a more severe test of friendship than the ability to talk and be listened to, than speaking the innermost thought that the friend may repeat it better, than the merging of lives. The supreme test is the ability to say nothing, and be content when nothing is said. Silence is the final proof of friendship, and contentment in silence. When I want a holiday and a true rest, I want a true friend, and the true friend is the one I can sit with in the railway train and say nothing. When I am introduced by courtesy, and acquaintanceship results, and I must always be saying something to my host, that is not friendship. Very valuable for a little while; but in the home of my friend I sit down, and stare at him, and say nothing. He looks right back at me, and says nothing.

My true friend meets me some morning, and there is not the old smile, there is not the cheery word. Now if there be true friendship, I am not disturbed by these things. I am quite sure that this attitude is on the surface, that there is a reason for it. I prove my friendship by respecting his silence, and not seeking for explanation. I think that is the final proof of friendship. The moment you ask your friend to declare his friendship, you reveal your doubt of his friendship. Well, I am afraid we shall have to look to heaven for this friendship, but we have it in God if we will, and it is here we fail.

Is there an hour when you can no longer pray? Then do not pray; and know this—God knows. Of course, if the reason of your inability to pray is that you have violated the laws of friendship, that you have sinned against it, then speak with repentance and with tears, until you be restored to joy and salvation. But if there be no conscious reason in your own life, let me quote from the ancient prophecy—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant? He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light."

Well, now what are we to do, prophet, because we are often there? Let him compel himself to sing? Nothing of the kind. What then? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon the Lord without speaking. God is equal in His love to the strain of a silence that is born of honesty. Are we? Nay, nay; am I? And I shall not answer with public confession, but I do want the thing to search me. That is where I break down. If God does not speak, and there is no light and no revelation, I begin to wonder if He loves me. Oh, cultivate heart-silence.

And, my brethren, God's truest friends are those to whom God is most often silent. Would to God I could comfort some heart with that. The light has gone out, and you are obeying Him, walking in darkness. Do not imagine that is because He cannot trust you; it is a supreme proof of His trust; silence is the last test. Our fellowship is with the Father, so that if we are driven to silence we need not be afraid; so that if He is silent we ought not to be afraid.

It was a great hymn to which Bliss was writing the music when he was suddenly taken from life in a railway accident. They found in his writing-case the music, half-written, to that hymn:

I know not what awaits me;

God kindly veils mine eyes,

I'd rather walk in the dark with God,

Than go alone in the light;

I'd rather walk by faith with Him,

Than go alone by sight.

We often sing it. May God make it true to us. That is the final proof of friendship.

"My soul, wait thou upon God." "Oh, yes," we say, "we will do that; it is the easiest thing to do." Nay, it is the hardest thing to do! It is much easier to work for God than to wait for God. It is the waiting that tells and wears the heart. It is suspense that kills. There is relief in the hour of catastrophe, if there has been long waiting. Remember how often He has had to wait for thee. Let us be ashamed that we are keeping Him waiting, and yet let us know that His friendship will bear the test. If in our deepest heart, when there is no song, no psalm, no ecstasy; no joy, we are true; His friendship will bear the strain. And He wants us to be such friends that we can bear the strain of silence and the great test of quietness.

But, my brethren, we need to practice our fellowship. He wants to talk to me of His own secrets, of the meaning of my life, and the way He would have me go; and I believe, brethren, one of the greatest lacks in the present day is that we do not take time to listen. "Oh," you say, "God does not speak to men now as He spoke to Abraham." I do not believe it. I think the true thing to say is that men do not listen as Abraham listened. We do not give God the chance to speak. The practice of fellowship.

I am listening, Lord, for Thee,

What hast Thou to say to me?

Quite easy to sing in a crowd; but we want to learn to practice it in our own individual life; and the practice means that we must take time to speak to Him of our work and His work; of our need and responsibility; of our sorrows and of our joys; of our defeats and of our victories. That is the practice of this fellowship, and we need to take time for these things.

Brethren, in closing, has it ever occurred to you that God is often disappointed that we are so busy doing things for Him, that we have not time to talk to Him? I feel that is true of my own life. I feel increasingly that I have to guard against being so busy for God that I have no time for God Himself; and God created man for His glory. For what is man to be? What is the ideal of human life? That he may enter into the secrets of God, and be the friend of God; and if God's friends never visit Him, never talk to Him, even though they are busily occupied in His work, they are robbing Him. Let us see to it that we take this great word and attempt to enter into the fulness of its suggestion.

Oh, presently we shall be back again facing the problems and perplexities, and doing that piece of work we laid down yesterday, glad to be away from it for very weariness. But now, when we take it up tomorrow, let us remember God is as interested in it as in the song with which we close the Sabbath. And if we will, brethren, that very piece of work—so poor, so commonplace that we desire not to do it—will become transfigured; and we shall find that the least thing of every day is part of God's method for building the city, and winning the world, and bringing in His kingdom.

May it be ours, therefore, not only to hold the doctrine of fellowship with God, but to practice it, and enter into all the fulness of the blessing, for His name's sake.

1 John 3:4; James 1:15 Sin.

1 John 3:4; James 1:15

Sin.

Sin is lawlessness.

1 John 3:4

Lust when it hath conceived beareth sin.

James 1:15

In these two brief passages we have inclusive statements of the nature and the genesis of sin. I am proposing to consider this subject in the most personal and immediate way, desiring to discuss the question of sin in the individual life, as to what it really is, and as to how it comes about.

What is sin? "Sin is lawlessness." How does a man sin? "Lust when it hath conceived beareth sin." We exclude from our consideration, first, the question of sin among the unenlightened peoples; and, second, the question of racial inheritance. Concerning those who have never heard the Evangel there is but one thing to be said, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Concerning the subject of racial inheritance, or, if you will, the subject of heredity, I am not proposing to speak, save to say that while it is perfectly true that very many of us may have inherited tendencies from our fathers, it is equally true that we all have another inheritance, mightier than the inheritance of evil. The mightier inheritance is our inheritance in God, both by creation and redemption. We are living in the midst of the sanctions of the Christian ideal. Wherever the ideal came from, the common consent of enlightened humanity agrees that it is right. There is no man in this house but that in the deepest of him consents to the standard of life revealed in the ethical teaching of Jesus. The standard of right and wrong for us is necessarily the Christian standard. We are all living in the light of that conception of life which has come to us through Christ, and we are all, in the deepest of us, consenting to the beauty of that conception.

Moreover, we are all conscious, however much we may debate it philosophically, of our power of choice. The man who, today, or yesterday, or the day before, committed sin, knows full well he need not have done so. I grant that there may have been unnatural predisposition to sin; I grant that the surroundings may have been very difficult; yet if a man be perfectly honest he will confess that he never yet committed an act of sin but by the choice of his own will. If the act of sin was not by the choice of his own will, then it was not sin. If you can conceive of circumstances in which a man is compelled by physical force to the doing of a thing which his conscience does not approve, circumstances in which a man has no choice left, under such circumstances he does not sin. Sin is always in the realm of the will. I am not discussing evil. Evil is a larger subject. Evil is all that is hurtful and harmful, whether as to cause or effect, whether material, mental, or moral. I am discussing sin.

Let us first, then, consider John's definition, "Sin is lawlessness." In order to understand this, we must take time to look at these two words, "sin" and "lawlessness," and see what they really mean.

"Sin." The word translated "sin" here is one of doubtful origin. From the philological standpoint, there is doubt as to its derivation. We are in no doubt, however, when we trace its use, as to what men meant by it. The very simplest definition of the word possible is "missing of the mark." It was made use of by Greek writers in at least three ways, always with the same underlying thought and intention.

The word was used in the physical realm. A man cast his spear and misses his mark.

It is used in the mental realm. A man sits down to write a poem and fails. That is a missing of the mark.

It is used in the spiritual realm, of failure to realize coming short of the high ideal.

Turn to the other word, "lawlessness." Philologically, it means "without law." Greek writers, however, never use the word to indicate the condition of being without law, but always with reference to the breaking of law.

Now, take these two words and look at them as they constitute the one definition of my text, "Sin is lawlessness. May I change the words and indicate the meaning? "Missing of the mark is due to the breaking of law." While the word "sin" alone might indicate a condition for which the one sharing in it might not be responsible, this whole definition declares the condition to be the result of choice and action. Thus the element of guilt enters into the thought and fact of sin. The mark is missed because the law is not observed. The prize desired is not gained—and this is for the young men here—because the rules of the games are not observed. It is not merely that a man is disqualified and flung out by a judicial decision of someone outside; but that there is only one way in which to reach the prize, and that is by the observance of certain rules. If a man break the rules he missed the mark of the prize of his high calling. That is sin. Sin is first a decision and choice of the will. It is, finally, the ultimate disaster of failure, resulting from that choice of the will. It was when I knew, and disobeyed, that I sinned. I was when I came to the parting of the ways, and had the right, the power to elect, to choose, to decide, and I did so in the way of disobedience, that I sinned.

A young fellow in a business house told me an almost grotesque thing. He had become a teetotaler, and had kept his pledge for some time, when one night in a mad frolic, and exhibition of wickedness, the other men in the house absolutely forced him to swallow brandy. He did not break his pledge. He did not sin. They sinned, but he did not. I know the illustration is rough, almost grotesque, but it gets to the heart of what I want you to see. How often that has been true in your life is another matter. You talk to me of the seductions of a certain hour and place. Why were you in that hour and place? I should need to cross-examine you very carefully before I would be willing to agree that there was no guilt in your sin. You speak to me of the fact that you have in your blood, in your life, tendencies to evil, things that drive you. Have you put proper guard upon those tendencies? Have you used the common sanity of the athlete in your fight against them? I am not speaking yet on the highest ground, but on the lowest. Is it not true of the vast majority of men who are sinning today that they "have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin"? Until a man has resisted unto blood in his striving against sin, he has no right to say he could not help his sin. If sin is never sin in the sense of guilt until a man violates law, directly a man does violate law it is sin.

When you state excuses for your choice of wrong, state also in common honesty the resources which were at your disposal, which you neglected. There are many excuses. There are men in this house tonight who live in the midst of circumstances very difficult for them, men who come to see me and talk with me, and write to me—I thank God for every such chance of helping men. All the environment in which you have to spend six out of your seven days is difficult. I grant it. I know it. Over against the difficult environment and the difficulty of the tendencies which you say you have inherited put the resources which are at your disposal if you will but avail yourself of them: the resources which are at your disposal in God, of which you may avail yourself if you fulfil His one condition of crowning Christ, the resources which are at your disposal in the comradeship of the saints, the resources which are at your disposal in prayer, prayer on the highway, in the midst of the environment, when the forces of evil are massed against you, prayer, which is but a sigh, a sob, the uplifting of the heart, but which touches the very hand and heart of God and brings deliverance to men. When next you tell me you are bound to sin, be careful that, first of all, you have considered not only the difficulties by which you were surrounded and the perils in your way, and the things which were against you; but be careful that you have also taken into account all the resources which were at your disposal.

In turning to James I want to read a few more words than the actual words of my text. "Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust when it hath conceived beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." This is a remarkable passage. In it three things are clearly revealed concerning sin. First, the basis of it, lust. Second, the method of it, a man is drawn away, enticed by his lust. Third, the issue of it, lust, being drawn away, conceives and bears sin. When I see the external act of sin, I ask what lies behind it. An enticement and a drawing away. And behind that what?

"Lust." It is absolutely necessary first of all that we should understand that deepest word in my text. What is lust? We have come to use this word almost exclusively in one sense. What does this word mean as it appears upon the page of the New Testament? Let me give you one or two illustrations where it occurs, which will prove that it does not necessarily, or indeed radically, mean what we have come to associate with the word in our speech today. When Jesus was approaching the end, coming near to the Cross, He sat at the table of Passover with His disciples, and said to them, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." To translate that in another way would be to read, "With lust I have lusted to eat this passover with you." It is the same word exactly, the suggestive Greek word *epithumia*. Peter in his letter, speaking of the great redemptive work of Jesus, says, "which things angels lust to look into," "desire" as we have it translated. It is the same as the word in my text. Once again, Paul writing in that wonderful letter, so radiant in its revelation of Christian experience, to his children at Philippi, said to them, "having the lust to depart, and be with Christ." I am sure you see at once what I am trying to bring you to understand about this word "lust." Desire is not sin, and there is no sin that men commit but at the back of it there is desire which is not sin. If only you can get far enough back into the mystery of your sin you will find desire which is not wrong in itself. Go back to an illustration which I am perfectly sure I have used more than once in this pulpit. I take it again as being the most graphic I know. Paul in writing to the Ephesian Christians said to them, "Be not drunken with wine... but be filled with the Spirit." That seems a strange bringing together of opposites. Behind both is the common lust, the same desire. Why does a man drink wine? Because the taking of it opens a window, lifts him,

exhilarates him. I dare not say enthuses him, for the difference between enthusiasm and excitement is radical. The word "excitement" simply means things in rapid movement without order. Enthusiasm means God-filled. But the man is after vision, light, excitement, lilt, and lift. What does a man obtain when he is filled with the Spirit of God? Vision, lift, enthusiasm, the thing that puts him high above all the troubles of life and enables him to keep beneath his triumphant feet the very things which perplex and harass and make difficult the way of man. The desire for the vision, for the lift, for the sense of fulness of life—it is that which drives a man to drink. If I should tell a man that when he appeals to drink for the satisfaction of that desire he is on his way to find God, I should lie. He has then, in answer to the cry of his soul after God, turned his back upon God. Desiring to find life, he has deliberately turned his face to death. Seeking the sun rising, he has knowingly begun to follow the will o' the wisp which leads him on to the swamps from which there is no return, save by some miracle of the redeeming grace of God. It is perfectly true that lust, desire, is in every life, and in every advance of evil to man; every suggestion of evil is made to something which at its root is right. Lust is not sin, but sin comes out of it.

Mark the method. "Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." I think with rare discrimination James here makes use of two words and they are both remarkable.

"Drawn away." It is a hunting figure, a figure of a man who is engaged in trapping animals, and the word means seduced from safety into snares. The next word "enticed" is a fishing figure, and includes the thought of a bait held out. The thought of the word enticed is "seduced by a fancied advantage." Mark the process in your own soul while I try to describe it to you as in mine, for, ah me, I know it, and you know it. There is desire in my life. Here is a suggestion that I shall satisfy that desire by being drawn away from the straight line which I see in front of me. I am enticed by the bait that offers me immediate realization of the thing I am after. I turn away, mark the word, turn away from the law which is in my conscience of right and wrong, I turn away to satisfy the lust. Lust is right, but the suggestion is that instead of answering the desire of my nature within the realm of God's holy law, I shall attempt to answer it outside. I am enticed. I am drawn away. The desire is right; the peril is that I am asked to satisfy proper desire by breaking law. Preaching some time ago on the subject of temptation, I illustrated this fact in the temptation of our blessed Lord. Every appeal of the devil was an appeal made to something which was perfectly right, but the suggestion of the devil was that there should be satisfaction of the proper desire by turning aside from law, being enticed, drawn away. You have not yet reached sin. Lust is not sin. Temptation is not sin. Desire is not wrong. The fact that you are drawn toward lawlessness is not sin. The fact that you are enticed by suggested advantage toward breaking law is not sin. You are yet upon the highway of rectitude. Christ desired, but He never sinned. Christ was tempted, but He never sinned. You may have come as far as this many a day and yet have not sinned. You will perpetually have to come as far as this. You will be conscious of desire for all kinds of things for which you have been made of God. Allurements will come and enticements and suggestion that you should step outside the proper line of rectitude which you know full well and satisfy your craving by some illicit process. That is temptation, but it is not sin.

When does sin begin? James is careful to tell us. "Then the lust, when it hath conceived." We may translate this word "conceived" here in order to help us, by a number of words—to clasp, to seize, to arrest, to capture. Here is a desire in my life. It is not sin. Here is temptation luring me from the line of rectitude. That is not sin. The will within me decides that I shall turn from the line of rectitude

and take this suggestion and lay hold upon it, seize it, capture it. What then? The act is committed. That is sin. When I seize the bait the hidden hook seizes me. The hook is not sin. The hook is the penalty, the first pang of hell. The sin is in the deliberate choice of the will and the determined act by which I turn aside to answer, not my desire, but the allurements to the fulfilment of desire in an improper way. When you turn toward evil courses, when you go out upon the highway or into the hidden and secret and shameful place, you are not seeking God, you are turning from Him. In your heart and conscience you know the thing which is right and the thing which is wrong. There is desire within you for vision, light and life in its fulness. Oh for the thrill and throb of a great life. Who does not desire it? Every man does who is physically, mentally and spiritually sound. He desires it. It is the cry of his life after God. But when you turn to the ways of lust and licentiousness you are not answering that cry, you are answering the seduction which suggests that you turn by short and illicit methods to satisfy desire. Sin is the answer to the suggestion that I break law to satisfy desire.

A man wins when he says, "Desire is perfectly right. It is right that I should desire vision and life at its fullest, but I must find these things along the line of law." If you listen to the voice and turn aside, know this, and know it forever—be not deceived, I pray you; "God is not mocked"—you sin, and you are not seeking God. Listen to me, you are trying to dodge God and get your prize without God, and you cannot do it. Lust, desire is enticed, is drawn away, and if man with the will shall seize upon the bait, then he sins.

Remember, this is not only a revelation of the genesis of sin. It is also a revelation of the nature of sin. It is not a thing to be pitied. It is a thing to be smitten, to be punished. Its punishment lies in the line of its own activity. If a man will turn away he turns to death, for mark the last word of James, "The sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." The man who is indeed alive, desires fulness of life, vision, sense of God, and turns to find fulfilment for these things in the evil and pernicious ways of ungodliness, is not after God, he is attempting to get round God and win something which his nature wants without God, and he never succeeds. This is sin, not merely against himself, not merely against the community, but against the cosmic order. Sin as the wilful choice of wrong is not a part of God's cosmic process. It is rebellion. It is treason. It is chaos. Let every man who feels allurements to satisfy desire apart from the way of God know this, that when he turns in answer to it to the house of evil, to the method of wrong, he is not after God, but lifting the fist of rebellion in the face of God. There can be but one issue for all such high treason, and that is the nemesis and the ruin of alienation from God and the consequent cutting off of the possibility of all that man most seeks after.

So I come to our common use of the word "lust." There is a poetic accuracy in it. What is lust? Desire. Yes, but get a little lower down. What is lust? The Greek word suggests hard breathing, passionate desire, earnest desire. If man attempts to satisfy desire without God, what is the answer? Desire which never can be satisfied. There are appalling illustrations of the truth of that which cannot be used here and now. God help me to say this thing solemnly to you. Take hold upon any proper and natural capacity of your life, I care not what it be, and attempt to satisfy it outside the lines of God's law, and you do but intensify the desire and never satisfy it. That is perdition. The craving for the thing which never comes. The God-created desire without the God-provided bread. That is the issue of sin. There are men in this house tonight who know something of it. There are men here, I dare venture to affirm, who are conscious of the fact that the

more they attempt to satisfy the craving of some inner desire without God, the greater the craving becomes. Take an illustration which is commonplace. Christ's supreme illustration of evil is mammon. I pray you watch the man who attempts to satisfy his craving for possession without God. The craving for possession is perfectly right. God made man to hold a scepter and wield power. Jesus did not tell men they were not to answer the craving for possession. He did utter words sadly and awfully forgotten by the Christian Church and the world at large, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." He did not say, "Lay not up treasures," but "Lay not up... treasures upon earth." Then also He said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The desire to possess is perfectly correct, it is part of the proof of your relationship to Deity. Here is a man who turns his back upon God, or, if he still names His Name, breaks His law of love. Did you ever find a man come to the moment when he said, "I am satisfied with my getting"? Is there not always an insatiable passion for more gold? A grasping devilishness that blights everything that is human in the man and makes him cruel and hard and cynical, grinding all others to the dust that he may make his gold. You need not envy the man who, without God, has piled his millions. There is a greater hunger in him after possession than ever, and the more he possesses, the more he hungers. Lust, which is desire at its deepest, attempting to be answered outside the line of God's law, becomes in itself a very consuming fire, the "worm that dieth not" and the "fire that is not quenched." That is the issue of sin.

I warn you with all love and earnestness, with all the passion of a strong conviction, and with all loyalty to my ordination vows to preach the Cross of Christ, I warn you do not be deceived by any philosophy which declares to you that sin is one of God's processes. It is man's poison and God's enemy. It is the one thing which has brought in its wake bitterness, anguish and sorrow. If you answer the desire of your inner life outside the line of God's will, which you know full well, then the lust which was proper becomes a fire which cannot be quenched.

Who here has never sinned? I am not asking whether you are a sinner by nature or not. I am not discussing that subject now. I pray you remember that in the mystery of Incarnation and Atonement there are forces provided greater than the forces which you inherited by nature. Actually and personally, who has never fallen? I mean into actual sin, as men count sin, sin of the flesh, or of the mind? Of course the mere moralist of the hour will reckon that the sin of the flesh is an evil thing. We are on other and higher ground. We recognize also the sin of the mind, the desire for safety, for ease, for all the things which are merely self-centred.

It is for the man who has sinned that Jesus came. The Evangel of the New Testament is for the sinner.

Where does the Gospel begin? It begins where sin ends. Mark the process. Lust, enticement, yielding, sin, death. Not death postponed. Not physical death. But death here and now. Dead in trespasses and sins. Jesus Christ brings men as His first gift, life from the dead, a new vision, a new sense of strength. The man who has become the slave of the evil thing, to which he has turned himself, may know his chain broken, the fire quenched, the passion stilled as the Master stilled the storm upon Galilee, and all the incompetence of the broken will made strong again. There is but one condition, and it is that man should turn from his sins to Christ and trust Him wholly and absolutely. Though you have answered lust outside law until lust has begun to be your judgment and your pain, even here tonight, He will quench the fire and break the bands and set

you free.

Do not, I beseech you, give these last words away in generalities. I am getting weary of generalities. I mean you, my brother, hidden away. Thank God, you are hidden away. No eye is resting upon you save the eye of the Master. You are hidden away in this crowd, in the grip of sin. Its power can be broken tonight and forever as you turn to the Christ of God and trust Him with all your soul and mind and body and estate. May God help all such as feel the force of sin to turn to that mighty Saviour.

1 John 3:5. The Purpose Of The Advent: 2. To Take Away Sins.

1 John 3:5.

The Purpose Of The Advent:

2. To Take Away Sins.

Ye know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin.

1 John 3:5

Last Sunday evening we spoke on a verse in this same chapter, "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." If the works of the devil are death, darkness, hatred and lawlessness, the one word "sin" expresses all these things for us. Sin is due to death and issues in death, that is, death as separation from the life of God. Sin is due to darkness—the carnal mind which cannot see the things of God—issues in yet denser darkness. Sin is due to hatred—the man continuing in sin continues a carnal man, not knowing God, is at enmity with God—and issues in yet profounder hatred. Or, comprehensively, it may be stated that sin is due to lawlessness as a principle expressing itself in lawlessness as an activity. Thus in our text we get nearer to an understanding of the purpose of the Advent as it touches our human need.

The simple and all inclusive theme which the text suggests is, first, that the purpose of the Advent was the taking away of sins, and secondly, that the process of accomplishment is that of the Advent.

Let us first, then, take the purpose as declared. "He was manifested to take away sins." In order to understand it we must take the terms in all their simplicity, and be very careful to find what they really mean. "To take away sins." What is intended by this word "sins"? The sum total of all lawless acts—the thought is incomprehensible as to numbers. I think I shall carry you with me when I say that there is no human being here who would care to have the task allotted to him of counting up his own lawless acts. If the thought is indeed incomprehensible as to numbers let us remember that in the midst of that which overwhelms us in our thinking are our own actual sins. The actual sins which we cannot enumerate are nevertheless included in this declaration of purpose. For a moment postpone the activity of your mind which suggests difficulties as to how anyone can do such a thing as this; leave out of the question the whole thought of process and simply face the avowed declaration of purpose "manifested to take away sins." "Sins," missings of the mark, whether willful missings of the mark or missings of the mark through ignorance, does not at present matter. The word includes all those thoughts and words and deeds in which we have missed the mark of the Divine purpose and the Divine ideal: those things which stand between man and God, so that man becomes afraid of God because he recognizes that in his sins he has violated the Divine purpose and broken the Divine law; those things which stand between man and his fellow man, so that man becomes afraid of his fellow man, knowing that he has wronged him in

some direction; those things which stand between man and his own success. Call them failures if you will, call them by any name you please, so that you understand the intention of the word.

When John the Baptist looked upon Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There he used the same word but in the singular. There he referred to the principle manifesting itself in lawless acts. He used a word which includes all sins, and therefore is, in some senses, the profounder word, and yet in our text we understand the writer to mean that the Advent was in order to the taking away of all acts of lawlessness springing out of the attitude of lawlessness, of all practice of wrongdoing issuing from the principle of wrong life.

Let us now examine the phrase "to take away." This is a statement of result, not a declaration of process. There is a marginal reading which says "to bear sins," and in the Gospel of John there is also a marginal reading, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away," or "beareth the sin of the world." These words are not incorrect if we are very careful to understand what they really mean. The Hebrew equivalent of the word "taketh away" is found in that familiar story of the scapegoat. It was provided that this animal should be driven away to the wilderness, "unto a solitary land." This suggested that sins should be lifted from one and placed upon another, and by that one carried away out of experience, out of consciousness. That is the simple signification of this declaration, "He was manifested to bear sins." If you take this word and track it back—not always a safe process, but here, I think, a helpful one—to its root meaning, it is, "He was manifested to list sins." He was manifested in order that He might come into relationship with human life, and passing underneath the load of human sins lift them, take them away.

Either this is the most glorious Gospel that man has ever heard, or the greatest delusion to which man has ever listened. I care nothing, for the moment, about your theological tendencies, or convictions, or prejudices—you may choose your own word! What I do care about is that there is in the heart of every man and woman in this house a consciousness of sin. No one of us would be prepared to say, "I have never deliberately done the thing I knew I ought not to do." That is consciousness of sin. You may attempt to excuse it. You may even say that it does not much matter, that the sin was the result of some infirmity of the flesh. You may even go so far as to say that the fact that you have repeatedly done the thing you knew was not the right thing was simply part of a process in which you were learning not to do it. So ingenious is the human heart that it will attempt to excuse itself by all kinds of fallacies. I do not believe there is a single person here who will deny the charge—if you deny the arguments I care nothing.

I will go one step further, and declare that in the deepest of you, in the best of you—again notwithstanding theological opinions, or prejudices, or convictions, as you choose—the one thing you hate most of all in your past is your own sin. You may affect to excuse it. You may be ready to argue with me as to the reason for it and the issue of it, but, if you could, you would undo it. If you could make it not to be, there are some here tonight who would be ready to sacrifice right hand or right eye. You may profess to have turned your back upon these evangelical truths which we declare, and yet you know you have sinned, and you wish you had not.

Passing for a moment from that outer fringe of men and women, who are somewhat careless about the matter, to the souls who are in agony concerning it—to the men and women who know their sin and loathe it, to the men and women who carry the consciousness of wrongs done in past years as a perpetual burden upon their souls—and there are many of them who have never

confessed it, who have never spoken to another soul about it, but nevertheless hate the memory of their own sins—I say that to such, a declaration like this is the cruelest word or the kindest that can be uttered. Cruel if it be false, kind indeed with the kindness of the heart of God if it be true. If somewhere, and somewhen, and somehow, in human history One was manifested to lift sins and bear them away; if by some means I can find some just and honorable peace of conscience notwithstanding sins and sin, then have I found blessing greater than any man can give me. I dismiss for the moment for the sake of my argument not only the outer fringe but also the inner circle of burdened souls, and I speak as a witness. Turning aside from advocacy, I bear testimony that if it be true, that He was manifested somehow, in some deep mystery that I shall never perfectly understand, in order to get beneath my sins, my sins, my thought of impurity, my words of bitterness, my unholy deeds, and lift them and bear them away—that is the one Evangel I long for more than all. More valuable to me, a sinner, than anything else that He can do for me is this.

In order that this great purpose of the Advent, as declared, may be more powerfully and better understood, let us reverently turn to the indication of the process which we have in this particular text, for while the supreme value of the text last week was its unveiling of the purpose of the Advent in victory gained over the enemy of the race, I am inclined to think that the supreme value of this declaration of purpose is its indication of process. "He was manifested to take away sins." Notice the Person referred to. "He was manifested." Who was the Person? "Ye know," says John, "that He was manifested." The reference certainly is to some One. If you go back over this chapter you come presently to the statement, "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him." Whom? The same Person is being referred to as in my text. I go back a little further and read, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." Whom? I go yet further back, into the preceding chapter, and trace my way until I come to the twenty-third verse, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." You cannot read the context of this text without seeing that, in the thinking of the man who wrote it, there is identity between God and the Son. It is perfectly evident that John here, as always, has his eye fixed upon the Man of Nazareth, and yet it is equally evident that he is looking through Jesus of Nazareth to God. That is the meaning of his word "manifested" here. It is the Word made flesh. It is flesh, but it is the Word. It is something that John had appreciated by the senses, and yet it is Someone Whom John knew preeminently by the Spirit. When he says in this same letter, "Everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure," he means hope set on God finally, on the Son by manifestation. So that the Person who is presented to our view here is that One Who in human life was the manifestation of God Himself. "He was manifested." He was before manifestation. Who was He before manifestation? Because Whosoever He was before manifestation, He was in manifestation; and Whosoever He was before manifestation and in manifestation, He was in the taking away of sins.

Notice that after John makes the affirmation, "He was manifested to take away sins," he adds this great word, "In Him is no sin." Will you let me put that into another form? Let me render the actual word of John in slightly different terms, "Missing of the mark was not in Him." The One in Whom there was no missing of the mark was manifested for the express purpose of lifting, bearing away, making not to be, the missings of the mark of others. Mark that declaration of the eternal and

essential sinlessness of the One Who came. We can interpret the language of John only by the teaching of John; so without apology I take you back again to the introductory word in his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." No missing of the mark was in Him. He was sinless through all the unmeasured and immeasurable ages. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men"—all created things springing from the energy of that mysterious One in Whom was no sin, in Whom was no missing of the mark in the mystery of creation. "All things have been made by Him"; that is continuity of activity in creation. In Him, the Upholder as well as the Creator, there was no missing of the mark. Presently "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." In Him was no missing of the mark. Presently we see Him yielding Himself to death, and even there, in the hour of His death, there was no missing of the mark. Through resurrection, by way of ascension at this moment at the center of the universe of God, the same Person, and in Him is no missing of the mark.

"He was manifested"—and in the name of God I charge you do not read into the "He" anything small or narrow. If you do you will at once be driven into the place of having to deny the declaration that He can take away sins. If He was man as I am man merely, then though He be perfect and sinless He cannot take away sins. If into the "He" you will read all that John evidently meant according to the testimony of his own writing, from which alone I have been making my quotations—if you will read into it all John meant, "He," the Word made flesh, in Whom was no missing of the mark before or after He was manifested to take away sins, you begin to see something of the stupendous idea, and something of the possibility at least of believing the declaration that "He was manifested to take away sins."

Consider the manifestation and sins, as to man. The terms of the promise of the Advent were, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." From hell? Certainly, but I pray you remember, only by saving them from their sins. From the punishment of sin, because from sin itself. That was the great word, "He shall save His people from their sins." When the songs to which the shepherds listened were heard, what said they? "There is born to you this day... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The promise of the Advent was that of the coming of One to lift sins.

During the probation of the long years this Person was meeting all the forces of human temptation and overcoming them. I think we may accurately and reverently speak of the long years of probation as testing years, years in which there was being wrought out into human visibility the fact of the sinlessness of the Son of God.

During His life and ministry what were the words of Jesus? Words revealing the meaning of sin. Words calculated to rebuke sin and to bring men away from sin. What were the works of Jesus? By works I mean miracles and signs and wonders. They were chiefly works overtaking the results of sin. You tell me that the miracles of Jesus were supernatural. I tell you they were always restorations of the unnatural to natural positions. When He cured disease it was not a supernatural thing, but the restoration of man to the normal physical condition. He was taking away the results of sin. So all along the line of His miracles of healing and His calling back out of death He manifested His power. I see Him forevermore in grips with sin, showing men tentatively, not yet finally, how He had power to lift sins. Once, in the course of a miraculous revelation of that

wonderful power, He said to a man, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and He was immediately criticized. What was His answer to the criticism? "What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch." You will sadly misread that story if you think He did some piece of jugglery in the physical to convince them of His power in the moral. There was most intimate connection between the man's palsy and his sin, and Jesus demonstrated His power to lift sin by setting the man free from the result of sin and sending him on his way in sight of the men who had heard Him. These men who criticized had no more to say. They criticized Him for pretending to forgive sins, but when they saw the man raised they had enough simple mental intelligence to see the connection between the thing said and the thing done.

I come now to the final thing in this manifestation, the process of the death, for in that solemn and lonely and unapproachable hour of the cross I come to the final fulfillment of the word of the herald on the banks of the Jordan, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It is not open for us in these days to attempt to interpret that word of John by the day in which we live, or by the conditions in which we live. We can interpret that word of John only by the simple facts in the midst of which he stood when he uttered it. Remember that phrase, "the Lamb of God," could have but one significance in the ears of the men who heard it. This was the voice of a Hebrew prophet speaking to Hebrews, and when he spoke of the Lamb taking away sins, they had no alternative other than to think of the long line of symbolical sacrifices which had been offered, and which they had been taught shadowed forth some great mystery of Divine purpose whereby sin might be dealt with. When John stood there in the midst of the great ethical revival which came under his preaching, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," we must explain his language, not by any poetical license of this age, but by the deep religious intention of the man who uttered it, and by the religious understanding of the people who listened to it. In all probability, when John uttered that word there were men from all parts crowding up to the Passover Feast, taking with them lambs of sacrifice in great numbers. In the midst of all the ritual, these men were arrested by the voice of John crying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." So in the hour of death you have the ultimate meaning of that great word. Whereas by manifestation, from first to last, He is forevermore dealing with sins and with sin, lifting, correcting, arresting, by gleams of light suggesting to men the deepest meaning of His mission, it is when I come to the hour of His unutterable loneliness and deep darkness and passion baptism that I have that part of the manifestation in which I see as nowhere else and as never before the meaning of my text, "He was manifested to take away sins."

Reverently let us take one step further. The manifestation and sins—as to God. Let me take you back simply to this affirmation that the manifested One was God. If that be once seen then we shall forevermore look back upon that Man of Nazareth in His birth, His life, His cross, as but a manifestation. The whole fact cannot be seen, but the whole fact is brought to the point of visibility by the way of incarnation. If indeed this One be very God manifested, then remember this, the whole measure of humanity is in Him and infinitely more than the whole measure of humanity. Do not forget the last part of my assertion. If you take the first part only—that the whole measure of humanity is in Him, you may imagine that humanity is the measure of Deity. I did not say so. But the whole measure of humanity is in Him. It is true of the whole race, from its beginning to its last,

that "in Him we live and move and have our being"; that we are as to first creation and essential meaning of life, "the offspring of God." The whole race is from God and of God, and I repeat, the measure of humanity is in Him, but He is infinitely more; it is also true that the measure of all created things is in Him—and infinitely more. Beyond the utmost bound of creation, God is. All creation, heaven and earth, suns and stars and systems, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, the hierarchies of whom we hear but cannot perfectly explain their nature or their order, all these are in Him; but He is infinitely beyond them all. They are but the dust in the balances which His right hand holds, and it is an arrogant and ignorant assumption to declare that humanity is the sum of God. All humanity is within the compass of His upholding might. No man can escape from God. In some deep sense of the word, no man can live a Godless life. "If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Humanity is not the measure of Deity; but the measure of humanity is in Deity. "He," the immeasurable, "was manifested to take away sins."

I begin to wonder. In amazement I begin to believe in the possibility of lifting the burden of my sin. The cross, like everything else, was manifestation. In the cross of Jesus there was the working out into visibility of eternal things. Love and light were wrought out into visibility by the cross. Love and light in the presence of the conditions of sin became sorrow—and became joy! In the cross I see the sorrow of God, and in the cross I see the joy of God, for "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." In the cross I see the love of God working out through passion and power for the redemption of man. In the cross I see the light of God refusing to make any terms with iniquity and sin and evil. The cross is the historic revelation of the abiding facts within the heart of God. The measure of the cross is God. If all the measure of humanity is in God and He is more, and the measure of the cross is God, then the measure of the cross wraps humanity about so that no one individual is outside its meaning and its power. When next you ask, or hear anyone else ask, "How can one man bear the sin of the race?" say, "He cannot, and he never did." One man cannot bear the sin of another man, to say nothing of the sin of the race. He Who was manifested is God. He can gather into His eternal life all the race as to its sorrow and its sin, and bear them.

Yet remember this—I would state this with great carefulness—it was not by the eternal facts that sins were taken away, but by the manifestation of those facts. My text does not affirm, and there is no text that begins to affirm, that He Who was manifested takes away sins. There is a sense in which that is true; but this is the truth, "He was manifested to take away sins." It required the "He," the Person manifested, but it required His manifestation. Most reverently do I declare that the passion revealed in the cross was indeed the passion of God; but the passion of God became dynamic in human life when it became manifest through human form in the perfection of a life and the mystery of a death.

Man's will is the factor always to be dealt with, and whereas the sin of man was gathered into the consciousness of God and created the sorrow of God from the very beginning, it is only when that fact of the sorrow of Godhead is wrought out into visibility by manifestation that the will of man can ever be captured—or ever constrained to the position of trust and obedience which is necessary for his practical and effectual restoration to righteousness. Wherever man thus yields himself, trusting—that is the condition—his sins are taken away—lifted.

If it be declared that God might have wrought this selfsame deliverance without suffering, our answer is that the man who says so knows nothing about sin. Sin and suffering are coexistent. The moment there is sin there is suffering. The moment there are sin and suffering in a human being it is in God multiplied. "The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world." From the moment when man in his sin became a child of sorrow, the sorrow was most keenly felt in heaven.

Yet I would that my last word should be a word specifically and especially to the man who is burdened with a sense of sin. I ask you to contemplate the Person manifested. There is not one of us here of whom it is not true that we live and move and have our being in God. God is infinitely more than I am, infinitely more than this whole congregation, infinitely more than the whole human race, from its beginning to its last. If infinitely more, then all my life is in Him. If in the mystery of incarnation there became manifest the truth that He, God, lifted sin, then I can trust. If that be the cleaving of the rock, then I can say as never before,

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee."

He was manifested and by that manifestation I see wrought out the infinite truth of the passion of God, what we speak of—and whether our language be the best or not, who shall tell?—as the Atonement. All the mystery of Deity was rendered visible by the Advent, the Incarnation, the Manifestation, so I know that here and now, as nineteen centuries ago on the rough Roman gibbet, as surely as God is God, here and now are the living values of the thing of which men sang and of which we still sing. Here and now I trust, and here and now I know that my sins are lifted, carried, borne away.

1 John 3:8. The Purpose Of The Advent: 1. To Destroy the Works of the Devil.

1 John 3:8.

The Purpose Of The Advent:

1. To Destroy the Works of the Devil.

To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

We are approaching the festival of Christmas. In the calendar of the Christian year this is the first Sunday in Advent. I am proposing to speak for four successive Sunday evenings on the purposes of the Advent. The importance of the subject cannot be overstated. The whole teaching of Holy Scripture places the Advent at the center of the methods of God with a sinning race. Toward that Advent everything moved until its accomplishment, finding therein fulfillment and explanation. The messages of the prophets, seers, and the songs of psalmists trembled with more or less certainty toward the final music which announced Jesus' coming. All the results of these partial and broken messages of the past led toward the Advent. It is equally true that from that Advent all subsequent movements have proceeded, depending upon it for direction and dynamic. The writings which we have in the Gospel stories are all concerned with the coming of Christ, with His mission and His message. The last book of the Bible is a book the true title of which is The Unveiling of the Christ. Not only the actual messages which have been bound up in this one Divine Library, but all the results issuing from them are finally results issuing from this selfsame coming of Christ. It is surely important therefore that we should understand its purposes in the economy of God.

There is a fourfold statement of purpose which I propose to make. The purpose to destroy the works of the devil, the purpose to put away sin, the purpose to reveal the Father, the purpose to establish by another Advent the Kingdom of God in the world.

In dealing first with the purpose to destroy the works of the devil I am attempting to follow the order of historic appreciation. There is a sense in which these purposes go forward concurrently, the destruction of the works of the devil, the taking away of sin, the unveiling of the face of the Father and the administration of the Kingship of God toward consummation. In yet another sense we may state the order of these things differently. We may say that He came first to reveal the Father, then to deal with sin, presently by way of the second Advent to set up the Kingdom in the world, and ultimately and finally to destroy the works of the devil. I think, as I have already intimated, that so far as historic appreciation of the purposes of God is concerned, I have suggested to you the true order. To the men of Christ's own age, both those who yielded to Him and those who rebelled against Him, He was first of all a reformer—and I pray you do not interpret the meaning of that word "reformer" by those who have followed in His wake or those who preceded Him, but gather all your thought of it from what He was in Himself—a soul in conflict with all that was contrary to

the purposes of God in individual, social, national, racial life.

Such was Christ, and there is a sense in which when we have said this we have stated the whole meaning of His coming. His revelation of the Father was toward this end; His putting away of sin was a part of this very process, and His second Advent will be for the complete and final overthrow of all the works of the devil.

Confining ourselves, however, to the simplest meaning of this particular passage, let us notice, first of all, John's description of the Advent. He does not say, "For this purpose, or to this end, was Jesus of Nazareth born." That would be true, but only part of the truth.

Remember, there can be no question as to Whom John referred when he said "the Son of God." We all know that he was writing of the One of Whom he always wrote. We are taken back irresistibly, however, to words at the beginning of John's Gospel and Epistle. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." It is impossible to read these words and imagine they are wholly or exclusively spiritual statements. John is most carefully defining the Person. In all the writings of John it is evident that his eyes are fixed upon the man Jesus. Occasionally he does not even name Jesus, does not even refer to Him by a personal pronoun, but indicates Him by a word you can use only when you are looking at an object or a person. For instance, "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." Upon another occasion John said, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as that One walked." It is always the method of expression of a man who is looking at a Person. Forevermore the actual human Person of Christ was present to the mind of John as he wrote of Him. How intimate he had been with Him we all know. One of the most tender and beautiful things in all the story of the life of Jesus is the story of John's love for Him, pure human affection for Him. The other disciples loved Him in a sense, and I do not undervalue their love, but it was of a different tone and quality from that of John. You cannot imagine Peter getting very intimately near to Christ. There was something of distance, of breeze and bluster, and of beauty, about the love of Peter. He would be quite content to talk to Jesus across the table, but John must get close to Him and lay his head upon His bosom. There was none of the disciples so intimately associated with the actual human personality of Jesus as John. When John refers to Him it is always in words that thrill and throb with the warm tenderness of human consciousness, of human friendship. Yet there is not one of you here who does not know that if I said no more I would not have uttered half the truth. If John the mystic, the lover, laid his head upon the human bosom of the Man of Nazareth, he heard the beating of the heart of God. If he laid his hand upon Jesus when he talked to Him he knew that beneath the warm touch of the human flesh there beat the mystic majesty of Deity. "That which our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." Mark the contradiction of it in this materialistic age of ours. Can you handle a word? Can you handle life? Yet John says, "This is what we have done." He is perfectly conscious of the flesh, but supremely conscious of the mystic Word veiled in flesh and shining through it. He is perfectly conscious of the human and gets thereby to Deity. So that when John comes to write of this One he speaks of Him as "the Son of God." He remembers the warmth of His bosom, the gentleness of His touch, the love-lit glory of His eyes, but He is "the Son of God."

The word "manifested" presupposes existence prior to manifestation. In the Man of Nazareth there was manifestation of One Who had existed long before the Man of Nazareth.

The incarnation was not an act by which God began to be in any single sense. It was not an act by which God came into nearness to human life. It was an act by which God manifested His nearness to human life, and by which manifestation He was able to do in human life and in human history things He could not have done apart from that selfsame method of manifestation. "To this end was the Son of God manifested."

Now we come to the statement of purpose. The person referred to, the devil. The things to be destroyed, the works of the devil. The purpose declared, to destroy the works of the devil.

The enemy is described here as the devil. I want to take other passages from the writings of John and let their light fall upon this name. In the eighth chapter of John's Gospel it is recorded that Jesus, using this very name, declares of the devil that "he was a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar." A little further on in the Gospel it is declared it was he who put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. I read in the context of my text that he is the fountainhead of sin, the lawless one. Gather up these thoughts concerning this personality—murderer, liar, betrayer, the fountainhead of sin, himself missing the mark because of lawlessness—and it will immediately be manifest what his works are. The work of the murderer is destruction of life. The work of the liar is the extinguishing of light. The work of the betrayer is the violation of love. The work of the archsinner is the breaking of the law. These are the works of the devil.

First, as to the destruction of life, for he is a murderer. This consists fundamentally in the destruction of life on its highest level, which is the spiritual. Alienation from God is the devil's work. It is also death on the level of the mental. Vision which fails to include God is practical blindness. On the physical plane, all disease and all pain are ultimately results of sin and are among the works of the devil. These things all lie within the realm of his work as a murderer, destroyer of human life. The Greek word might perhaps be translated more forcefully "man-slayer." He is the slayer of man, in the spiritual, which is supreme; in the mental which marks consciousness, whether spiritual or material; in the body, which is the instrument of the spirit, whether for good or evil. The man-slayer is one who comes in to spoil humanity, to rob it of its life, to blind it spiritually toward God, to limit it mentally because of the blindness of the spiritual, and to bring into it all manner of disease and death in the physical realm.

He is more. He is the liar and to him is due the extinguishing of light, so that men blunder along the way. All ignorance, all despair, all wandering over the trackless deserts of life, are due to the extinction of spiritual light in the mind of man. I can quite imagine someone saying, "You are going outside the realm of what is true when you declare that all ignorance is the devil's work." I abide by that statement, perhaps for reasons which are not ordinarily advanced or held. I will make one contrast in your mind tonight. I claim that in this Man of Nazareth as pure man there was an utter absence of ignorance. His thinking was perfectly clear. He as man saw right through to the heart of mystery, and that because He was never brought under the dominion of sin, never brought under the dominion of the evil one, was able in His life perpetually to rebut every advance of the prince of darkness, who is a liar from the beginning. I am not merely speaking of Him as One infallible in spiritual things. I believe He was also absolutely infallible in other things. I am asked today if I imagine that Jesus knew the laws of nature by the discovery of which in recent years men have

made such rapid progress. Yes, absolutely. He knew every one. I am asked if I believe that He understood the mystery of electricity. Yes. Then you say, "Why did He not tell the race?" The race was not ready for the knowledge. What is true in the spiritual realm is true also in the scientific. He had many things to say which men were then not able to bear. I for one have no part or lot in the view of Christ that He was scientifically half ignorant, while spiritually infallible. You say, "Then He was not upon our level." He was not upon our level. No perfect man was ever upon our level. There was in Him no sin, no darkness, no limitation, and you have one gleam of this fact in the impression He produced upon the men of His own age. He went up to Jerusalem and was talking in the midst of men of culture and men of light and leading, in the midst of the school men. What did they say of Him? "How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?" "Whence hath this Man the accent of the school, never having been to school? How is it that this Man in His teaching is most evidently familiar with the things we have obtained through strife and difficulty?" They did not answer their question. Men today cannot answer their question, save as they recognize that here was a Man never having learned yet knowing, and seeing clearly to the heart of things. I go back from that illustration, which is in some sense a digression, and yet I think you see its purpose. All ignorance is the result of the clouding of man's vision of God. "This is life eternal," age-abiding life, high life, deep life, broad life, long life, comprehensive life, "that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." The proportion in which man knows God is the proportion in which he sees clearly to the heart of things. You say, "How is it that Christian people have not been able to see these things? How is it that the great discoveries of science have not been made by Christian people?" I would have you remember first that the discoveries of science have always been made in a Christian atmosphere. In the second place, the redemptive work of Christ will not be perfected in humanity until that mysterious morning of His second Advent, when we shall have our new bodily powers as well as our new spiritual powers, and when man is wholly restored to God. Let me say this as superlatively as I believe it. In that day manhood will laugh at the foolish pride of this day, which thinks it understands this world. Sinning man has but scratched upon the surface of the infinite mysteries of this world. By and by, when the redemptive work of Christ has been perfected in man, and in the world, we shall find that all ignorance is banished and man has found his way into light. But the liar, the one who brings darkness, has made his works far spread o'er all the face of humanity, and all ignorance and resultant despair and all wandering aimlessly in every realm of life are due to the work of the one whom Jesus designated a liar from the beginning. Again, the violation of love, as a work of the devil, is seen supremely in the way he entered into the heart of Judas and made him the betrayer. All the avarice you find in the world today and all the jealousy and all the cruelty are the works of the devil.

Finally, He is the supreme sinner. Sin is lawlessness, which does not mean the condition of being without law, but the condition of being against law, breaking law. So that all wrong done to God in His world, all wrong done by man to man, all wrong done by man to himself, are works of the devil.

To summarize them, death, darkness, hatred, find them where you will, are works of the devil.

The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. If at the beginning we saw Him as a soul in conflict with all these things, remember that was an indication of the program and a prophecy of the purpose. The Advent which we celebrate was not merely the birth of a little child in whom we were to learn the secret of childhood and in whom presently we were to

see the glories of manhood. All that is true; but it was the happening in the course of human events of that one thing through which God Himself is able to destroy the works of the devil.

"To destroy." What is this word? It is a word which means to dissolve, to loosen. It is the very same word that is used in the Apocalypse about loosing us from our sins; or, if you will be more graphic, it is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles when you read that the ship was broken to pieces; loosed, dissolved, that which had been a consistent whole was broken up and scattered and wrecked. The word "destroyed" may be perfectly correct, but let us understand it. He was manifested for what? to do a work in human history the result of which should be that the works of the devil would lose their consistency. The cohesive force that makes them appear stable until this moment He came to loosen and dissolve. He was manifested to destroy hatred by the gift of love. He was manifested to destroy lawlessness by the gift of law. He was manifested to loosen, to break up, to destroy the negatives which spoil, by bringing the positive that remakes and uplifts.

He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil as to death by the gift of life. This means first spiritual life, which is fellowship with God. It means also mental life, the vision of the open secret. Not yet perfectly do we understand, but already the trusting soul in this house, utterly devoid of education, hears more in the wind at eventide, and sees more in the blossoming of the flowers than any scientific man. Was it not Huxley who said that if our ears were but acute enough we would hear the flowers grow. You say that is a purely scientific statement. I know it is, and science, in the last analysis, is spiritual. Christ has so far invaded the world that the men who do not name His name are beginning to spell out this great truth. The merely physical scientist of a generation ago has passed never to return. I hear of whitening dawns of psychological investigation, but what does it mean? That men are gradually beginning to hear the singing. There is no simple-hearted child of God in this house but that looking into a flower sees the face of God. I think, perchance, I have told you here before of something that happened in my boyhood's days which I have never forgotten. There came to my father's house a young fellow who had been led to Christ but recently in one of my father's meetings. One day he took me down the garden—I was but eight years old—and he plucked a nasturtium leaf, and putting it in his hand he said, "Look at this." Boylike, I thought he had found a great curiosity, and hurried to see it. I did not see what he saw. The day came when, by the grace of God, I saw it also. He said, "See, is not God beautiful?" For me, you may take all your botanists if you will give me that man with the leaf in his hand. That is not imagination. It is the open secret. It is what Carlyle called the great significance shining through. Mrs. Barrett Browning was right—

Earth's crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;

But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—

The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

How many there are in the "rest"!

He who sees has the true intellectual vision, which Christ has bestowed in His gift of life. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God." The gift of life was to destroy death, and the man who has His gift of life laughs in the face of death, laughs triumphantly, and—yes, I

will say it—makes fun of death! Do not misunderstand me—I mean for himself, never of the sorrow which comes to the bereaved. I still believe, say what you will, that there was laughter in the Apostle's tone when he said, "O death, where is thy sting?" As though he had said, "What hast thou done with thy sting, death? What hast thou done with thy victory? I trembled in thy presence once, O rider upon the pale horse, but now I laugh in thy face, for thy paleness has become the glistening white of an angel of light." So He destroys the works of the devil by giving the gift of life which destroys death.

As for darkness, this is intimately associated with the thing already said, the gift of light; but remember light always comes out of life. If there be death then there is no vision. If there be life there is light. Light means knowledge and hope and guidance, so that there is no more wandering aimlessly. By bringing light into human life and into the world Christ has destroyed the works of the devil.

As for hatred, He destroys hatred by His gift of love, benevolence—and I am not using the word idly as we often do; I am using it in all its rich, spacious, gracious meaning—benevolence, well-willing, self-abnegation, kindness in the Apostle's sense of the word who, when writing to the Galatians, gives kindness as one of the qualities of love, the specific doing of small things out of pure love. All these things are things by which the works of the devil are being destroyed. Hatred, avarice, jealousy, selfishness, how are these things destroyed? By shedding abroad love which is the warmth of life, as light is its illumination. By these things He destroys the works of the devil.

As for lawlessness, this Jesus destroys by the gift of law, passion for the rights of God, service to my fellow men, the finding of self in the great abnegation, and the finding of self in perfect freedom because I have become the bond-slave of the infinite Lord of Love. The works of the devil, what are they? Death working within us, the spirit that is against truth and light, the darkness of ignorance. The spirit of hatred and malice, avarice and jealousy and the whole unholy brood of things which are unlike God, lawlessness lying at the base of all, the refusal to submit, these are the works of the devil. Nineteen centuries ago the Son of God was manifested, and during those centuries in the lives of hundreds, thousands, He has destroyed the works of the devil, mastered death by the gift of life, cast darkness out by the incoming of light, turned the selfishness of avarice and jealousy into love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness. He has taken hold of lawless men and made them into the willing, glad bond-servants of God. So has He destroyed the works of the devil.

Do not forget the meaning of the Advent historically. It was the invasion of human history by One who snatched the scepter from the usurper. It was the intrusion of forces into human history which dissolved the consistency of the works of the devil, and causes them to break and fail. "How long, O Lord, how long?" is the cry of the heart of the saint today. Yet take heart as you look back and know that force has operated for nineteen centuries and always toward consummation. Still, the works of the devil are manifest, the works of the flesh are manifest. Yes, but the fruit of the Spirit of life which has come through the Advent of Christ is also manifest. All over the world today on many a branch of the vine of the Father's planting the rich clusters of fruit are to be found. All, so far, is but preliminary. It is twilight only. High noon has not yet arrived; but it is twilight, and noon must come. What the Advent has wrought it will still work. That which it has accomplished in the face of opposition it will accomplish. That which has dissolved the vested and established evils

proves to my heart the certainty of the ultimate victory. I tell you that if we have but eyes anointed to see we shall discover the fact that all the works of the devil in the world are wrapped about by the slow burning fires that came when the Son of God was manifested that He might loosen, dissolve, destroy the works of the devil.

The last word is to be personal. The Advent personally was the coming of the Stronger than the strong men armed. It was the coming of One to destroy the works of the devil in my own life. Are they not destroyed? Are they not shaken to their foundations? Are they still established in the fiber of your being? Do you know as you sit in this house tonight that the works of the devil, death, darkness, hatred and rebellion are the master forces of your being? Then I bring you the Evangel. I tell you of One manifested to destroy all such works. I tell you not merely as a theory, but as having the testimony of history attesting the truth of the announcement of my text. I do not move you by that! Suffer me, then, to tell you as a word of personal and actual experience: not that in me the victory is perfectly won, not that the Master's work is accomplished, but that in me, solemnly, I bear the testimony, the forces of this Christ have operated and are operating, and the things that were formerly established are loosened and are falling to decay. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. If tonight you are in the grip of forces of evil, if you realize that in your life his works are the things of strength, then I pray you turn with full purpose of heart to the One manifested long ago, Who is here now, Who, in all the power of His gracious victory, will destroy in you all the works of the devil and set you free.

Jude 1:21. "Keep Yourselves In The Love Of God" .

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"Keep Yourselves In The Love Of God" .

These words are most remarkable in the light of their context. Taken apart therefrom, it would be the easiest thing in the world to misunderstand and misinterpret them. Let us, therefore, be patient while we remind ourselves of all that which we have read as a lesson. The words of this text may be said to be the center of Jude's advice in view of danger; danger, let it be carefully observed, threatening the called, beloved, kept, for so in the opening words he addressed those to whom he wrote, "them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ."

To such he said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It has often been pointed out that the theme on which Jude desired to write was that of our common salvation. While he gave all diligence to the great subject, preparing for his work; he was turned aside from his purpose by the Holy Spirit of God, and constrained to write words of exhortation in view of perils threatening the called; the beloved of the Father, those kept for Jesus Christ.

He first described the perils, "There are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." He did not enter into any fuller description of these men. We may be left very largely to speculation as to what the teaching was which they were advancing, or what the habits of life in which they were living. Having referred to the perils, he proceeded to remind those to whom he wrote by three instances that those once saved might by their own wrongdoing be fearfully punished. The Israelites delivered from Egypt, sinning in the wilderness, failing in faith, were destroyed. Angels who kept not their proper habitation, but left the appointed orbit of their being and service, were cast down from the heights, and reserved in darkness to the final assize. Sodom and Gomorrah, cities of the well-watered plain, having all the advantages of that wonderful country; failing to discover the Creator through the creation, and giving themselves over to all manner of uncleanness, were destroyed. Then, referring again to the evil workers, he compared them to Cain, the hater of God, who reddened his hands in the blood of his brother; to Balaam, who constrained and compelled of the Spirit to the uttering of truth in prophecy, did nevertheless, eventually seduce the people of God to idolatry, and hopelessly perished; and to Korah, who rebelled against the government of God, and was destroyed. Then follows that passage which we have so often read, and yet of which, as we read it together tonight, we felt the almost appalling force, showing the evil of lust and pronouncing judgment upon it. Then having referred to Israel, and illustrated his master thought, that privilege does not in itself ensure ultimate blessing, but brings grave responsibility to those who share it; he came to the positive part of his letter, "But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, in the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the

Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

I bring you the message of that injunction. I bring it to those of you in this assembly who are "called, beloved of the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." While we shall not have time in the course of one evening meditation to go back over this ground and consider it in all its detail, let us recognize that this injunction is one born of a consciousness of peril, filling the heart of a man who turned aside from what might have appeared to him would have been a greater, more important work—that of writing of our common salvation—in order to write this one brief page of exhortation. The final message of it, that to which all the rest lends force, is contained in these words, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

I want to lead you in meditation; first on the plain meaning of this injunction; second, on its importance; and finally on the method which Jude reveals, by which we shall be able to obey the injunction.

Be patient with me if I take two or three moments to ask you to remember what this text does not mean. We are not told to keep ourselves in such a state as to make God love us. I think a recognition of that at the very beginning will help us in the consideration which is to follow. I am not called upon to bring myself to a condition of life which will compel or constrain the love of God toward me. I am not called upon in my life as a child of God to maintain a certain attitude in order to make God continue to love me. Let us start with the recognition of the fact, that God's love is unsought, undeserved and unconditional. We cannot, in this life, put ourselves outside the love of God. It is a great, fundamental truth of the Christian religion that "God so loved the world." The world did not seek His love. The world as He saw it in its sin did not deserve His love, and He did not impose upon the world, conditions fulfilling which, He would love them. He loved the world. I can never think of this for myself, without there coming back to me these lines full of simplicity, full of beauty, written by Charles Wesley.

He came from above our curse to remove,

He hath loved, He hath loved us because He would love.

Love moved Him to die, and on this we rely,

He hath loved, He hath loved, though we cannot tell why.

Said a boy in a Sunday School class to his teacher many years ago: "Teacher, does God love naughty boys?" The teacher said, "No, certainly not!" It was terrible blasphemy. Of course He does. There is a man somewhere in this congregation who has been disappointed within the first five minutes of my message, and is saying, This message is not for me; if it is to the called, the beloved, the kept for Jesus Christ; it is not for me. There are certain senses in which you are quite right; but remember this; God loves men, not upon any condition, not because they seek His love; but, I dare to put it even more forcefully as the idea is suggested in Wesley's hymn, because He would love; nay, He could no other, for His is love. However far you may have wandered, however far, the far country may be; you may have wounded Him, and grieved His Holy Spirit, but you have not made Him cease to love you. You may have forgotten Him, but God has never ceased to love you.

If that be admitted, then we may proceed. What then did Jude mean when he said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God"? Quite simply he meant this. Being in the love of God; keep yourselves from all that which is unlike Him; from all that which violates love and grieves the heart of God; or to use the actual word of Paul, that which causes sorrow to the Spirit of God.

Mark again the introductory word of this brief letter; you are "called, beloved in God the Father, kept for Jesus Christ"; therefore, seeing that you are loved, that you are dwelling in love, that love encompasses you, is set upon your perfecting, "keep yourselves in the love of God." Correspond to that in which you dwell. Answer the love of God.

Therein is the point of our personal responsibility; if indeed we are called of God, if indeed we are beloved of God, if indeed we are being kept for Jesus Christ, then to us the word applies, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Go back to the illustration of the earlier part of the letter; What was the sin of Cain? It was that of hatred, which expressed itself in murder. What was the sin of Balaam? The sin of greed, of covetousness, which expressed itself in the wickedness by which he seduced the people of God from their allegiance, and brought them into evil relationships with idolatrous peoples. What was the sin of Korah? Envy in the heart against the arrangements and the government of God, which expressed itself in rebellion against Him. I refer to these again only to ask you to notice that in each case that love is violated. In each case the action is contrary to love. Cain; hatred, murder; impossible to love. Balaam; greed, seduction; impossible to love. Korah; envy, rebellion; impossible to love. These illustrations, used to show the evil of the men against whom Jude is warning us, serve also to illuminate the meaning of this great charge, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Being in His love, do not become careless, but remember that you are responsible. The atmosphere in which you dwell creates responsibility. The great and gracious fact of the unsought, unconditional, love of God, into which you have been specially brought as you have been called, creates grave responsibility.

Last Sunday evening, we were speaking here of that great word of Paul, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and the final message I brought you in that consideration was this, that the love of God shed abroad in the heart of the child of God if allowed to have its own way and master the life will express itself in the attitudes of the life. Paul's injunction is "Let this mind be in you." Answer the movement of the Divine life by bowing to the inward impulse of that life.

There is the same thought here. In speaking on that theme last Sunday night, I dwelt upon it as a great inspiration and gospel of hope to the child of God. Tonight, I come back to it, and listen to the emphasis of solemn warning. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Mark the importance of the injunction. We are surrounded by seductive influences. We are in the love of God; and yet we live in an atmosphere in which, unless we learn the art of watchfulness, unless we discover our responsibility, and answer it in the economy of God, we shall wander, not away from His love, for He will still love, but from the possibility of realization and manifestation; we shall fail to fulfil its purpose, and to answer its great and gracious impulse.

Take again these three illustrations. Let us take them in all their bare and naked horror. What are the dangers threatening those upon whom God's love is set; threatening those who live and move

and have their being within the very love of God? The dangers are suggested by these illustrations; murder; Cain hated his brother; enticement of other men to actual evil; Balaam seduced the people of God; rebellion against the actual and established government of God in the midst of Whose love we live; Korah led such a rebellion. When I say these things in this assembly, speaking to Christian people, I can quite believe that there are those who object and say, We cannot commit murder; we shall surely never be guilty of deliberately seducing the people of God from allegiance, and leading them into the practice of evil; we never can be guilty of leading a rebellion against God. In answer to that objection, I pray you to remember one or two simple things. First, Cain immediately prefaced the murder of his brother by bringing an offering to the Lord. Balaam, compelled by the Spirit of God, uttered a prophecy concerning Israel more wonderful than any other in certain respects. Korah led a popular movement, and was a man of the people. All the things that are things of horror as we look back at these illustrations, were prefaced by others we are compelled to admire. Let the conceptions of Jesus fall upon these ancient illustrations. Cain murdered his brother. We say, We shall never do so. The answer of Christ is this, "everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." The actual crime is not the worst sin. The capacity for it, the tendency toward it, the willingness in certain circumstances to harm another. We are nearer to vulgar sin than we know oftentimes. The man who in the presence of so solemn a warning as this epistle brings, says: "These things have no application to me, I cannot commit murder, I cannot be guilty of the sin of Balaam, I can never be guilty of the sin of Korah," may be by his own self-satisfaction on the very margin of those very sins. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

The warning is needed, for we lose, ere we know it, the graces and glories of the Christian character. Before we know it, these things which result from His love, and which are full of beauty according to His will, have lost their bloom, lost their freshness, the withering process has begun. I am afraid—I would not utter it as a word of censorious criticism, I associate myself with the statement—I am afraid the Church of God is full of men and women who belong to God, who are not in the love of God as to their own character, as to their own conceptions. The forces that are about us are full of peril. Ere we know it, we have fallen—not out of His love—but from such correspondence thereto, as fulfils His will, and manifests His purpose, and accomplishes His work in the world.

Then we need to take one step further most solemnly, and to remember that our age-abiding and ultimate safety depends upon our correspondence to God. We are not to think our salvation is the result of grace, independently of our response thereto. We are not to imagine that at last He will present us as faultless before the throne of the glory of God unless we are faultless. Christ will not introduce us into heaven's fellowship unless there be correspondence to God. Unless there be that love of God shed abroad in our hearts, mastering the life, which expresses itself in holiness, compassion and sacrificial service, He will never present us before the throne of God. There is a grave and awful responsibility resting upon us. Let us remember it.

These thoughts are enforced by the illustrations of the earlier part of the letter. Israelites delivered from Egypt were destroyed in the wilderness. Angels who kept not the orbit of their high and holy service were cast into darkness. Cities dowered with all the values of the fairest valleys and the well-watered plain, were destroyed by fire.

Privilege is not enough. It creates responsibility; and responsibility not responded to, unanswered, not yielded to, issues in destruction. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It is necessary that over and over again those of us who name His name should bring ourselves back to the measurement of His requirements, and test ourselves as by His love.

If the word of the living God is searching and trying you, do not forget that He loves you still. You are in His love; answer it, respond to it, yield to it. All that in you is contrary to that love; all of bitterness, of hatred, of injustice, of impurity, all that violates the perfect law of the universe which is love; all these things are to be put away. So, we are to keep ourselves in the love of God, responding to it, allowing it to be the perpetual test of our thinking, the criterion of our conduct. We are responsible in these matters.

How may we obey the injunction. The answer is given in the words lying immediately around our text. It may be remembered by the remembrance of three simple words, building, praying, looking. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit... looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." These are the laws of fulfilment.

Building on faith. We hear a great deal today, I sometimes think too much, on the subject of character building, yet there is great value in the idea if it be rightly apprehended. How is character built? Character is built by thought and by action. Or, if I may take three words indicating a sequence: There is first the conception; then the conduct arising out of the conception; and finally there is the character resulting from the conduct. That is the whole process of character building, as I understand it. The matter of first importance is that of the conception, for "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he." According to our thinking, will be our doing; and according to our doing, resulting from our thinking, will be our being.

The foundation of the building is that of our most holy faith. When Jude used the term, he used it as expressive of truths which center in Christ. Enumerate, if you so will, the facts of the one great faith of Christ. "Christ; God incarnate. Christ; perfect, ideal Man, living a sinless life. Christ of the cross; God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Christ; "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" Christ; sitting at the right hand of the Father. Christ; coming again to receive His people and to administer the affairs of the world. Are these the cardinal truths? The central thought is that of Christ Himself. He is the object of faith. The Lord Christ; of the sinless life, of the atoning death, of the triumphant resurrection; is the object of faith. We are to build on that foundation. That is to say, that all the activities of our life must harmonize with the faith which we exercised in Christ, and by which we entered into that inner circle of the love of God.

Let us apply the principle to the illustrations of the earlier part of the letter. Is it possible for any man to slay his brother while he is building up on that faith? Can there be harmony between murder and obedience to the ideals of Christ? Is it possible for a man to build on that faith, and seduce the people of God, or rebel against the rule of God? Let that faith be the master passion of the life, let that Christ be not merely the object upon which faith fastens for its first realization of life, but let the Christ be Lord of the life. Faith on Jesus Christ as an act of twenty years ago is useless for the present moment. Faith in Jesus Christ must be the maintained attitude of the life; so that all the habits of the life, the thinking, planning, and doing, shall forevermore be tested thereby. To build on that faith is to keep in the love of God. To be true to Christ in thinking, loving,

willing, and doing, is to abide in the love of God. That is the first condition.

Are some of you saying in your hearts, "All this is so patent?" I know it. I know also how easily we forget and how constantly we disobey, and how insidiously there creep into our lives wrong motives, and we fail to build on our faith. We, who in the sanctuary hear the message and feel its force, drift into the world, and ere we know it, we have denied the faith, not by open word that affirms disbelief, but by answering impulses that were born in hell rather than in heaven. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Keep yourselves by building on the faith.

Take the next word; "Praying in the Holy Spirit." Then even the building on the faith is not to be an action wholly of my own will and in my own strength. If it were so, I should be hopeless. I should know the truth and be unable to do it. I am to pray in the Spirit. The testing of my desires is to be that of the Holy Spirit of God. I am to pray in the light of His interpretation of Christ. The sacred office of the Holy Spirit is to make real to the consciousness of the believer the truth about Christ. Some newborn child of God may say to me, "you have charged us to build on this faith, to test all our living by Christ, how are we to know?" The Spirit of God is given for constant, direct, immediate interpretation of Christ. We are not to imitate the example of a Leader separated from us by two millenniums. We are to walk in the will of God interpreted in the inner life of each of us by the indwelling Spirit of God. "Praying in the Holy Spirit." All the desires of the life are to be submitted to His purification, to the fire of His presence, which burns up the dross of base desires. So am I to build.

Do not let us forget the last word of the three; "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The reference of Jude, without any doubt, is to that advent of our Lord for which we are bidden to look. I am convinced that the Church of God has lost, and is losing immeasurably because she has ceased to look for the coming One. When Paul was writing one of his earliest epistles, that to the Thessalonians, he described the new attitude of Christian men in these words, "Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." We still insist on men turning from idols to the true God. We insist today as perhaps never before upon serving the living God. Remember, the perfecting word is the last, "to wait for His Son from heaven." In our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we have justification, sanctification, glorification. I know the words are old, but how full they are of value and meaning. I look back and say, "There and then I was saved." I think of the present process and say, "Today I am being saved." I look on and up and say, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The completion of the work will be at His coming. If we would keep ourselves in the love of God, we must be watchers for that morning. To remember that He may come and disturb me at my work, or in my play; will have wonderful effect upon my work, and on my play. I am so to live and toil and speak, that if the life were perfected, the toil ended, and the speech checked, by the flaming glory of His advent, I should not be ashamed from Him at His coming. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," by looking for the mercy.

Let our last thought be that suggested by the closing ascription of praise. "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominon and power before all time, and now and forevermore."

Mark the beginning of the brief letter. Mark its central injunction. Listen to its final doxology. How did it begin? "To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ." How does it end? "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling." Between these two the charge, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Let us test ourselves, whether we be in the faith or not, by asking ourselves whether we are in the love. Is there bitterness in the heart, anger in the soul against some other man? Is there the making of murder in you, greed, covetousness, a spirit of envy? While God still loves you, you are not keeping yourselves in the love of God. I pray you with Jude, remember Israel delivered from Egypt, perishing in the wilderness; angels keeping not their first estate, cast into darkness; the cities of the plain desolated. May He help us to understand and to keep ourselves in His love.

Revelation 1:9. Tribulation, Kingdom, And Patience.

Revelation 1:9.

Tribulation, Kingdom, And Patience.

... the tribulation and kingdom and patience... in Jesus....

Revelation 1:9

The text is only a phrase. But what a phrase it is. Taken thus, in separation from its context it is full of suggestiveness. Its opening word, "tribulation," is tremulous with sadness. It speaks of stress and strain and sorrow. Its central word, "kingdom," is pregnant with majesty. It speaks of government and order and strength. Its final word, "patience," is vibrant with heroism. It speaks of courage, and fidelity, and endurance. Final word, did I say? I was wrong. There is yet another, and it is supreme. "In Jesus" are the final words, and they qualify, interpret, glorify, all that have gone before. "... the tribulation and kingdom and patience... in Jesus...."

All this becomes far more arresting and illuminative when the phrase is considered in relation to its context. Therein it is the description of an experience; the experience of the writer; the experience of those to whom, or for whom he was writing; and—as the phrase itself reveals—the experience supremely of Jesus Himself.

The writer thus describes himself and his situation:

I John, your brother and partaker with you... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,...

His writing was addressed to "... the seven churches which are in Asia...." To Ephesus in danger of false teachers and bearing persecutions; to Smyrna, in tribulation, poor, suffering, some of them imprisoned; to Pergamum, dwelling where Satan had his throne and where Antipas was martyred; to Thyatira, in danger from the false prophetess and patiently enduring; to Sardis, overwhelmed in death, only a few remaining undefiled; to Philadelphia, keeping the word, not denying the name, under the most difficult circumstances; to Laodicea, made tepid by prosperity, that gravest of all perils that ever threatens the holy church.

Moreover, his writing was by the direct command of the One Who, speaking of His own experience said, "... I was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore,..."

Our phrase then describes the experience of John, of the church, and of Jesus. It presents two outlooks which qualify each other. The first is the outlook on circumstances, and the whole of that outlook is condensed, compressed, packed into one throbbing word, tribulation. The other is the outlook on life, and the whole of that outlook is expressed in the two words, the kingdom, and the patience.

Let us then consider first this twofold Christian experience; the experience of circumstances and the experience of life. Let us then attempt to consider the mutual relation of these two phases of the Christian experience which cannot be separated in this present time and age and dispensation.

First, then, the twofold experience itself. The first phase is that of the experience of circumstances, expressed in one word, tribulation. What is tribulation? The thought of the word is that of pressure producing actual suffering. I can do no better than illustrate its meaning by reference to our Lord's use of it, when in the Upper Room He was discoursing with His own, prior to His departure. In the course of that conversation He said: "In the world ye have tribulation:..." In the same discourse a few sentences earlier, our Lord employed a most arrestingly suggestive figure which helps us to understand what tribulation is;

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world.

The word there rendered anguish is the same word. We are brought by that flash of intimate understanding and tender grace, to an interpretation of tribulation; it is the pressure that means agony, but it is the travail that issues in life and joy. That is the experience of the church, of John as it was of Jesus, in this world.

Mark the persistence of it, taking first of all that which must be supreme in our thinking, the experience of our Lord Himself. His whole life was a life of tribulation; to quote the prophetic word uttered concerning the Messiah long ere He came, He was "... a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief:..." As we observe Him from babyhood to boyhood, and from boyhood to manhood, and through full maturity to the completion of His public ministry, in ever-increasing measure we see Him always feeling the pressure of circumstances.

This was so in material things. He was homeless. "... foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Mentally it was so. He had no comrades. He had no peers in the realm of thought. There were no great philosophers in His age; philosophy had become decadent before He came into the world. The great philosophers under the influence of whose teaching men were professing to live and act; Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, were not comrades for Him in their thinking. He was alone. Among the men of His own age and of His religion after the flesh, there was none able to enter into His conception of things or to soar to the height of His outlook.

Spiritually, He found no sympathy in the world at all. His spiritual concepts were not accepted by men, not understood of men. He stood alone. Such was His loneliness; materially without home, mentally without comrades, spiritually without sympathy. Life to Him was the bearing of a testimony to the essential and eternal things; the bearing of a testimony that men never apprehended, would not apprehend or receive. From the beginning to the end there crushed and pressed upon Him the false concepts and false ideals of men, which at last found their supreme expression in the words so often quoted and yet so terribly revealing: "... we will not have this man to reign over us." This pressure upon Him of circumstances found its culminating expression and experience in the Cross of Calvary.

The persistence of this experience of tribulation in the history of His people has been equally definite. The story of loyal-hearted discipleship has ever been, and still is, that if a man will live godly in this world he shall suffer persecution. The church forever contradicts the world. That is its business. That is what it is in the world for; to contradict it in its fundamental conceptions, in the conduct that grows out of its fundamental conceptions, and in the character which results from the persistent conception expressing itself in conduct. The church in the world is an eternal negative to the things which are supremely of the world.

With what result? The world is forever opposed to the church. It is against the church. It will bring all its pressure to bear upon the church. It will do everything to silence her voice and destroy her influence and end her propaganda. If this is not so, it is because the church has forgotten her message. If the world now is making friends with the church, then alas for the church. The world has not changed. Its central conception of life, its ideal, is still that of the magnificence of mastery and the glory of the material. The church's ideal is still that of the magnificence of service and sacrifice and the beauty of the spiritual. These things cannot merge and mix without the quality being changed entirely on the one side or the other. The church is in the world to affirm the things of the beginning, the original things of truth, the meaning and the reason of things; to tell man what man has honestly sought to discover for himself but never has been able, the reason, the truth behind everything. The world is still saying: "We will not have these things"; the world is still against the church. The church stands in the center of this pressure, bearing her witness and feeling the agony of her loneliness and her strife with the things against which she is called to protest. This is a persistent experience.

But this is not all the truth about the experience of the church's Lord and of the church. We need the other two words of my text; not only is it an experience of tribulation, it is also an experience of the kingdom and the patience. Two thoughts are suggested by these words, and yet they are so closely related that they describe one supreme fact. In the one case, that of tribulation, we have the experience of circumstances. In the other, that of the kingdom and patience, we have the experience of the church in her very life, that which constitutes her what she is, that which differentiates her from all other societies, that which makes a distinction clear, sharp, between a man of God and a man of the world. What then do these words connote? The word "kingdom" connotes the rule and the realm of a king. Here, of course, the reference is to the Kingdom of God, and not to any dispensational interpretation of the phrase, not to any dispensational application or value, but to the fact of the Kingdom of God. It is the static, unchanged, abiding fact. It is static, that is, it is the one fact that has never altered, never changed, the fact that abides. The Kingship of God, the Divine sovereignty, holds all things in the grasp of its power and within the authority of its management. The whole fact of the universe is included, whether it be heaven above, or the earth beneath, or the depths of the underworld below. Nothing escapes from the operation of that one fact. Satan himself must report in the Divine Presence ere he goes upon any mission of persecuting the sons of God. The arch enemy of mankind cannot touch one single piece of your property, not so much as a hair upon the back of a camel that you possess, until he has asked permission. Satan desires to sift you. Then he must ask before he can do it. Satan desires to plunge a continent in war. Then he cannot act save under a Divine control. If in the Divine control there be a process of judgment, it is judgment proceeding toward the accomplishment of a purpose of mercy. The true experience of the whole church of God in its life is fundamentally an

experience of that Kingdom of God.

And closely related, indeed growing out of it as an inevitable sequence, there is the experience of patience. The word literally means, "staying under"; but the staying under always means staying on. If we are to stay under the pressure of circumstances, we must stay on the kingship of God. Patience is the experience of the soul that relates itself to the Kingdom of God and relates all circumstances to that selfsame fact. The soul, keen and sensitive to the fact of the Divine Kingship, is able to remain under the pressure of circumstances, tribulation, affliction, persecution, as it relates them all to the underlying fact. In use the word always connotes cheerful, hopeful endurance. It is never used of that state of mind that says things are as they are and cannot be helped. That is not patience, that is stupidity. Patience will feel the agony, shudder at its appearance, and be conscious of its pain; but patience will hear the undertone of the eternal music and express it in song even when circumstances press and grind upon the soul.

In the experience of our Lord the persistence of this sense of the Kingdom and of patience is most clearly marked. The whole truth was expressed in His own words in this same discourse to which I have already referred. When He said: "... In the world ye have tribulation,..." He also said: "... but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." The victory of His life was gained by submission to the static fact of the Divine Kingship and by consequent sovereignty over all circumstances.

He gave us the supreme exemplification of the experiences of life. His life was homed in the centrality of the Divine government and expressed itself in infinite patience and so mastered all tribulation.

And that was not only the experience of our Lord Himself. By His grace and through the ministry of His Spirit, it is the experience of the Christian church. If her experience is that of fellowship with His sufferings, it is also that of fellowship in His triumph. There was one man who knew perhaps more of these things than any other man who appears upon the pages of the New Testament. I refer to Paul. When he was writing his second letter to the Corinthian Christians, he spoke twice of his own experience in this regard.

We are pressed on every side...—and that is the same word, tribulation— "... yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body."

And again;

... in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions,—(that same word)—in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;—(that is the experience of tribulation)—in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left—(this is the experience of the Kingdom)—by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things—(this is the experience of patience).

The church always overcomes the world. In the case of every individual martyr, the victory is with the man slain and not with the men who slay him. In every hour of persecution it is the church that is victorious, not the oppressive power that persecutes. Following in the pathway of her Lord and Master, Who death by dying slew, the church bends to bonds and stripes, is battered and bruised to death, to rise again in life immortal, and to triumph. Tribulation! yea verily, but also the kingdom and the patience that are in Jesus.

The mutual relation of these phases of experience has already been seen in our consideration, yet it is so important, as it seems to me, that it demands separate statement. Let us think of tribulation then in its relation to life, and then of life in its relation to tribulation.

Tribulation is caused by life. The sense of the kingdom and the sense of the patience of the soul makes the world's opposition inevitable. It is impossible to have a man or a society utterly sensible of the Divine government, utterly faithful to the Divine government, living in a world like this, but that man, that society, becomes a center of opposition. Consequently, it is the kingdom and patience that create the tribulation. If we relax our conviction as to the kingship and our patient fidelity to all that kingship inevitably connotes, then the pressure weakens. We shall not feel it so much. If we abandon our attitude and our fidelity toward the kingship of God, the pressure of the world will cease altogether. We need not have persecution if we do not desire it. All we have to do is to abandon our loyalty to the Kingdom of God. The world will not persecute us then.

But not only is it true that tribulation is caused by life; it is also true that tribulation strengthens life. The very forces that are against us are making us stronger. This is the strange and wonderful experience of all Christian souls and of the Christian church. Deepening loyalty increases patience. Growing pressure increases the strength of the life which it strives to destroy until life becomes forever and finally victorious.

From Antioch in Pisidia Paul was driven out. At Iconium they put him outside the gates. At Lystra they stoned him, leaving him for dead. After a while the broken, bruised body revived and he went to Derbe. When he had been there a while he went back to Lystra, the place of the stones; back to Iconium where they drove him out; back to Antioch in Pisidia. He went back to teach the Christians something that it was important they should know, that "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God."

The very pressure of the stones had deepened and intensified the sense of the real and the spiritual. He went back to tell those people that by these things we enter the Kingdom of God in all its fullness. The old saying is indeed true, that "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The church hidden in the Roman catacombs overcame the gross and devilish materialism of Rome. The church seated and patronized by Constantine on the Seven Hills, became weak, paralyzed. It has ever been so. It has been by the pressure and agony of tribulation, that the forces of the church's life have been increased and renewed and made powerful. The church persecuted is the church powerful because then she is true to her life and realizes her strength.

Life is surrendered to by tribulation. The sense of agony and the sense of patience in the soul makes opposition contributory to the very life which it is persecuting. Here again I quote from Paul in his letter to the Philippians: "... the things which happened unto me have fallen out... unto the progress of the gospel," as the Revised Version has it.

The things that have happened unto me—the bonds, the imprisonments—have turned out for the beating forward of the gospel.

Life transmutes tribulation, and so (in effect) Paul writes: "Let us also rejoice in our tribulations. Tribulation worketh patience, patience worketh conviction, conviction worketh hope!" Wherever we find life in its strength, we find tribulation in its pressure, but if we watch the process we see life transmuting tribulation.

These are dark days for the church of God. Are they? Think again! What has provoked this world conflict? The opposition of the world to the church. Exchange that for other words if you like and say it is a conflict of ideals. That is but another way of saying that it is a conflict caused by the opposition of the world to the church. This is a testimony to the power of the church. The passion for the mastery of the earth by brute force is the hatred of the world for the ideals of Christ.

What is the issue to be? Let us ask another question. For the moment what is happening? The church is led into a wilderness in which she looks the world squarely in the face and shudders. That is great gain. Too long the church has been playing fast and loose with the world, and now God has permitted a situation when the church is once again compelled to look at the world and see what it really means. As she does it, if she is true to God, she shudders and is ashamed.

But she is not only brought into a wilderness in which she can look the world squarely in the face. The church is brought to the place where she looks God in the face anew. There will happen to the church that which happened to Jacob at Jabbok; she will be able to say, presently, after the night and the darkness have passed: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is healed."

That thing is true individually. Here is a boy back from the war, marvelously preserved from anything more serious than a wound that has incapacitated him for a month or so. This is what he said: "I never really knew God till I was at the front." No, he was not a heathen and a publican. He belonged to the church. But he saw God there. That experience is being multiplied, and the vision will heal. There will come to us a new sense of the powers of our life, a new experience of the agony and of the patience.

Are we in tribulation? are we in Patmos? Let us also be in the Spirit on the Lord's day. So shall we know the kingdom, so shall we know the patience. It may be we shall hear behind us the voice of a trumpet, and being turned to look we also shall see the Son of Man, girt about the paps with a golden girdle, with feet that shine like brass burnished in the furnace, with eyes that flash as with a flame of fire, with hair white as the driven snow. The thing He will say to us amid the carnage and the darkness is this:

"... I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore...."

Revelation 3:20. The King At The Door.

Revelation 3:20.

The King At The Door.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.

Revelation 3:20

The first and true application of these words is an application to the Christian Church; but, with a fine sense of appropriateness, the Christian consciousness has taken the principle involved, and made personal application of it. For while in the letter to the church at Laodicea these words spoken by the Lord outside the Church had application to that church and those within its doors, we do no violence to the principle involved, but indeed come to understand it more perfectly, when, in all simplicity, we listen to these words of Christ as addressed to the individual. The door at which He stood knocking was the door of the Church; yet it was to one man that He made His appeal. If we make our application to the Church we must remember that the call of Christ was to an individual within that church, and that the way back for the excluded Christ to fellowship with those who bore His name and wore His sign was through an individual life. Therefore, the two applications are not only permissible but important.

My principal purpose this evening is to make the second of these applications the personal one. Yet, standing as we do on the threshold of the new year, I feel that I cannot wholly pass over the first value of my text. I have no desire, neither have I the time at the present moment, to enter into any discussion of the application of the whole of these letters; but, taking them in all simplicity, we accept them as letters sent to seven churches then actually in existence; and, moreover, this church at Laodicea was certainly known to Paul, for his references to it in the letter to the Colossians are very striking. An examination of them in the light of this letter is interesting and valuable. The fact that arrests our attention is that here, so soon after the presence of the Lord in the world in the days of His flesh, was a church bearing His name, gathering together ostensibly for His worship, making its boast in its own sufficiency; while His estimate of it was that it was Christless, He was not in the midst, He was outside the door. I say that a picture such as that must cause pause to all of us who are united in church life. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

To summarize, for I am going into no detail in this application, what is the picture of this church at Laodicea? It is that of an influential church without influence. We should have taken the church at its own estimate, and our Lord made perfectly clear what that estimate was, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." That was the language of the Church. That was our Master's interpretation of the underlying thought of the Church concerning itself.

His estimate of the church was very different. "Thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." That phrase, "the wretched one," really means burdened one. We often hear of churches being burdened with debt, but never of churches being burdened with wealth; but that was our Lord's estimate of this church. Therefore, in His view, it was pitiable, for such is the thought of the word "miserable," not that the church was conscious of its own misery; therein lay the profoundest tragedy of its condition, it was not miserable, but it was pitiable, in the old sense of the word "miserable" with which we are familiar in the liturgy of the Episcopal Church, "Have mercy upon us, miserable offenders," pitiable offenders as the thought really is. We "have need of nothing," said the church; but the Lord said, "Thou art... poor and blind and naked." A church without influence, wealthy but poor, satisfied but pitiable. I have no desire to do any other than thus to glance at the picture. As the minister of this church, in the midst of many of my own people, I make no application of it; I dare not, I do not know; but I confront the possibility that a church may bear the name of the Lord, may be perfectly satisfied with its own success and its own influence, may make its boast in the fact that it has now become wealthy and has need of nothing, while yet the Master is outside, declaring it to be pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked. That is the background of condition.

Now hear His word to such a church, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He has not yet abandoned that church. If He is excluded from His own church He stands still near to that church. How near? At the very door, knocking and asking for what? For one man who will let Him in! And promising that if there be one man within the church who comes to consciousness of poverty, and misery, and blindness, and inefficiency, and if that man will admit the Master, He will pass in and set up the table of perfect fellowship with that man. If that should have happened at Laodicea, perhaps it did, I do not know; but suppose some one man opened the door and the Master crossed again the threshold and sat down with that man, what happened in that moment? That man excommunicated the church. We have often heard of a church excommunicating a man; it is possible for one spiritually minded man absolutely loyal to Jesus Christ to excommunicate a whole church.

I now pass to the personal and individual application of this simple and sublime word of Christ. In doing that I am anxious first of all to look at the One Who is speaking. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Who is this? Where shall I go for a description of Him in the New Testament? I will confine myself to the writings of John. We were looking at one of them on Sunday evening last, as we found it in the prologue to the gospel beginning with the stately words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"—then omitting the parenthesis of the next twelve verses and catching up the statement at verse fourteen—"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." On that description I am not going back. That is the Person referred to here. In this book of Revelation the same One is described for us in symbolic language. In all the symbolism of that description of the One upon Whom John looked we have suggestions concerning His glory and His grace, which as we meditate upon them fill the heart with a sense of wonder and amazement in the presence of this Lord Christ of ours. The first word is an arresting word. "I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man." Bear in mind—this is mechanical, but if you will ponder it, it may be helpful—that description occurs in the New

Testament, in the gospel stories eighty-five times, eighty-three of which are occasions when Jesus used it concerning Himself. It was His favorite description for Himself, "the Son of man." I am not going to tarry with the significance of the word save in this one and simplest respect; it brings us face to face with the fact of the humanity of our Master, brings us face to face with the fact that the One upon Whom John looked in Patmos, was, whatever else He was and is—and other facts and forces of His being are symbolically suggested—He was of our own nature, a man of our humanity, the Son of man. Then we find the symbolism of character: the hair white as wool, suggestive according to Eastern symbolism of purity and age; the feet of brass, which burnt as though burnished in a furnace, suggestive of that procedure in judgment in invincible strength which had been spoken of by all the prophetic writings ere the coming of the Christ Himself; the voice as the sound of many waters, the concord of all the voices that had sounded ere His voice sounded, merging into one final truth all the divers portions that had been spoken to the fathers in times past by the prophets; or, briefly and inclusively, the infinite music of the full and perfect speech of God to men through His Son, the Son of man. This is but to touch upon some of the suggestive thoughts of the symbolism of the vision. It was this Person Who said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." As we think of the statements of the prologue to the Gospel, and of this symbolic description at the commencement of the Apocalypse, and merge them into one, and endeavor to realize all they suggest, let us remember, however hard it may be to understand it, that the declaration of the text is that the One Who stands at the door and knocks is the Creator, the King, the Lawgiver, the Judge; but He is the Redeemer also, for He says, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever more, and I have the keys of death and of hades."

Ere we listen to the word of the text, let us turn to the particular description with which this letter opens: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

There is nothing more wonderful in these letters than the fitness of the description of Jesus at the commencement of each one to the peculiar need of the people to whom the message was sent. Here none of the symbolism of the description is employed. Here every word is mystic and awe-inspiring. "The Amen" is a title which by its very simplicity arrests the attention, and of which, when we inquire as to its meaning, we find the root signification is that of nursing, nurture, strengthening, establishment, so that the Amen reminds us that He is the essential, final Truth. It is exactly equivalent to the word which fell from the lips of our Lord when He said, "I am the Truth." Then He is "the faithful and true witness"; and while the Amen is the positive description, this is relative. He Who is the Amen, the essential truth, eternal truth, is, in His dealings with men, the faithful and true witness, not true alone but faithful also, not faithful merely but true also. The thing He will say will be the thing of truth, and He will say the thing of truth however it may burn.

Then the final title, so simple and yet so startling, which links this letter to Laodicea with the teaching of the letter to the Colossians, "the beginning of the creation of God."

Thus it is seen that Christ stands at the door of the Church, or at the door of the individual life, in all the essential grandeur and dignity of His own being, which is far beyond our comprehension; yet in order that we may understand, and be able to hear the knock at the door, and the accent of the voice, "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God," is "the Son of Man." All these things are the commonplaces of our New Testament and of our

understanding thereof. Yet I have taken time, of set purpose, to remind my own heart of them ere I turn to the consideration of this word of Jesus.

Now listen to the text, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." There are two things I shall ask you to notice. First, the attitude of Christ described; and, second, the responsibility resting on us in view of that attitude.

What is His attitude? First, He is the excluded One, excluded from heaven by Love, excluded from earth by hate, for "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." And if we think of the Church, think of Him excluded from the Church, neither by hate nor by love, but by luke-warmness, the tepid condition which is loathsome to the heart of this Christ of ours.

Now let us take this one thought about the Church and make application of it in the case of the individual. They did not know He was outside. They thought they were Christians. They named His name. They professed to believe His teaching. They had His institutions in their midst. They observed the ordinances of His commandment. They were a fully organized church. They did not know, did not dream that He was outside.

The peculiar individual application of this text, then, is not to the man who is openly and avowedly anti-Christian. I believe that at the door of that man's heart and life also Christ is knocking; but the peculiar application of this word of Christ must be to the man who is a Christian in name.

I pray you therefore to place the measurement of the picture of the Laodicean church on your own life, and find out whether in your case these things be so or not. How shall we do this? How shall we find out whether we individually are poor, pitiable, blind, naked, devoid of the essential Christian character? There is one test, very simple, but very suggestive, and very searching. How shall we detect the difference between the church with Christ in the midst and the church with His name in the midst, and Himself excluded? How shall we detect the difference between the man truly Christian and the man who names the name of Christ but is not Christian? What is the testing word, the discriminating thought? This is it, lukewarm! May I use another word, far more common, but perhaps more arresting, tepid!

That is a startling affirmation to make, yet I make it on the basis of this flaming revelation in the letter to Laodicea. "I would thou wert cold," and the word may be rightly translated frozen—"or hot," flaming, "so because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold"—are you not appalled by these words of Jesus?—"I will spew thee out of My mouth." That is the test. Can you sing about the Cross without any tears? Can you talk about the holiness of God without any tremor? Are you lukewarm? Then it is more difficult for the Lord Christ to deal with you than with a frozen man. Is it not true? The most difficult congregation in the world to which to preach the gospel is the congregation that regularly listens to it and refuses to obey it! The one man it is hardest to bring into living relationship with Christ is the man who sits right there in front of the preacher sabbath by sabbath, and hears the message but never answers it; admires it, talks to his friend about it, and agrees as to the accuracy of it, but in the center of his own life does not obey it; that man is lukewarm, tepid! Know well that Christ is not within because thou dost only admire Him! Know this, Christ is outside if thou art only prepared to patronize Him. He is the excluded Christ. This is the first picture that my text suggests. Behold, I stand outside, and knock. I do not think there will ever

be any hope of Christ finding His way into the central life of some of us, until God in His infinite mercy awakens us to the fact that He is not within, but outside!

But this is also the picture of Christ seeking admission. The first is the human side; it tells the story of your condition, many of you who are listening to me. I am not preaching about men and women who are not here, but to men and women who are here, so help me God! Let us hear what the picture suggests about Christ. If He is excluded He is asking to come in. It is so old a story that men do not believe it because they know it so well, and a man does not know how to preach it so as to arrest the attention of the men who know it. Oh that I could so say it that men would be startled by it and believe it; this Lord Christ wants room in your heart and life, notwithstanding the fact that you have excluded Him by your own will, notwithstanding the fact that you have insulted Him by your patronage and admiration while you have withheld your obedience. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

What does He want to do if He comes in? To give you gold instead of poverty, to provide you with the white raiment that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; with gentle fingers to do for you what He did for the blind man long ago, anoint your eyes with salve until the light shall stream on them and you shall see. He has described your condition, burdened, pitiable, poor, blind, naked; and He says "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," with wealth for thy poverty, with sight for thy blindness, with raiment for thy nakedness. Thy condition is not My will for thee, says the Lord Christ to this heart of mine; I fain would make thee wealthy with all My wealth; I fain would open thine eyes until thou canst see the vision that I see; I fain would clothe thee with the white raiment that is My very own.

What does He want to come in for? He wants you to be His host, He is asking your hospitality. He wants to be your Host, He desires to give you hospitality. Was there ever statement more perfect than this? "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me"; I will be his guest, he shall spread the table for Me. I will be His Host and he shall sit at My table. I do not suppose there is another figure in the New Testament quite so wonderful as that of a revelation of the Lord's purpose as He knocks at the door of the human heart. How can a man say a thing which in the very saying may be spoiled? Yet let me try! God is robbed of one of His own homes so long as He is excluded from the heart of a man; and that is not a piece of my imagination. I go back to the Old Testament and I find the truth. Let God speak by the lip of the ancient prophet, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The dwelling places of God, eternity, and the heart of a man! Jesus says, I want to come in to My own home; I built it, furnished it, all the material is My handiwork; let Me in! Be My host, let Me come in and live there. Let Me be the Guest in My very own home, and then I will be Host as well. I will spread the table for thee!

He always wants hospitality. He is very homeless in London by comparison. Will you not make home for Him in your heart? No room for Him in the inn. Let Him in, that He may sup with thee. He is hungry for thy love. He is homeless until a man shall open his heart and let Him in. He shall be thy Host; yet not wholly at His own charges, for thou shalt be His host. And in that perfect fellowship, My heart—as though Christ should say—will find rest, and thy heart will find rest.

What is our responsibility? To admit Him, that is all!

That is all, did I say? It is a very old story, but it will help us now, the story of Holman Hunt's picture. When Hunt painted his great picture, "The Light of the World," the picture of this thorn-crowned King knocking at the door, a friend of his who saw it before the public exhibition said to him, "Hunt, you have made one mistake here." "What is that?" asked the artist. "There is no handle on the door." Hunt looked at his friend and said, No, that is not a mistake; that is the door of the human heart, and it must be opened from the inside. "I stand at the door and knock." He desires to enter, but He will not force an entrance. I am responsible in this matter. If ultimately I should miss the way, I cannot put back the blame on God. I must open to admit Him. You may have heard His voice tonight in some whisper other than any word spoken by the preacher. You may have been conscious of the nearness to you of this Lord Christ; but He is still outside, until you swing your heart's door open and bid Him enter. Why do not men open the door? I would like to tell you another story. My dear friend, Mr. Collier, of Manchester, told me this story, and it made a very profound appeal to me; it is full of simplicity from the standpoint of the child, almost quaint and humorous, but it is a wonderful story. One night they were having a lantern service, and a working man was present with his boy by his side, looking at the pictures of the life of Jesus. When Holman Hunt's great picture was flashed on the screen, they were singing,

Knocking, knocking, who is there?

Waiting, waiting, oh, how fair!

and the boy gripped his father's hand and said, "Father, why don't they open the door?" The man said, "I don't know; s'pose they don't want to!" "No," said the boy, "it isn't that. I think I know why they don't; they all live at the back of the house!" Why don't you open the door? Because you are living at the back of the house? You have receded into the baser, meaner, things of your own life, and, living there, you do not hear the knocking at the front door! You have descended in life voluntarily to mean motives, intellectually to limited outlook, emotionally to unworthy passions. You are living at the back. But for this hour some of you have pressed from that back region in the front, and you have seen the light from the windows out of which you seldom look. God grant that you may have heard the knocking. Will you open? I quoted two lines a moment ago from a hymn, and I am always sorry that the hymn ever appeared in that form. It is the mutilation of a great poem. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote something far finer than those two or three verses. Let her poem make my appeal;

Knocking, knocking, ever knocking!

Who is there?

'Tis a pilgrim strange and kingly,

Never such was seen before.

Ah, sweet soul, for such a wonder

Undo the door.

No, that door is hard to open;

Hinges rusty, latch is broken.

Bid Him go!
Wherefore, with that knocking dreary,
Scare the sleep from one so weary,
Say Him—No!
Knocking, knocking, ever knocking?
What! still there?
Oh, sweet soul, but once behold Him,
With the glory-crowned hair;
And those eyes so strange and tender
Waiting there.
Open, open, once behold Him—
Him so fair.
Ah, that door! Why wilt Thou vex me,
Coming over to perplex me?
For the key is stiffly rusty,
And the bolt is clogged and dusty;
Many fingered ivy vine
Seals it fast with twist and twine;
Weeds of years and years before
Choke the passage of that door.
Knocking, knocking! What! still knocking?
What's the hour? The night is waning;
In my heart a drear complaining,
And a chilly, sad unrest!
Ah! His knocking! It disturbs me,
Scares my sleep with dreams unblest!
Give me rest,
Rest—ah, rest!
Rest, dear soul, He longs to give thee;

Thou hast only dreamed of pleasure,
Dreamed of gifts and golden treasure,
Dreamed of jewels in thy keeping,
Waked to weariness and weeping.
Open to thy soul's one Lover,
And thy night of dreams is over,
More than all thy faded dreaming!
Did she open? Doth she? Will she?
So, as wondering we behold,
Grows the picture to a sign
Pressed upon your soul and mine;
For in every heart that liveth
Is that strange, mysterious door—
Though forsaken and betangled,
Ivy-gnarled, and weed bejangled,
Dusty, rusty, and forgotten—
There the pierced hand still knocketh,
And with ever-patient watching,
With the sad eyes true and tender,
With the glory-crowned hair,
Still thy God is waiting there.

Revelation 19:16. The Kingdom: The King.

Revelation 19:16.

The Kingdom: The King.

He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 19:16

This is a view of Christ in His glory, a poetic and prophetic description of a glory upon which the eye of man has not yet rested in actual history.

John, as he wrote an account of the vision granted to him, was careful in the center of the descriptive paragraph to name the glorious One the Word, in the mystic language which he had used in writing the story of His mission in the world. In the loneliness of Patmos there were granted to the Seer such visions of his Lord as he had never seen before. In the presence of the unveiling of the glory of this Person, John became as one dead; and yet, he was conscious of the touch of a gentle, tender hand, thrilling with all human affection, and of the sound of a voice full of sweet tenderness, and ringing with all authority, saying: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." The One Who passes before our vision in this paragraph is the self-same One upon Whose bosom John had laid his head in the years that now seemed so far away, the one of Whom he declared: "We beheld Him and we handled Him." Now he sees Him, in the figurative language of this paragraph, riding from the opened heavens, a King, followed by armies; and on His vesture and on His thigh a name was written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." I repeat that the eyes of the men of the world have never yet so seen Him; nevertheless, Jesus is today God's anointed and appointed King.

One of the great themes of the Bible is that of the Kingship of God. I am sometimes inclined to think, as I study and attempt to teach it, that whatever word, descriptive of Deity, one may be thinking of at a given moment, that word contains within itself the suggestiveness of every other word. A little while ago, in a careful and devout treatise on the Atonement, the author declared that in the word Father all essential truth concerning God is contained; for the Father is a King having authority, and the Father is a Saviour, forever seeking the realization of the highest life of His children. Would it not be equally true to say that when one speaks of Kingship all other thoughts are included therein? Would it not be equally true to affirm that if one speaks of God as Saviour, authority and tenderness and tears are all suggested by the word? From the beginning to the end of the Bible, the revelation of God is that of His Kingship, not declared in so many words in the stories with which the record opens, but as clearly revealed there as anywhere else. Take the ancient story, and see the placing of man in the garden; mark the spacious liberty, the glorious opportunity in the midst of which he found himself, in order that he might have dominion; but, as you gaze upon that spacious liberty and that wonderful opportunity, mark well the tree that

indicated the limit of liberty and the condition for the fulfilment of opportunity: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it." That tree was the sacramental symbol of the limit of liberty, and therefore a revelation to man of the throne higher than the one upon which man himself sat, and to which he must bow in allegiance if he would reign in power over everything that lies beneath him. As I pass on and on through the library I find the same story of God as King, God governing, God lifted up and enthroned, and when the seers of the ancient economy came to the highest visions of God they were always visions of God enthroned. With the coming of the New Testament, there came the fulfilment of the things suggested in the Old concerning this very fact of the Divine Kingship and government. In the language of the far distance there had been indications of the fact that at last into human history there should come a manifestation of the Kingship of God—the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was a prophecy of the authority which should overcome the forces that were against humanity. The great promises made to the father of the race all indicated the coming of manifest Kingship, and to the great tribe of Judah the promise was definitely made that out of it should come a governor. The psalms are full of a King yet to come. The prophets during the delivery of their messages among the failing thrones of time, and in the presence of all the breakdown of earthly royalty, looked on and on, and waited and hoped that this essential fact of government and authority would come into clear manifestation.

In the New Testament there is the fulfilment of the hope, the answer to the expectation, the aspiration, the desire, the longing, the passionate waiting of the long centuries. From the beginning to the end of the story of Jesus' public ministry, there is the note of Kingship and unquestioned authority in His teaching. When he ascended the Mount, and delivered to His disciples His ethic, there was no note of apology, no question of counsel taken with any other. Nay, rather, there was the note that set aside the old economy, because it was now superseded by the new ethic, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time... but I say unto you!" I listen to Him in all His teaching, and I watch Him in all His ways; and I see ever One Who is sole and absolute Monarch, calling no man into His counsels. I trace Him through all His life, and I see Kingliness manifest not only in His teaching and in His general attitude toward men, but also, and perhaps supremely, in His attitude toward God. Christ never used the same word to describe His own praying which He used to describe the praying of other men. The word He used when describing the praying of the disciples, and when He charged them to pray, was a word which indicates coming into the presence of God with empty hands, as a pauper asking for the bestowment of a gift, of a bounty. Jesus never used that word about His own praying. Martha once used that word of His praying, but that was her mistake. The word Christ used of His own praying was a word which indicated partnership, fellowship with the God to Whom He spoke, "I will inquire of the Father." It is equally significant that you never find Him praying with His disciples. He prayed alone. They watched their Lord at His prayer, and as they watched Him and listened to Him, they came to Him upon one occasion and said, "Lord, teach us to pray." The very petition they presented to Him, asking that they might be taught to pray, is demonstration of the loneliness of His praying. Jesus prayed on another level, on another plane. His fellowship with God was other than the fellowship of the men by whom He was surrounded. Whether I watch His attitude toward men, or His attitude toward God, this perpetual note of authority is to be discovered.

As the shadows of the Cross were falling upon His spirit, the shadows of the dark hours to which Jesus was coming, and to which He had so often made reference in the company of the disciples, and as they trembled in the presence of the Cross out of their very love for Him, it is perfectly evident that the effect it produced upon Him was not that of trembling. There was no tremor in the presence of men and what they could do; the trembling was reserved for the loneliness of Gethsemane, when He faced the infinite mystery of the passion, and men were excluded. In the presence of the Cross itself Christ said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."

That authority was manifested with equal clearness in the hour of the Cross. If we watch Him carefully we cannot fail to see that Jesus compelled the hour of His own death. In the earlier days of His ministry He said: "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself." Watch Him at the last. Read carefully Matthew's story, and you will find two statements close together, though we have sometimes read them and never recognized their relationship. The high priests, plotting for His arrest, warned Judas that it was not to be effected at the Feast. Directly after, I see Him with His disciples, and Judas sat at the board; and Christ said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly." And He was arrested at the Feast, in spite of the priests. This was not a man driven by circumstances; He was a Man compelling circumstances. This was not a prisoner arrested at last, having been hunted to death by His enemies, who had now overcome Him. He held in His hand every foe that was against Him, and compelled the whole of them to cooperate in the fulfilment of His own purpose. He stood in the presence of the representative of Roman power, Pilate; and when he asked Him, "Whence art Thou?" Jesus gave him no answer. When Pilate said, "Knowest Thou not that I have power to release Thee, and have power to crucify Thee?" Christ replied, "Thou wouldst have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above."

Man of Nazareth, did you call Him? Verily yes, man of my manhood, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, humanity of my human nature, but a King. This is He of Whom all the prophets spoke, and Whose coming they anticipated. This is He of Whom all the psalmists sang, their expectation becoming the inspiration of their psalmody. This is He for Whom long ages have been waiting. This is the King, God's one and only King. In the great Kingdom of God Christ is King, an expression to men of the meaning of God's Kingship, and for the accomplishment in the midst of human history of all the purposes of God.

Now for one moment look beyond this hour in which we are assembled. Lift your eyes! It is not easy to look on into the mystic future; but look, I pray you, look on to the Advent. Place it where you will; I care nothing for the sake of the present argument and illustration as to your view concerning the relation to each other of the various aspects of that Advent; I am desirous only of drawing attention to this tremendous declaration:—

Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For He put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted Who did subject all things unto Him. And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto Him that did subject all things unto Him, that

God may be all in all.

The underlying truth of that declaration is that of the Kingship of God. Jesus is seen as the manifestation in human history of that Kingship. Jesus came for the demonstration thereof in the midst of the long failure. He came into human sight, into human consciousness, to destroy the works of the devil, to restore again that part of the Kingdom which was lost and in rebellion. The fisherman of Galilee who leaned upon the human bosom of Christ—and I sometimes think felt the very beating of His dear heart—John, in the isle of Patmos, with the waters washing inshore, and desolation in his heart because of absent friends, looked, and the heaven was opened, and that Man of Nazareth was seen, and "upon His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Let us, therefore, consider this Kingliness of Jesus, for it is a manifestation in time, and for us, of the real meaning of the Kingship of God. I shall ask you to consider three things: first, the Kingly character as revealed in Jesus; secondly, the Kingly qualifications as manifested in Him; and, finally, the Kingly position which He occupies even now, and which will be manifested before the eyes of men in the accomplishment of the purpose of God.

The Kingly character. Upon this depends the Kingly position. That is a revolutionary thing to say, by which I mean that it is saying something that the world has never yet come to understand. True kingliness must be based upon character. A sentence like that is quite naturally applied to kingship among men; but, in order that the truth in that application should be emphasized more powerfully, I affirm that the Kingship of God is founded upon the character of God. That is a tremendous truth, and if we can but grasp it, what will be the confidence, the assurance it will bring to us in the midst of battle and strife? That truth had its unveiling in Jesus Christ. Kings have become kings in human history by force of arms. Said this King, "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Nationality that begins with military power, that is built upon military power, ends by military power. Not by force of arms, not by policy and intrigue, not by succession does this King reign.

Let me but remind you of that great passage in the Philippian letter, in which Paul described the humiliation and consequent exaltation of Christ. Let us begin in the middle: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." How that thrills with the music of the march to imperial power—every knee to bow and every tongue to confess! This paragraph commences with the word "Wherefore," and now I take that word and use it interrogatively. Wherefore? Why has God lifted Him high, and put Him on the throne? I go back to that which precedes: "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross." Can you explain to me that patient, persistent, awful descent to the uttermost depth of the Cross? There is only one answer. The answer is in the word which never occurs in the passage, but which bathes the passage with infinite light. The answer is given in the word Love. "God so loved the world."

Love brought Him down, my poor soul to redeem;

Yes, it was love made Him die on the tree.

That is the character upon which the Kingship of Jesus is based. That is the character upon which the government of God is based. The Kingly character is love. Love is not a weak, sickly, anemic sentiment, which has in it no discipline, no strength, no anger, no fierceness. Love has holiness at its heart. Wherever we find true love we find the capacity for anger. Love is always angry with anything and everything, and with anyone and everyone, that harms, hurts and spoils that which is loved. Jesus once brought the prince of darkness into the light, and described him as a murderer, a liar. Love will judge the murderer, and fling the liar out. If love permit the murderer house room, and forgive the liar in his lie, it ceases to be love. Love can be stern, severe and hard, but always in the interest of redemption and renewal, and remaking. "The King of love my Shepherd is." In that great word there is laid bare so much as man may see of the Kingly character of Jesus, and the character of God upon which His government is based.

Then consider the kingly qualifications. "The King of love my Shepherd is." All the great kingly characters in the Bible were shepherds. Moses, uncrowned, but a king, learned the art of kingship not at the court of Pharaoh, but in the desert. David, the king after God's own heart, served his apprenticeship to human kingship while he was a shepherd boy. Jesus said the sweetest and profoundest thing about Himself, in some senses, when He said "I am the good Shepherd," and other writers described Him as the great Shepherd and the chief Shepherd. The work of the shepherd is to watch over the flock, to feed the flock, to protect them, to heal their wounds, to lead them to pasture, to restore the wanderers, to fight the wolves even though he die in the conflict. That is kingship. The true king is always a shepherd, living not for himself but for his flock, thinking for the flock, caring for them, putting all the thought of his life and the service of his being into the interests of the flock. Such was this great Shepherd. Because of the perfection of the shepherd character of Jesus, there was perfect qualification for government. I know how difficult that is to understand, how revolutionary it seems, when thinking of the kings of earth even until this hour. God's king is a shepherd, because God is a Shepherd. I take you back to the ancient word, "Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want." So sang David the king, who also was a shepherd. He saw on the throne of majesty and government the Shepherd who leads and loves and restores.

A further qualification is that He is a prophet also. When I use the word "prophet" thus, I do not use it in the imperfect sense of foreteller, but in the larger sense of forth-teller, law giver, one who interprets the perfect will to people who need such interpretation, one who is able to enunciate an ethic, which if obeyed, life will be fulfilled at its highest and best. How is it that other kings have so constantly failed in human history? Because they have had to be dependent on others to make laws. I believe in absolute monarchy, provided we find the true monarch. He has never been seen in human history, except once; and this is the once. All other kings have either consulted their parliaments, or made laws despotic and devilish.

Here is a King Who went to the mountain and enunciated an ethic of which the whole can be written in two or three pages, and yet the proportion in which the world has found its way into light and liberty is the proportion in which it has obeyed that ethic. It is a perfect law, perfectly adjusted to human need. Who is there today who is not prepared to admit that if this nation could be remodeled and governed according to the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount, all our problems would be solved? Men outside the Church know that to be true. Men who charge us with being

other-worldly learned the ethic which they admire from the lips of One Who was the supreme other-worldly Man. From His lips there fell the perfect and final law for the government of humanity.

This King has as qualification not merely the Shepherd character and the prophetic gift; He was also a Priest, and He is a Priest in very deed and truth. A priest is one who becomes a representative of others, one who stands for all the rest, one who takes the blame of failure, one who stands in the gap. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" What is the answer of the ancient prophet? "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save... I have trodden the winepress alone." Figurative and wonderful language, foretelling the fact that finally the King takes into His own Person all the sins of the people. That is atonement. That is the mystery of the Cross. That is the infinite, incomprehensible, wonderful, eternal love that was manifested upon the green hill. This is my King, for He is my Shepherd. This is my King, for He is my Lawgiver. This is my King, for He is my Priest. The qualifications of His kingship are that He is Shepherd, Prophet, Priest.

One final word. I pray you mark the authority of Jesus, His Kingly position. He stood at the end of His days upon earth on the Mount of Olivet, with a little group of men surrounding Him, and He said, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." That was human speech in order to reveal to men the fact, and to fix their attention upon it, that in that Manifestation of the eternal principle of Divine government, all authority is forevermore vested in the Man Jesus. He utters the final word of life or death concerning every individual soul. There can be no approach to God save through Him. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Forevermore He pronounces the word "Blessed" or "Cursed" upon men, according to whether they bend the knee to Him, or reject Him. No man or woman can disobey His ethic without being lost. He is not a capricious King, commanding that men shall be destroyed, or that men shall be saved, to please His own fancy. He is the embodiment of eternal law. He brings men to the judgment bar of His high ideal; accept it, fall before it, worship it, and He will make you; reject it, and turn back to the base, the ignoble, the mean, the dastardly, the devilish and impure, and He will blast and blight you by the fires of infinite and eternal law.

We need have no anxiety about the Kingship of Jesus. We need not imagine for a single moment, in all the fussy feverishness of this neurotic age, that the Christian religion is going to fail. Christ cannot fail. All authority has been given unto Him. The thing He says is true. Nineteen centuries have passed away, and His word is living and abiding—searching, tender, gentle, healing even yet. He is God's King. All power is His as well as all authority. Read carefully the stupendous description of Christ in Paul's Colossian letter, and see how true it is. He can stay the progress of life, arrest the planet, and gather the souls of men about Him when and how He will. He is King.

He is King executing judgment in the world. What is judgment? Judgment is that which the world needs more than anything else. Judgment is absolute rectitude, the holding of the balances, the readjustment of things that are wrong. Judgment! Great word, gracious word, beautiful word, tender word! But you say, "I tremble when you say judgment." That is because there is sin in your life, permitted and retained. I am afraid of judgment, you say. That is because you are oppressing. The men who are oppressed thank God for judgment. Judgment is heaven's love at work, correcting all the things that are wrong. "He shall establish judgment in the earth."

Remember finally that His Kingly position is not merely that of authority, power and judgment; it is that of infinite patience. How often have we said—if you have not said it, be patient with those who have, and I stand with them—How slow are the goings of God. We stand in the presence of wrong and oppression, we look out over the city scarred and seared with wounds, we listen in moments of high spiritual inspiration, and we hear the sob and sigh of broken humanity, and we say, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Then the answer comes back, the longsuffering of God is His patience. Supposing we go back a little way. Had God moved to a swift issue twenty-five years ago, where would some of us have been who today, by His grace and patience, have seen the light and walk in it, and are hoping towards it, and looking for it? There is a process by which all evil might be crushed; but it could not be crushed without crushing all the possibilities of good. Let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. When the wheat and the tares have grown to their final development and manifestation, then the thunderstorm.

Thank God for the patience of the King, and part of His patience is this service. Shall we not find our way to the King, and, submitting to Him, bring our lives into harmony with the eternal and abiding things? Thank God for Him, on Whose garment and on Whose thigh is "a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Oh, soul of mine, bend to His sceptre, kiss His sceptre, put thy neck beneath His yoke, and find thy life and find thy liberty.

How Can A Man Walk With God? Conscience.

How Can A Man Walk With God?

Conscience.

To-night I have no text. If anyone is sufficiently under the power of tradition to feel that a text is necessary, then either of the twenty-nine verses in the New Testament in which the word "conscience" is found will serve, for conscience is my theme.

Conscience is that at which some men mock, and if we could but know the truth, while they mock they feel the power of it in their own souls. Conscience is that in deference to which some men today in England are suffering imprisonment rather than disobey the dictates for which they are prepared to die.

The power of conscience has been recognized by philosophers, poets, prophets, and all great leaders of human thought. Shakespeare expresses it in the words of Hamlet:

...the dread of something after death,

The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn

No traveller returns, puzzles the will

And makes us rather bear those ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of.

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;

And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought

Crabbe, in his Struggles of Conscience, has these lines:

Oh Conscience! Conscience, man's most faithful friend,

Him canst thou comfort, ease, relieve, defend;

But if he will thy friendly checks forego,

Thou art, Oh! woe for me, his deadliest foe!

Sterne, in Tristram Shandy, says:

Trust that man in nothing who has not a conscience in everything.

George Washington, in his Moral Maxims, wrote:

Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire, called conscience.

Or once again, and perhaps in the whole realm of literature nothing is found more remarkable than the words of Byron:

Yet still there whispers the small voice within,
Heard through gain's silence, and o'er glory's din;
Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod,
Man's conscience is the oracle of God.

What, then, is conscience? What is its value? What part does it play in life? How much heed ought we to pay to it? These and many other related questions are being forced upon us in this strange hour in which many things we have held as sacred are being postponed to a more convenient season. It goes without saying that in this pulpit, if we discuss the theme, it is in order that we may seek the Biblical light: thereupon; and to that I may add that our discussion will be concerned with the truth itself rather than with any application thereof.

As to the Biblical light, I shall begin by making some general statements. First, the word "conscience" is not found in the Old Testament; but the literature is full of the story of the operations of conscience in the human soul. Every record of a moral heroism is the answer of man to the call of his conscience. Every manifestation of immoral anger is produced by the activity of conscience. All the sobs of the penitent, and all the songs of the forgiven, are inspired by the working of conscience.

The word is found in the New Testament. Presently we shall discuss it. For the moment let us note some general things concerning its use there. According to the New Testament, conscience "bears witness," "gives testimony," produces action, for things are done "for conscience' sake." In the New Testament conscience is described as "good," as "void of offense," as "Pure," as "toward God." But conscience is also described in the New Testament as "weak," as "seared," or, more literally, branded with a hot iron; as "defiled," as "evil." Finally, the New Testament declares that conscience can be "cleansed."

There is no clear-cut definition of conscience in the Bible. Perhaps the passages which come nearest to definition are two. The first is to be found in the Old Testament: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord searching all the inward parts of the belly." In the New Testament the passage which always seems to me to come nearest to a definition of conscience occurs in the prologue to the Gospel of John: "The true light,... which lighteth every man." The spirit of man has many qualities, many quantities, many capacities, many activities. Among the rest it is in itself the lamp of the Lord. A light shines in every man.

Let us, then, consider, first, conscience in itself; second, conscience as to its place and power in personality; third and finally, conscience as to its place and power in society.

Our word "conscience" is almost a transliteration of the Latin word from which it is derived, conscientia, which means simply, knowledge with.

That definition, which is perfectly accurate, and perfectly justified, and beyond which, in some senses, we shall not be able to go, leaves us asking questions. The suggestion of the word is

evidently agreement. Necessarily, the next question is, Knowledge with whom or with what? Recently, a writer on conscience said: "The original connotation of the word implies a common agreement, a social idea shared by the community." Is that so? I think not. There is absolutely nothing in the history of the word to warrant the impression that conscience means a social idea shared by the community, and there is certainly nothing in Biblical use to warrant it. Conscience is ever referred to in a peculiarly individualistic sense; it is personal, it is lonely.

Therefore we ask again, What is the suggestion of the word? If it be individual, if it be personal, if it be lonely, how can it be knowledge or conviction with? The answer is that the agreement suggested is agreement between a man's understanding and the fact that he understands. Certain standards are postulated, use what terms you will to describe them. Speak with the old philosophers of the reason, the idea, the essential and eternal truth; or speak in the language of religion, of the law, of ethics, of truth—conscience is the sense of the soul that apprehends those things. The knowledge is true, whether I apprehend it or not; but when I apprehend it, that is conscience.

In process of time the word has been reserved for the moral realm, so that today almost invariably we draw a distinction between conscience and consciousness. Conscience is the recognition of good and bad, the distinction between right and wrong, a distinction created, not by laws written outside the man which govern his life, but by the inherent sense of his soul in the presence of these things.

But conscience in the Biblical sense is far more than that. Normally, conscience is always a warning against the bad and an urging toward the good. Conscience is that activity of the human soul which recognizes the difference between goodness and badness, which makes the distinction quite clearly to the soul itself, and which then inevitably urges the soul toward goodness, and warns the soul from badness.

Of the actual New Testament word, our word "conscience" is in every sense so trustworthy and accurate a translation that I need simply stay to remind you what that word is, and of the slight difference, which finally is no difference at all. It means seeing with; that is co-perception. Again, we have the supposition of agreement, and it always has a moral value, and the moral value is exactly the same as that to which we have been referring. So much for the words themselves as to their meaning and their use.

Now as to the fact. Conscience is an activity of the human spirit in the moral realm, and normally it is wholly beneficent. Conscience is that within the soul of man which reveals goodness as goodness, which reveals badness as badness. Conscience is that which calls things by their right name, refuses to allow any evil thing to be rebaptized by a name that robs it of its real meaning and significance. Conscience will call a lie a lie, and will not allow a man to escape by applying to it the high sounding name of hyperbole. Conscience cannot prevent a man saying the untrue thing, but it will trouble him. It cannot prevent him saying it, but it does prevent him thinking it. No liar escapes that voice. He can become so accustomed to it as to laugh at it. That is the ultimate tragedy. Nevertheless, conscience persists. It is always unveiling the truth, always unmasking a lie, forever warning the soul against the wrong of wrong and the peril of wrong. That is the terror of conscience. But it is always luring the soul toward the high and the noble and the true, always inspiring the soul to follow the light, to follow the gleam, to obey the truth. That is the hope of

conscience.

Conscience is an activity inherent in man by Divine creation, and active under Divine activity. This is the Biblical teaching from first to last, in both the Old Testament, in which the word is never found, though the idea prevails; and in the New Testament, in which the word occurs, and the idea is even more powerful. God never leaves a man alone in this world. That may be challenged, I know. Well, then, if it be true, as some theologians have taught, that there is a line over which a man may pass in this world and leave hope behind; if it be true that a man can in this life, and before this probationary state ends, cross such a border line and be as hopelessly lost as though he had reached the darkling void where God is not; if that be true—I do not admit it:—but if it be true, then remember that a man so abandoned of God has no conscience, he has no trouble about his sin, no pain of heart in the presence of it, no sense of the badness of badness. That agony of soul that is almost despair, when alone a man thinks of sin, is the touch of God in infinite mercy on the man's soul. That is conscience. Conscience is infinitely more, and I am inclined to say infinitely other than a moral sentinel threatening a man with damnation. It will do that also. But why? In order to turn a man back from the darkness toward which he is proceeding. The severer the voice of conscience, the more terrific its appeal; the more poignant the agony of soul, the surer the evidence of the unfathomable and unutterable love of God. The very agony of conscience is a call of love.

Therefore conscience is a capacity to create responsibility. Its warnings must be heeded, its promptings must be obeyed, or it will become weakened, it will not act with the readiness it once did; it will become seared as if branded with a hot iron; be insensitive to every movement in the spiritual world; it will be defiled, until, at last, it is made utterly evil. Only as men obey conscience can they escape from the perils suggested by these words of the New Testament.

Now as to the place and power of conscience in personality. All I have already been saying is pertinent at this point. Conscience exists in every human being, and originally it is good, pure, without offense, God-governed. Take a child naturally. I mean any child: that little child born in the slum, born in the East End slum, with all its squalor and its filth, where the street is the only playground; or born in the West End slum, which is all veneer and false refinement and godlessness—wherever a child is born, in that child spiritually the conscience is good, pure, without offense, God-governed.

The first exercise of conscience, of the normal conscience, is witnessing. It is that activity within the soul which is wholly personal. Yet the soul knows that, somehow, it is other than personal. Have you never sat down in the presence of some temptation, opportunity, duty, responsibility, and talked to yourself? Oh, no, I am not speaking now of that muttering aloud which is a sign of old age creeping on. I am thinking of something far profounder, of the moment when you think all by yourself, and you first say, Yes, that thing is wrong; and then you say, I do not really see that it is wrong. Then, still alone, you argue with yourself. That is conscience, it is you. Ah, but "the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord"; that is also God, God dealing with you. That is the first activity of conscience, witnessing to the difference between good and bad, and always urging the soul toward the right, and warning the soul from the wrong. Later on, when we have disobeyed the voice, when we have not followed the gleam, when we have refused to walk in the light, when knowing the good we have chosen the bad, then conscience still witnesses within the soul, still

emphasizes the difference, but now the supreme note of conscience is the condemnation of the wrong done. That is the haunting of conscience. The fame of Jesus spread over Galilee and Judæa, and there was a man on a throne who said, It is John, whom I beheaded, risen from the dead! What was the matter with that man? He was an Idumean; he was a Sadducee; he did not believe in resurrection. Ah, did he not? Conscience never let him escape from the wrong he had done, never allowed him to dodge the truth, that in a drunken debauch, to please a wanton woman, he had violated conscience. Conscience violated, wronged, battered, kept on; and when he heard that there was another voice sounding he said, It is John whom I beheaded, risen from the dead. That is a wholly beneficent activity, that is still God in the soul; and had Herod repented, Herod had been ransomed and redeemed. Conscience is always calling men back. Consequently, the first human responsibility in the matter of conscience is obedience, immediate, utter, and at all costs.

Yet there is another phase of responsibility. It is not enough that I shall obey my conscience; I must constantly seek the correction and readjustment of my conscience. Conscience may be weakened, conscience may be seared, conscience may be defiled, conscience may have become permeated and saturated with evil. Hence the necessity for the perpetual correction and readjustment of conscience. I must seek the light which comes from God Himself, in order that I may know whether the light that is in me—to use the marvelous words of Jesus—be darkness or not. Conscience may be out of gear, may lead a man astray. Who shall correct it? Not you, not I; no human being can do it; God alone is able to do it. I well remember once crossing the Atlantic without a gleam of sunshine from the first moment to the last. As we were nearing New York the captain said to me, "We have been going by dead reckoning, and we are a little out of our course. We have had no sun, and all our mathematical precision breaks down unless the sun shines." That is the whole point. Suppose you come late to business, my dear young friend, and the person in charge of your work says, "You are late." You reply, "You will excuse me; I am not late, it wants a minute to nine." The sharp reply is, "Your watch is wrong." Ah, yes, you must readjust your watch by Big Ben. Is that enough? No, Big Ben must be readjusted from Greenwich. Is that enough? It is if you remember that Greenwich is governed by the sun. Your conscience may get out of gear, it may be wrong. This is a most solemn consideration that every man ought to face in this particular hour. Your conscience may be misleading you. It may need readjustment, correction. That readjustment is a solemn responsibility. Prejudice must be denied. Pride must be impossible. Persistently, with regularity, sincerity, and determination, conscience must be remitted to the Son, to the essential Light, to the Light beyond which there is no light, to the Authority beyond which there is no authority, to the God Who is good, and from Whom the spirit of man proceeds. That spirit which is His candle must be held in His light, that a man may know whether or not his conscience is leading him astray. That is the human responsibility for conscience.

And so, finally, what is the place and power of conscience in society? If all consciences were normal, that is, good, pure, without offense, God-governed, there would be no difficulty in the matter of conscience. The conscience of each would be the conscience of all, and life would be a perfect harmony; and that is what will be when God has finished His work with the race and completed His victory. But it is not so today. There are seared, defiled, evil consciences in the world. There are also weak consciences, and these are in the majority. Weak consciences are such as are not clear in their apprehension of good and evil; they are not quick to discern. Weak

consciences are not keen of scent in the fear of the Lord; they are not quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord. Here is the cause of conflict and difficulty in the realm of conscience. Here is a man whose conscience says to him, I am bound today to enlist and fight. Here is a man who says, My understanding of the will of Jesus is that I cannot do it. Who is to judge? I declare to you that you cannot, and you have no right to do so. I declare to the man who says that his conscience forbids his fighting that he has no business to impose that conviction on the man who says that he must fight; and I declare to the man who feels the tremendous obligation of the present hour—there are multitudes of them, men whom we honor in proportion as they are true men—must respect the man who cannot share his conviction. There can be no judgment. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." That is a very solemn and searching word. This whole Biblical conception of conscience teaches us, first, that there must be respect for the individual conscience; and, further, that no attempt must be made to impose the law of personal conscience on other men.

However, every man who takes his stand on conscience should, at least, have the ability to give a reason for the faith that inspires him. Even though he may not be able to persuade another, even though he have no right to try to compel another to stand where he stands, surely he should be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him. During the period of stress—I do not mean this war now, I mean all life as we know it—the period of human imperfection, the period during which the temporary and imperfect expedient of government by majority is in force, during that time, minorities are to be respected. If history teaches anything, it teaches that over and over again it has been proved that the minority was right, and not the majority. I give it you as a personal conviction that in every commission that has considered a great question, from the time when the commission sat in the days of Joshua to decide whether they should obey God or not, the minority report has been the correct one, and not the majority. The majority said, There is the land, it is a great and wonderful land, but we cannot take it; there are giants and walled cities! That was the majority report. The minority said, We see the giants, and the walled cities, but we see God. I come right down from then until the very latest Royal Commission that comes to my mind, the commission on Divorce, and it is the same story of the rightness of minorities. At least, that should give us pause. It is a great thing when the multitude is right, but I am never going to be persuaded that anything is right because the multitude says it is. There must be in the heart of men who believe in this Biblical revelation a respect for minorities.

In any such consideration, however, the conclusion must be on the individual note. For every man the last stand of life is his personal conscience, that conscience being cleansed and void of offense. If taking that stand shall bring that man into the place of suffering, then let him suffer. A man who for conscience' sake suffers and whimpers, calls in question the reality of his conscience. "For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man... suffereth wrongfully." Let the man who suffers for conscience know that in all probability the whole conception of the Bible bearing witness, and all human experience bearing testimony, his suffering is winning a victory for the principle for which he suffers.

So whether this way or that way we may be doubtful at the moment as to what the path of duty is, one thing only matters—that every man shall be fully persuaded in his own mind as he stands before God. So may He Who cleanses human conscience give to us the conscience which is good and pure and void of offense, so that having done all things, we may stand.

The Coming Of The Word. The Beginning Of Sin.

The Coming Of The Word.

The Beginning Of Sin.

I do not propose to take any one verse in this chapter as text. It is complete in itself for all that it is intended to teach, and it is required as a whole if we are to understand that teaching. Of course it is impossible now to deal with all the details of this story, and for the purpose of this meditation it is not at all necessary that we should do so.

This chapter is supremely interesting because it is the first in the Divine library on the subject of sin. The fact of the existence of evil has already been thrice recognized in the first two chapters.

In the desolation described in the second verse of chapter one, we have a recognition of the presence of evil in the universe;—"the earth was waste and void." In the charge to Adam, to keep the garden, as well as to dress it, there was recognition of the presence of evil, not in the world, not on the planet, but in the universe. Finally, the sacramental symbol, the tree in the midst of the garden, was the indication of the possibility of disobedience, a recognition that the fact of human will admits the possibility of wrongdoing.

Thus we have seen the adumbration of evil resting on the first pages. The Bible does not begin with anything perfect, save that in the first verse it does indicate a perfect God, and a perfect primal creation.

Now we come to the chapter which deals with the beginning of sin in human history; and it is a microcosmic revelation in that it shows not merely the source of the poison, but also its method, its activity, and its issue.

We must remind ourselves again that we are looking at these things in the atmosphere of simplicity and not of complexity. I attempted to emphasize that by way of introduction last Sunday evening, when we considered the garden story, and saw man, perfect but not perfected, as to his being, his nature, his vocation, and his limitation. In all these stories we are away behind the complexities of life in the midst of which we live, dealing with the simplicity of elemental human character and nature.

We shall attempt to gather our thoughts around the three personalities revealed in this chapter; the personality of God, the personality of man, and the personality of Satan. These are taken for granted in the story that is told.

We are introduced in the beginning of the chapter to a clearly defined, yet mysterious personality, wholly evil, described here as the serpent. Then we are again face to face with man as we saw him in our previous study. And here also we are in the presence of God, described first by the name Elohim, and then by the title Jehovah Elohim.

Gathering our meditation around these three personalities, Satan, Man, and the Lord God, we shall attempt to examine the teaching of the story concerning the Satanic method; the Human experience; and the Divine attitude and activity.

Satan is here introduced to us as a personality doubly disguised. Neither the beast nor the Angel is clearly seen. "The serpent" appearing to Eve was not a snake in our sense of the word. "The serpent" means "the shining one," and the suggestion is that this temptation came through the medium of a person, new to the one being tempted; a person arresting, commanding attention, neither an angel of light in all the full glory of the revelation, nor wholly a beast of the field; but some strange personality in which there was the disguise of the beast and the disguise of the angel.

Those of you who care to follow the study, will take time to trace the word serpent, or shining one, through the Scriptures; noticing especially what light the New Testament flings upon it, and discovering the harmony of the teaching which the Bible gives concerning this person.

It is enough for our present purpose that we recognize that there came into that garden scene at which we looked last Sunday evening, one who was neither angel nor beast; a living one, for that is the real meaning of the word beast, not necessarily beast in our sense of the word, but a living one, somehow of the material, of that creation beneath man and under his government; and yet shining with a splendour that suggested other powers, subtle and supernatural.

Whatever the appearance may have been we are supremely interested in watching the method of the enemy. First, he questioned the goodness of God; secondly, he denied the severity of God; finally, he slandered the motive of God.

The enemy questioned the goodness of God, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" What I am about to say may appear a paradox, but hear me through. The question was not an inquiry; it was rather an attempt to convey a suggestion to the mind of the woman, by the method of interrogation. The thought suggested was that in that sacramental symbol of limitation, there was, on the part of God, an unkind withholding of something which might have been possessed by man. In the wilderness, long millenniums afterwards, I see another Man being tempted; and I hear this as the first temptation, "If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." We seem here to be very far away from Eden. I am glad of this, because it reveals the fact that temptation comes in varied garbs to man, but that essentially it is ever the same. Coming to the wilderness to the Son of God, the second man, the last Adam, the tempter said, "If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread"; and the suggestion was that if He were the Son of God, God ought to feed Him, that God was withholding something that He ought to have; He was asked to use the power of His Sonship to change the condition in which God had placed Him for the moment.

Thus, the first suggestion of the Tempter is that God is unkind, that restriction is unkind. This was not declared, not announced, not affirmed, but it was suggested. That is always the beginning of temptation. For the purpose of immediate illustration, instead of thinking over the vast expanse of diversified human life as we know it today, let us think back within our own personal experience, and we shall find that whatever form the temptation of sin takes, at the heart of it there is suggested the idea that restriction which forbids the thing we desire is unkind on the part of God.

That is the first suggestion of evil.

Evil is ever inconsistent. This is part of its method. A most contradictory word follows immediately. The woman said to the serpent "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." To that the Tempter emphatically replied, "Ye shall not surely die." If in the first movement, I have the questioning of the goodness of God, in the second I have the denial of the severity of God. The affirmation is a distinct negative of the emphatic declaration of God, made to this man when He put before him the sacramental symbol of the limitation of his liberty. This was a minimizing of sin, a declaration that disobedience will not have the effect which God has said it will have; and consequently, it was a minimizing of the value of holiness.

Thus while the first suggestion was that restriction is unkind; the second was that restriction is unreal. First, God is not good in that He deprives you of anything. Secondly, God is not severe, He will not punish you as He said He would if you take of the fruit of the tree.

Come to the wilderness again, and again the suggestion seems entirely different, while yet it is the same, "Cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee." In one case; Take this fruit and eat it and you shall not die. In the other; Cast Thyself down, and Thou shalt not die. It is the very same temptation in its central meaning, though the method of declaration is different, that there can be no punishment as the result of trafficking with God and disobeying His clearly defined law.

Finally;—and here we reach the heart, the most awful revelation of evil—the motive of God is slandered; "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." One almost trembles even to interpret so evil and awful a suggestion, yet this is it. It was the suggestion of selfishness and jealousy on the part of God. It was the suggestion that God was keeping man outside his own kingdom.

The motive of God was thus slandered as the enemy declared in effect; He knows that you will be as gods knowing good and evil; He is jealous, He would keep you out of your kingdom.

I come again to the wilderness and hear the Tempter saying, "Here are the kingdoms of the world; You ought to have them all; You ought to be able to possess them; but You cannot possess them because of Your loyalty to the will of God, because of Your poverty and Your lowliness, and Your refusal of the things that other men are seeking. Behold, I will give Thee the kingdoms of the world from which Thou art being kept by abiding within the law of Thy God." Again the principle is exactly the same.

The appalling thing is the element of truth in every lie that evil tells. In this third chapter of Genesis, I see the supreme illustration of that which Tennyson sang,

A lie that is all a lie may be met with and fought outright;

But a lie that is partly truth is a harder matter to fight.

Take each of these temptations, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" That was the truth, but it was the truth so framed and presented, with veiled suggestion, that it was the most monstrous lie. "Ye shall not surely die"; that was true, but it was the interpretation of death on

the level of the material; man sinning, did not immediately die after the fashion in which men use the word; that is physically only. "You shall be as gods, knowing;" you shall come into a kingdom from which God has excluded you. Directly as they sinned they came into the kingdom, and they knew.

Therein is revealed the subtlety of temptation. The Satanic method is that of uttering a partial truth, and suggesting a lie; of seducing men, by the uttering of a half truth, to yield themselves to that which is of the very nature of evil.

All this is testified to by common human experience. The first definite step of wrong to which we can look back, that act in which we overstepped the boundary within which we had walked in childhood, was taken after inward thought. That thought took the form which inspired to outward action of evil when we imagined that it was unkind of God to deny us something which we desired. Then followed the thought that violation of the law would not result in punishment. Finally, we persuaded ourselves that God was keeping us out of something which by right belonged to us, that He was unjust as well as unkind. In answer to such suggestions we acted in the hope of gaining our kingdom.

I hold in my hand a little book unveiling the soul of a man who gave himself to all the courses of evil. The tragedy of the book is that I am afraid it was not an honest book, as subsequent events proved. This man wrote:

I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. Desire at the end was malady, or madness, or both.

"I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation." As though he had said, there were things from which God shut me out by His law. I felt I had a right to enter into those things, and I went to the depths! And what depths they were; depths not to be named in the company of clean men and women. That was an illustration of the outworking in the nineteenth century of this selfsame principle. Here is the method of Satan. It is unkind of God to keep you from those things that lure you. God is not severe after all; you will not die if you disobey. You have a right to know, even though you break His law to gain knowledge. These were the suggestions of evil.

Intimately related to these and immediately following upon them, we find the human experience. I shall waste no time in distinguishing between the sin of the woman and the sin of the man; they were one. There are three things at which we shall look. First of all the sense. What was felt by this human being? How did temptation appeal? We have, so far, been looking at the temptation as it came from the enemy. Now let us try to feel the sense, the experience of the woman under temptation.

The woman saw three things; that it was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes; and that it was desirable in order to make one wise. Let me interpret the story of Genesis by the language of the mystic Apostle John. The lust of the flesh; she saw that it was good for food. The lust of the eyes; she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. The vain-glory of life; she saw that it was to be desired to make one wise. That was the threefold human emotion under the spell and power of which man capitulated in the presence of temptation.

The lust of the flesh; good for good. Get to the wilderness and watch the Man being tempted once again; "Man shall not live by bread alone."

Pleasant to the eyes; the lust of the eyes. "It is written Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"; Thou shalt not live by sight, but by faith.

"To be desired to make one wise"; the vain-glory of life. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," was the answer to the glamour of the kingdoms of the world, the vain-glory of life.

I have referred to the wilderness, for there we see temptation refused; but the human sense was the same; good for food, pleasant to the eyes, desirable to make one wise. There is no need for me to make application. Stand out in this great city and you have the whole picture; the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; the vain-glory of life; that is how man is attracted. Let James put all the story in brief words. "Lust, when it hath conceived...." That is the sense.

The second matter demanding attention is that of the act, the taking of the fruit. It was volition, acting in answer to the impulse of sight, wholly within the realm of the material. It was an act impelled by sight; by that which contradicts faith, or professes to be independent of it; it was an action of the will, inspired by wit, wisdom, cleverness, observation, sight.

It is wonderful how men can be deceived by their own cleverness. It is perfectly certain that two and two make four, but it may be unsafe to act upon that fact. If you are making your calculation, and say that two and two make four, your finding may be a blasphemy and a sin. Is it not true, then, you ask? Certainly; but supposing you ought to have said, two and two, and one; you have forgotten a quantity, failed to take account of another number; then your logical accuracy is your soul's damnation. You ought to have found five, and not four. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry; but God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee." "But God," that was the One he had forgotten. He said, two and two make four; and he tried to live upon the four, when it ought to have been five; the One was the forgotten principle. That demonstrated the madness of living by sight. That is the story of Eden. Volition by sight; action impelled by the cleverness of human calculation; turning from faith in the forgetfulness of the supreme One, Who makes the quantity in your clever four, the eternal five.

That volition by sight on the basis of the material expresses itself in rebellion against God on the level of the spiritual; and finds as the result life passing under the bondage of Satan. That was the first act of sin. Let us again take James' word. In dealing with the sense we said "Lust, when it hath conceived." In dealing with the act we say "beareth sin."

Then we come to the issue of it all, the first issue was fear. That is where fear comes into the Bible. What was fear? In this case and always, it is lack of spirit-strength. They were afraid, afraid of God! Why? Had God changed? No, they had changed. In the mystery of that spiritual life which was the essential, they had lost their knowledge of God, and consequently, they had become afraid.

Then followed shame. To me this is a very remarkable word, "they knew that they were naked." Let us disabuse our minds of some very paltry and incidental interpretations of that statement. They became conscious of the material, conscious of the flesh, and were ashamed of it; because

they knew that in that act they had violated the spiritual. "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" What made you conscious supremely of the material, and in your consciousness of it, what generated in your mind the sense of shame? That sense of shame is the one note of music here. It is the one gleam of light. If there had been no shame, how utterly hopeless it would have been ever to hope for their redemption. The shame is the evidence that there was still the opportunity for return. It was the sense of the material, and the fact that they had yielded to the temptation, surging through the soul. They were naked, and they tried to cover up the material because they had become ashamed of the sin.

The final fact was that of their utter and hopeless dejection. Not satisfied with the coverings they had woven for themselves of the leaves of the garden, they hid themselves amid the trees of the garden when they heard the sound of God going in the wind of the day.

For food the hand was stretched out, and in the grasping of that forbidden fruit there was loss of spiritual strength, which issued in fear. For that which was pleasant to the eyes the sin was committed, and immediately there surged upon the soul, not the pleasantness of life, but the shame of life. After wisdom the mind stretched out, and instead thereof there came the knowledge of good and evil experimentally, which was conviction of the most appalling madness and folly. Again we turn to James, and complete his declaration, "Sin bringeth forth death."

Briefly, let us notice the Divine action as answer to the Satanic method. The first suggestion was that God was not good, that He was unkind. God vindicated His goodness in His administration of justice. The very fact of His inquisition is a revelation of His goodness; He came to their level, and talked to them, asked them questions, allowed them to talk to Him, made opportunity for them to speak out the story of their wrong. The method of the inquisition traced the sin back to its source. I suppose we are always inclined to feel contempt for the man as he attempted to place the blame upon the woman, and even upon God, for the emphasis of his answer is this, "the woman whom Thou gavest me"; and we have the same feeling for the woman when she tried to plead her own weakness, "the serpent beguiled me." Ere you indulge in contempt for Adam or Eve, remember that God asked the questions and accepted the excuses. When in reply to God's question Adam named the woman, He turned to her and asked, "What is this thou hast done?" and when she replied, "The serpent beguiled me," He immediately turned to the serpent. In the form of whatever living creature he had disguised himself, that beast was then and there changed in its material fashion, and forevermore became a snake. You remember Ruskin's description of the snake, "that running brook of horror." Whenever men look upon a snake they feel the revulsion that sin ought to make in their minds. Sentence was pronounced at the center of the wrong. Yet there was a sentence upon the woman, full of grace; "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." The crowning glory of her being, motherhood, was to be sanctified through sorrow, travail, and pain. Do not let us be afraid of looking at that. What holy sanctification has come into the world, and been maintained therein by the awful and appalling mystery of motherhood through pain. There was a sentence on man, full of purpose; the highest dignity of thy being, toil, shall be gained through stress and strain and weariness. Side by side with that most sacred thing of all, the sanctity of the pains of motherhood, is the sanctity of the weariness of toil. If these things had been unnecessary to perfect men and women, they were necessary for the remaking of imperfect men and women. So that His severity was exercised in patience, and the direct lie of evil was answered.

Finally, His motive was unveiled in mercy. The devil had suggested selfishness as His motive, and that He answered in the word that prophesied the ultimate triumph through travail; the seed of the woman "shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel"; that was the prophecy of the ultimate good of the creature, and it revealed the love that motivated the whole government of God. Such was the Divine activity in the presence of sin.

This is the Bible account of the origin of the sin and sorrow of humanity. If you reject it, then what? From the facts of sin and sorrow and suffering you cannot escape. How do you explain them? Do you tell me that all I see in the world of sorrow and suffering and sin are parts of an upward movement; that gradually humanity is rising superior to these things and will leave them behind? Then, my masters, what an appalling and unutterable beginning there must have been! I cannot write over the beginning, if the beginning was such as is necessary to that view, "In the beginning a good God." I must put away the idea of good altogether, and write God down a monster. But again; if you tell me that this is part of an upward movement, where are the evidences in individual or national life of a natural upward movement apart from external influence brought to bear? I affirm there are no evidences. Wherever you find an individual rising, a tribe rising, a nation rising, it is not the result of a natural movement from within; it is the result of some external touch of quickening and redeeming power.

If I accept this story, what then? I have found the theory corroborated in all human experience, absolutely corroborated in my own. I know temptation did not come to me by way of a tree, because I do not live in a garden. I saw no shining one taking the form of a beast, or beast transfigured into the form of a shining one. Yet the temptation came in the same way, by the suggestion that God was unkind, that He was not severe, that He was not fair. My heart was persuaded to imagine that because I could not do this and could not go there, I was being kept out of some kingdom that I ought to be able to enter.

So temptation came, and the sense which resulted in my capitulation to the temptation, was the same, good for food, pleasant to the eyes, to be desired to make one wise; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the vain-glory of life.

It is the same story. You can change the garments and the environment, and the language, but the facts abide. The story is true to life in London today.

If this story be true, herein is the vindication of the Christian evangel. Herein is the inspiration of all Christian endeavor. Man as we meet him is not as God meant him to be. He is what he is as the result of temptation and sin. Yet thank God, over all the darkness and sorrow and sadness there is the word of God, the seed of the woman shall at last crush the head of the serpent and master evil, even though in the process His own heel be wounded.

Tonight we are not looking on in hope, we are looking back to accomplishment. We have seen the seed of the woman crushing the head of the serpent, to the bruising of His heel; we know the perfect Victor, Who is the perfect Saviour.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: Can A Just God Forgive Sins?

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To the ears of the Christian believer the question seems superfluous, and I think I may almost say it sounds grotesque. That fact notwithstanding, to vast numbers of men and women it is the most perplexing of questions, and constitutes the initial religious problem. If that question could be settled the whole attitude of their life would be altered.

The question is full of interest at the present time. It exactly expresses the mental attitude of the scientist today. Thirty years ago the scientist was not in the humor to ask questions; he was making affirmations, declaring quite reverently, quite devoutly, quite honestly, but with absolute dogmatism, that God, if there be a God, is unknowable by man. That is not the mood of the scientist of today. He is on the much saner and safer ground of asking, not necessarily in this language, but to this effect, and in this spirit, Has man anything to do with God? He may not yet write God with a capital G, indeed he may not use the word God at all, but he is recognizing that behind all material phenomena there is something, and he is now inquiring honestly, reverently, with profound earnestness, what relation has man to this fact?

The question is an interesting one for another reason. It indicates the point at which theology becomes religion or fails to become religion. Theology is the science of God, the truth concerning God, the facts concerning God so far as they have been discovered and recognized. Theology is not religion. I believe it to be quite necessary to religion, but it is not religion. A man may be theological and irreligious. The point where theology merges into religion, or else declines to be religion, is where the question is asked, Has man anything to do with God?

The question is interesting in the third place because it challenges the Bible. When I use the word challenge, I do not mean it attacks the Bible. The Bible assumes an affirmative answer to that inquiry. The Bible never argues for the existence of God. It takes God as granted. From its first stupendous and majestic word to its last glorious refrain it is a book the theme of which is the relation between man and God, defined, enforced. So that when I ask the question, Has man anything to do with God? I challenge the Bible. I do not contradict it, but I inquire as to its accuracy.

This initial question, which is a serious question to hundreds of men today, is of interest because it exactly expresses the mental attitude of the scientist today, because it indicates the point at which theology becomes religion, and because it challenges the Bible.

Now faith—and by faith I mean for the moment the attitude of mind of the Christian man—recognizes the right to make such an inquiry. It also insists that the right to inquire involves the responsibility to consider the evidence. I want to make that quite clear to my friend who is inquiring. You have a perfect right to inquire. Do not believe any preacher, or any man who claims to be a prophet, who tells you that you have no right to ask questions. You will never find bedrock for religious faith until you have learned how to ask questions. It is equally true that the right to ask questions involves the responsibility of considering the evidence. You have no right to ask

questions and then imagine that there is no answer. You must listen to the answer. You are not bound to accept it, but you must listen to it. That is to say, the man who asks a question does by such action indicate the fact that his mind is open, and that he desires an answer. If not, then the man who asks questions is a trickster, and we have no time for him, and no patience with him. When Jesus stood confronting Pilate, and Pilate asked Him questions, Christ said to him, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee?" Is your agnosticism first hand or second hand? It is a very important question to begin with when you are going to ask a question. If the question you are asking in the presence of the Christian religion is a question you have heard in Hyde Park, and you repeat it glibly because you think it sounds clever, then, in the name of God, I have no time or patience to deal with it. But if the question comes up out of the agony of your soul, as a sob out of your inner life, out of a tremendous, passionate desire to know the truth at all costs, then, because the hand of my Lord has been upon me in ordination, my business is to try to help you. I may not have gotten very far, but as far as I have come I want to show you the way. You remember Tennyson's "In Memoriam," and how he describes the fight of doubt for faith. I know it is an old story, but listen to it again:—

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.
I know not; one indeed I knew,
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true:
Perplexed in faith but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.
He fought his doubts and gather'd strength
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,

And dwells not in the light alone.

From that I take the one line I endeavored to emphasize, "He would not make his judgment blind," which means not merely that he would not accept a dogma simply because the preacher declared it to be true; but also that he would not accept his agnosticism as final until he had tested it by every power of his mind. If you ask questions you must be willing to weigh the answer.

Suffer me still another word in the preliminary stage. Let those who are honestly inquiring recognize the difficulty of faith in the presence of their inquiry. By that I mean to say there are those who are so certain, so irrevocably certain of God, that it is very difficult for them to argue for Him or for man's relation to Him. I remember my dear old father saying to me over and over again in days when I did not so perfectly apprehend his meaning as I have come to do since, in my own experience, I am far more sure of God than I am of myself. Now, if you are an inquirer you can hardly understand that. Even if you think it false and that we are very foolish, please to remember that it is a conviction, that it is a sincere conviction, and remember also that if the man of faith has to be patient with you, you must learn to be patient with the man of faith. All that is very preliminary, yet I have taken time to say these things, because they indicate, so far as I am able to do, the attitude of my own mind toward the man who is inquiring in the spiritual realm.

In attempting to deal with this question I do so as giving evidence rather than as pleading a cause. Twenty-five years ago I came as a young man into a place of almost unutterable darkness about spiritual things. Two inquiries came to me with forceful power. First, is there a God after all? Second, and if there be a God, have I any personal relations with Him? Has He any personal, direct, immediate relationship to me? I am bound again to pause a moment to say there are, perhaps, some of you here who have been Christians for years who never came to such a crisis as this. I can only say, be patient with those who have been through it. Without undervaluing the quantity or quality of your faith, I still believe that what Tennyson says is true: the man who faces the spectres of the mind comes to find a firmer faith his own, not firmer than yours, but firmer than the faith he had before he faced the spectres of the mind. I want to say as I look back to that period of the eclipse of faith—I think that is a correct description of what took place in my own mind—it was not caused by anything moral. I say that only in order to intensify the testimony I desire to bear to any who may be facing similar inquiries. I believe that Dr. Torrey affirmed that infidelity and immorality are always closely allied. That may be true in some senses, but I do not believe that all infidelity springs from immorality. I do believe that infidelity will work out into immorality, but that is another matter. So far from these inquiries arising out of any moral delinquency, they came immediately following the most definite experience of spiritual blessing that ever came to me. The eclipse swept over me in a day, and hung over me for months, even for two years. I had been brought up in a home where my first slumbers were wooed by songs full of the music of the name of Jesus. The whole atmosphere of my home life was an atmosphere permeated by confidence in God. I never learned to doubt when I was a child. I had no chance. Then suddenly, and apparently without cause, these inquiries came. Is it true that there is a God? And if it be true, has that God anything to do with me? It is the second of those questions which is the real theme of our talk together tonight. The first is intimately related to it, and I choose to begin there.

My answers to these inquiries in each case are of the simplest. I propose to give the answers that came into my own experience, and to tell how they came. These answers do by no means reveal the final structure of faith. That is not yet completed. There are a great many things I am not yet sure about; things about God, and about man, and about Truth. The structure is in process of building. The final exposition, the ultimate explanation, I am still waiting for. These first answers constitute the rock foundation upon which faith is being built, and the first stone of the structure of faith laid upon that rock foundation. Twenty-five years ago, when the light came, I began again the life of faith, finding a firmer faith my own, and I did so, first upon the rock foundation of a simple conviction; and from that conviction came a first deduction, which deduction was the first stone in the structure of faith, which is not yet finished.

What, then, was that first piece of rock that I found underneath my feet in the day of faith's conflict, in the day of faith's eclipse?

This: The consciousness of myself and the universe became the conviction of God. After a process of inquiry, and of attempt to restate the doctrines of the faith in such terms as would enable me to accept them; and finding myself utterly unequal to the task, there came a moment when, standing alone on the earth in the midst of the universe, I seemed to come to the consciousness of myself and of that universe. That consciousness compelled me to affirm, It is infinitely easier in the presence of myself and the universe to believe that there is a God than to believe that there is not. It was not much to stand on, but it was a bit of rock under the feet of a man who had been sinking. You say, You demonstrated nothing. That is true, but I had a conviction. You cannot demonstrate a great many things of which you are absolutely sure. You are sure that the woman you call mother is your mother, but you cannot demonstrate it. I did not get mathematical demonstration, but I got conviction, and came at last to say: Here am I, here is the universe. I cannot believe that there is no God! There is a God! It was not much, just a bit of rock; but, oh, God, what a bit of rock means to a man who is drowning. I started there. If you can get a bit of rock under your feet, never mind the temple; never mind the Church; never mind the theologians; put your feet down and stand squarely on it.

Now, I should like to describe the process by which the conviction came. That is not easy, but I propose to attempt it with all brevity. That conviction came as the result of a look back, a look around, and a look on.

A look back to origins. I came to realize that everything results, and to ask from what? You remember Mr. Hastings' old riddle. Here is a hen, and here is an egg. The hen results, from what? The egg. The egg results, from what? The hen. Go on, and when you have solved that you have solved the Christian religion. I only quote it to remind you that everything results. A chair. It results from what? From man's handiwork. On what? Trees. Trees? How did they come? They resulted. From what? Leather, what is that? There were animals once. Whence came they? They resulted. From what? Get on back with your journey.

That is all very childish, is it not? But put your hand where you will; put it on your own thin-veined wrist. It results from what? All that is the beginning of a journey. I do not care how far back you go, through the long centuries, the infinite mysteries, all the evolutionary processes. I do not care anything about them. Back, back. Oh, where did it all begin? The only answer that ever brought satisfaction to my soul is, "In the beginning, GOD." Yes, I can believe that. If you say mighty atom,

or tell me about a protoplasmic germ, which John Ruskin translates for me and reminds me that the Greek term being translated means, first, stuck together, I ask, What was stuck together? And who stuck it together? I am not playing; my soul went through all this in agony twenty-five years ago, and no theory satisfied my reason until I said, at the back of all results, as originating cause, is God. That was my first bit of rock.

Then there was a look round, first on the vast, then on the minute. On the far-flung splendors of the starry night, on the minutiae of beauty in a handful of lichen, of moss, of dust. I looked out on life, not human life merely, but on all life, and I saw changeless change, and changing changeless-ness: seasons regularly moving, life repeating itself true to type, types by inoculation with new types making new mysteries and new wonders, but everywhere order, and everywhere law. I said, Who presides over all this? A double-faced something? Nothing; it all happened? I cannot believe that. Then I found that the Christian writings declare of man, the final manifestation of life, In God he lives, and moves, and has his being. I came to see that the infinitely great God is seen in the infinitely little thing, in the dust; and in the infinitely vast thing, the universe; and I said, Yes, that is easier than any other proposition.

Then I took a look on. All mystery; the light is not clear even yet, but the rhythmic order of things convinced me that at the last "that cannot end worst which began best." There is a goal somewhere, to be reached somehow, "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves." I am not talking theology now. Theology discusses how the goal is to be reached. The conviction of the goal brought certainty in my own soul of the one presiding Being.

Then I began to ask about the Being, and I discovered certain things from which I could not escape. Let me only name them: wisdom and might, beauty and beneficence. I came to the conclusion that all these things must ultimately rest in the Being who "spake and it was done," through Whose power all things are upholden, to Whom as the final Goal all things forever move.

Now a few brief words as to what was the result of that finding. I passed immediately to the second inquiry, Has man anything to do with God? I do not think that inquiry can long remain unanswered if God be believed in as a personal Being, having in His own being wisdom, might, beauty, and beneficence. You see, I am trying to omit all the terminology of theology. I am not speaking of righteousness, holiness, love. All these things are there. I am speaking only of the things I found apart from the revelation of Scripture. When the first conviction came to me, I came to the second conclusion, a deduction from the conviction. Because God has everything to do with man, man must have to do with God. If man is of God, and in God, and for God, as a part of creation, it is utterly unthinkable that God, having everything to do with man, man could have nothing to do with God. That was the first stone laid upon the rock foundation.

Think of the process by which I came to that conclusion. Two propositions and deductions made from them. The first proposition. Man is the crowning wonder of creation. Theories and processes matter nothing in this respect. I am not saying what my conviction is, but it does not matter at all whether man was created by a definite, immediate act within an hour from thought to completion; or whether man emerged through long processes. I care nothing. Here is the fact. Man is the crowning wonder of creation. We are all agreed on that, the agnostic, the so-called infidel, the inquiring scientist, the Christian preacher, the most indifferent man who looks about him at all. We are all in agreement. From that proposition I made this deduction. The Creator cannot be

unmindful of the crowning glory of His creation. It is unthinkable that if this whole vast and minute universe has come from God, and is of God, and moves toward God, that God should be careless of the highest, most wonderful thing in all creation. You remember the psalmist's inquiry, "What is man that Thou takest knowledge of him?" The psalmist's query and our conclusion may be put together, but they begin at the poles asunder. The psalmist started with revelation, which declared that God is mindful of man and visited him. On the basis of revelation, he inquired what relation there was between man and God. "What is man that Thou takest knowledge of him?" Revelation says, Thou art mindful of him. In the presence of that statement the psalmist asked, What can man be? Our question is not that. Our question is, Has man anything to do with God? We affirm the relation, and we demand to know whether the man who is related has anything personal to do with God.

God is, and He has something to do with man. He sustains him. And man has something to do with God, man receives his life from God, he lives and moves and has his being in God. Now comes the real point of inquiry. Has God anything to do with man's doing, his thinking, his habits, his morality? I submit this to you. The crowning glory of man is moral. I am not quite so sure that I carry you all with me when I say that, nevertheless, I repeat, the crowning glory of man is moral. Is it not so in a little child? You love the child when it is not immoral, but non-moral, before it has come to a knowledge of right and wrong. A child in its mother's arms is not immoral, but it is non-moral. How you watch the day when it begins to be moral, to know right and wrong, making its own choice, defying you. I shall not be misunderstood when I say there is a charm in the defiance of a little child. It needs to be guided, for defiance is but the exercise of the supreme function of life, will. It is the hour of dawning beauty. You have watched all the physical development and the opening mental power, as it looked up and inquired, talking in language no one but a mother could understand; but the crowning hour comes when the child becomes moral. What is true of the child is true of the nation. I read this morning a very remarkable article in the Daily News on W. J. Bryan; one of the most inseeing articles, if I may be allowed that word, that I have ever read. In the course of that article I read these words:

His appeal is always to the moral conscience. The name of the Almighty is as familiar on his lips as it was on the lips of Mr. Gladstone, and it is the highest tribute to his sincerity that employing it he never gives you the sense of canting. The truth is, he lives in an atmosphere out of which our politics have passed. No one today in the House of Commons ever dares to touch the spiritual note. When we say that oratory is dead, we mean that faith, which is the soul of oratory, is dead. Oratory fell to earth when Gladstone and Bright ceased to wing it with spiritual passion. Our wagon is no longer hitched to a star.

The proportion in which that is true is the proportion in which this nation has lost its greatness and its grandeur and its glory. The proportion in which the highest spiritual emphases of morality are reckoned out of court in the legislative assembly is the proportion in which we are under eclipse. I put it that way, for God grant that the touch of ultimate spiritual morality may be felt yet again in all our national life. You know it is true. Morality is the supreme thing, the greatest grandeur in the child and the man, in the people and the nation.

Get back to the beginning. If the child, the man, the people, and the nation, are the creation of God; and if it be unthinkable that He is not interested in that which He has made its crowning glory,

can it be thinkable that He is not interested in the highest glory of that which He has created, which is moral? To me it is utterly unthinkable.

Let me repeat the three things I have tried to say. First: It is easier for me to believe God is, than that He is not, when I stand in the midst of the universe. Second, I cannot believe that, man being the crowning glory of creation, God can be unmindful of him. Finally, when I look on man and know that the ultimate, most wonderful thing in him is morality, I cannot believe that God is careless about morality. Consequently, I believe that this God, Whom I have never felt with the touch of sense, upon Whom these eyes can by no means look, can reveal Himself to man, and I believe man can receive the revelation. The ability in each case is obligation. In the case of God the obligation is fulfilment.

I have attempted to go over the ground which I trod, not thus easily, but in tears and in pain and anguish, twenty-five years ago. I bring to you, in conclusion, a word from the most ancient of the Scriptures of our Bible, "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace." My friend, inquiring at this the very beginning, the threshold of religious problems, let me say to you in all sincerity, that no man of intellectual power can rest in agnosticism. He may find himself there, but he cannot find rest there. The man who says, I am an agnostic, in an agony, and is inquiring, will find his way through; but the man who is smug and satisfied, and imagines he has reached the highest plane of intellectual greatness because he is an ignoramus will never arrive anywhere. There is no rest for an intellectual man in agnosticism. I charge you, if you are making inquiry, put your blood into it, put your life into it. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." Do not stand on the edge of great questions and indulge in the dilettante fooling with them. Get down to the business, and so far as you have ability, ask honestly, persistently, determinedly. It was Eliphaz who said to Job, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." Job was agnostic, but never rested in his agnosticism, and he said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." Someone says, That is exactly where I am, where I have been for a long time. Now, you must be patient with me as I bring you the Christian message. "No man hath seen God at any time. The Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." That God, infinite, mysterious, present everywhere, came "out of the everywhere into the here"—to borrow reverently George Macdonald's description of the baby—and tabernacled—may I be more blunt in my translation, 'pitched His tent' among us, "and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Man, my brother, there is no escape from God. Get to Him through the Son and you will find rest. You say, What of the problems of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, theologies old and new? In God's name do not begin with these things, but begin with the God of Whose existence you are convinced. Put your feet on the one bit of rock, and you will find it not so small as you thought it was; but rather the strong and mighty rock of ages. Then begin to build the superstructure of faith by handing over your life to the light so far as it has come to you, to the truth so far as you have come to see it.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: Can A Just God Forgive Sins?

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It will be admitted at once that the possibility of the forgiveness of sins has been believed in and proclaimed by the Christian Church for nineteen centuries.

False deductions have been made from the central doctrine, and false presentations of that doctrine in the process of the centuries. By false, I mean untrue to the earliest teaching of Christ and His apostles as that teaching is recorded for us in the Scriptures of the New Testament.

Perhaps the most glaring of the false deductions was that which was known as the Antinomian heresy, which was that because God has in His grace provided perfect redemption it does not at all matter how a man lives.

Perhaps the supreme illustration of what I mean by false presentations was to be found in that most remarkable movement which preceded the reformation, and had its head center of exposition in Tetzl, who preached that by certain payment on their part men might receive indulgence to sin. These false deductions, and false presentations, as well as the simple proclamation of the New Testament declaration, do prove that the idea of the forgiveness of sins has obtained in the Christian Church from the beginning until now.

This belief is based on belief in the government of God, the conviction of righteousness, and the consciousness of sin.

The idea of forgiveness of sins cannot be present to the mind of the man who does not believe in the existence and government of God. Therefore, all we said last Saturday night must be taken for granted as we take up this second problem of the religious life. God is, and God governs. If you deny these things then you deny sin, and this inquiry as to whether God can forgive sins is absurd. Unless we find common ground in this premise we certainly shall not find a common resting place in the conclusions that I shall draw. To admit the government of God is to be convinced of His righteousness, and that conviction is ever followed by the consciousness of sins. Do you quarrel with me at that point? Do you question the accuracy of what I am now taking for granted? If for a moment you grant the idea of righteousness, measure yourself by that idea, and tell me if you have realized the ideal. I do not care, for the moment, whether your father was a sinner, or whether Adam fell. I care very much about these things on other occasions and in other directions, but not now. See God, and righteousness, and immediately, if you are honest, you will say I have failed. I think there is no man here who knows what righteousness is, who has had the first faint idea of the ideal of perfection and of beauty, but who is compelled to say, While I see it, and believe in it, and admire it, I have not realized it. That is the consciousness of sin. It may bring no terror to the heart, but it is there. It is only as these things are recognized that we make such an inquiry as the inquiry of our subject tonight. Taking these things for granted, I inquire, Can a just God forgive sins?

Seeing that the forgiveness of sins is a Christian doctrine, it is necessary that we inquire what the doctrine really is that the Church teaches. I think you will agree with me that this is a fair proposition. Suppose I had no Bible and no Christian body of truth, and no Church which for nineteen centuries had been proclaiming the possibility of the forgiveness of sins, and someone should suggest a question such as this, I should have to approach it from a different standpoint altogether, and answer it in a different way. Even then I should say to my questioner, What do you mean? There are two or three words in your simple question that I want you to define. What do you mean by "just," by "forgiveness," by "sins"? Exactly as I would ask these questions if this inquiry came to me without the light of the Christian revelation, seeing that the idea conveyed by the inquiry is a Christian idea, I must still ask these questions. What is the Christian meaning of the terms "just," and "forgiveness," and "sins"? Let us then proceed along three lines. We will define our terms. We will state our problem. We will attempt to formulate the answer of the New Testament.

First of all, for the definition of terms. The terms are very wide, having racial applications. We will, however, endeavor to confine ourselves to the individual applications. Understand from this moment I am attempting to deal with these questions as though I were the only man involved in the inquiry, as though I made the question pertinent to myself, and entirely and absolutely personal, as though I said, Can a just God forgive my sins? In dealing with the inquiry in that way we will first define our terms. I am going to attempt a rapid definition of words used and ideas conveyed in that question.

First, the words, just, forgiveness, sins. What does the word just mean? If you take the word that lies behind it, and examine it, and attempt to discover, as you always will do if you are a careful reader, its root significance, I am not at all sure that you will not at first be somewhat surprised. The word out of which this comes is a word which means seeing. Let me suggest another word, observing. You say at once that these two words mean the same thing, and yet the second of them is constantly made use of in a slightly different sense from that in which the first is always used. Seeing suggests a view. Observing also suggests a view, but it often means more. For instance, you say to a boy, Here is a rule of conduct, observe it; by which you mean to say, You are not only to see, but to act in harmony with the thing you see. So if the root idea of the word translated just be seeing, its use means acting in harmony with the thing seen. Just means activity in conformity with things as they really are. Can a God who acts in conformity with things as they really are forgive sins?

Let us be as simple and childlike with our next word, forgive. What does forgive mean? To let go is the simple meaning. It suggests the idea of unlocking a prison house so that the prisoner is set free. The sense in which the word is used always means to treat sins as though not committed, to let them go, blot them out, pardon them, forgive them. Let me repeat my inquiry in the light of these definitions. Can a God Who acts in conformity with things as they really are treat sins as though they had not been committed?

For the third time let us follow this line of definition. From the Christian, Biblical standpoint it is almost more difficult to define words translated sin or sins in our Bible. I am content to take the word that is most often translated sin, which suggests the simplest fact in the mind of the writers. It is a word which means "missing the mark." It is the word used of a man standing with his rifle and

shooting at a bull's eye and missing it. It is a word which indicates the failure of the man who sets himself to realize, and never realizes. He misses the mark. To fail, whether wilfully or unwittingly, is, in the broadest sense of the word, sin. Let me make my inquiry again. Can a God Who acts in conformity with things as they really are treat missings of the mark as though the mark had not been missed? That is the problem of this inquiry.

Once again, take the two ideas suggested here for definition. First, the idea of the justness of God. What is justness? We have already said it is seeing things and observing them in the sense of being true to them. Let us now put it this way. Justness in God is undeviating conformity to truth, in Himself, and in His dealings with all others. Take the phrase forgiveness of sins and the idea suggested by it. What is meant by the forgiveness of sins? The treating of failure as nonexistent, and the treating of the one who fails as though not having failed. That is forgiveness in the Bible sense. If you try to understand what forgiveness means by what you do with your children you will never understand it at all. If you begin to argue that just as you say to your child, I forgive you, so God does with the sinner, you do not begin to know what the Bible teaches about the forgiveness of sins. That is not the forgiveness of the Bible. You cannot make the sin of your child as though it had not been, and that is what the word really means. Someone is saying, You are making the problem more difficult than it seemed. I hope I am. In order to persuade ourselves that God can forgive, we are losing the amazement that ought to fill the heart in the presence of the meaning of the Cross and His infinite grace in forgiveness. The thing that first overwhelms me is the problem. Then the thing that overwhelms me more is the solution of the problem which the Bible teaches and for which the Christian Church really stands.

Having spent so much time with the definition of terms, let me now try to state the problem. Here are certain self-evident things that I submit to you and pray you to follow me, and not to be afraid. As to God. To treat sin committed as not committed is to act out of conformity with truth. That is unjust. As to the universal order. To treat sin committed as not committed is to establish and confirm sin. That is unjust. As to the sinner. To treat sin committed as not committed is to establish and confirm sin as a power in the life, and that is unjust. Now, the problem can be stated by only first making a fundamental affirmation. A just God can forgive sins only by basing His judicial action upon absolute truth. If the forgiveness of sins means the violation of truth, then God can never forgive sins. Can God so deal with sin as to enable Him to forgive it on the basis of absolute truth? You say to me, Of course God can forgive sins, because He loves. I say, Yes, but then in God's name remember what love is. Love is not a sentimental softness that overlooks the poison in the blood. Love is not an anaemic weakness that weeps over cancer and refuses to cut it out. There is nothing we are suffering from today more than this weakened conception of the meaning of love. We begin to understand love only when we understand that at its heart, at its center, are purity, and eternal righteousness. Let me say the thing as I feel it. If you could persuade me that forgiveness, which simply says, Oh, never mind, say no more about it, pass it over, could satisfy God, then I say it could not satisfy me. It does not get to the depth of my own being. It does not touch the heartache and anguish of my conscience. Before I can know forgiveness as experience in which I dare rejoice, there must be, somehow or other, blotting out, canceling, making not to be. I tell you honestly that it does not seem to me that there can be a solution, until I open my Bible and begin to read it.

Now I want—and as God is my witness I feel the almost appalling difficulty of it—I want to state the Christian answer to this great inquiry. I do not propose to state the answer in the terms of my own ideas of how God might do this thing. I will tell you why. It is honest for me to say only what I have already said, that there appears to be no solution. What, then, does Christianity affirm? The Bible teaches the forgiveness of sins. The Church has taught the forgiveness of sins. We are still—in proportion as we are true to the doctrine of the Catholic Church for nineteen centuries, and to the doctrine of the Word of God—proclaiming the possibility of the forgiveness of sins. Upon what grounds?

First of all, let me attempt in a very few sentences to state the process by which God can forgive sins so far as that is stated in the New Testament; then let me speak of the provision He has made for sinning men who turn to Him, and, finally, of the great proclamation which is entrusted to us in the presence of sin.

What is the process? We must begin where the New Testament begins. First of all, there is presented to our view a Person, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ; or, to give Him the full and dignified title with which the apostolic writings abound, and which culminates all other suggestiveness, the Lord Jesus Christ. What is this Person according to New Testament teaching? God incarnate. I know perfectly well that you may say that is not granted. I am not dealing with the question as to whether this Person is God incarnate or not, apart from my Bible. That is an inquiry which every man may make, but that is not the one with which I am now dealing. All I now say is, and I say it quite carefully, if that Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not God incarnate, then some part of the New Testament is untrue. It is quite impossible, absolutely impossible, and those of you who differ most widely from my own position will agree with me here, to retain your New Testament and deny that. You may deny it, and deny it honestly, but if you do, then there are certain parts of the New Testament which you say are not true. I respect your conviction, though I do not share it. I want you to see this. I stand asking what the Church has taught for nineteen centuries upon the basis of Biblical revelation, and my first answer is, that, first, a Person is presented to me, God incarnate. I see Him living. I see Him dying. I see Him rising.

Then, in the second place, will you remember that this New Testament teaches that this Person is a manifestation. In His life there is manifestation of righteousness. In His death there is manifestation of substitution. In His resurrection there is manifestation of victory won in and through and out of death.

Now, a manifestation is never all. A manifestation means that all cannot be seen, and therefore it must have a medium through which men may come to see it, though they cannot see it all. The moment you speak of this Person as a manifestation, using, if you will, the actual phrase of your New Testament, "God manifest in flesh," you recognize the spiritual and essential fact behind the manifestation, which is more than the manifestation, which is superior to the manifestation, of which the manifestation is but the unveiling, the revelation.

Therefore, finally, this whole fact revealed in Jesus is inexplicable. I cannot know all the life, even though I see its lines and lights, and movements. I cannot know all the death though I see its suffering and brutality and tragedy. I cannot know all the resurrection, though I see its triumph and hear its song. Behind the manifestation is a great spiritual and essential fact, yet not a contradiction to the manifestation. That is to say, I am to interpret the spiritual, essential, eternal

facts in the terms of the manifestation. When I look at the life of Jesus I see righteousness incarnate, and in that manifestation I learn, as nowhere else, the holiness and righteousness of God. In the same way, when I look at that death interpreted by all the declarations of the New Testament, I see death for others, death in which He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, in which He was the Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world. In that death I see manifestation of something in God, infinite, mysterious, overwhelming, appalling, which cannot be shown in any other way than by such a death as that. In the terms of that human death I come to understand something that lies back in Deity which I cannot fully understand, but which apart from this death I never could have dreamed of.

Looked at on human levels, what was this death of Jesus? Suffering undeserved. Suffering on behalf of others out of pure love and compassion. At the back of it, what is there? The suffering of God out of pure love on behalf of those who do not deserve such suffering. You say that does not explain it, and I admit I have never yet had it explained. It lies beyond me, surging upon my spirit in billows of unfathomable love that almost break my heart, yet eluding the grasp of my mind. I come back to the terminology of human manifestation, "By His stripes we are healed. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." That old prophetic word was carried out to the letter in the human life of Jesus. But this was manifestation in order that human eyes might see the infinite and unexplored reaches of the pain of the being of God. So I see through Christ the activity of righteousness, of expiation, and, finally, of victory. In His life God's righteousness revealed. In His dying, God's expiation by suffering of man's guilt unveiled. In His rising, God's victory over all the forces of darkness made manifest.

What is the result of this according to the New Testament teaching? Think for a moment of the provision. The New Testament declares that there is now forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Christ, that by the shedding of His blood remission has been made. Blood is the symbol of what? I veil my face, and take my shoes from off my feet. God knows I do not. So much as blood says, I know. Blood shed is not life lived, but life laid down. Blood shed is not merely the strength of a great ideal. It is the bruising and battering of that ideal. It is agony, and pain, and defeat. That is the symbol. God help us to tread reverently when we go beyond it. The issue of sin realized in God, gathered into His heart, to His own suffering, to His own pain, to His own wounding. That is the ultimate significance of the old word in the Hebrew economy, "In all their afflictions He was afflicted."

The New Testament never teaches that a man named Jesus tried by dying to persuade God to love. The New Testament never teaches that God was impassive, and never felt pain, while some person other than Himself endured it, in order to appease Him. There is no such teaching from Matthew to Revelation, from Genesis to Revelation. The New Testament does teach—and quarrel with all I say, but hear this—"God was in Christ." Every word He spoke was a word of God, and every work He wrought was a work of God, every tear He shed was a tear of God. The very blood He poured out was in that sense symbolical of the very blood of God. So that we are in the presence, not of a unit out of the vast multitude of humanity, pure in himself, trying to deal with God so as to make God love men. We are in the presence of God, in the One in Whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally, that men might see a suggestion of it, and come to an understanding of it. In Him I see how God has taken hold of guilt, and made it not to be, curing the pain in His own pain, ending the issues in His own agony, taking all the responsibility and the

mysterious harvest into His own nature and bearing it. Thus a God of absolute truth, without violation of truth, makes sin not to be, and thus forgives the sinner. Whether these things are so or not, these are the things the New Testament teaches. These are the things for which the Christian Church has stood, and must stand, if she would remain. The doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is a doctrine that a just God can and does forgive, not by putting the issue upon someone outside Himself, but by gathering up into His own heart and life and being the weight of sin, by suffering in Himself.

Consequently, the proclamation of the Christian evangel is that God can be just and the Justifier—mark well the condition—"of him that believeth in Jesus." What does that mean? To believe in Jesus is to return to the government of God at the point of His grace. Never miss out government when you think of grace; never miss out grace when you think of government, for in Christ the two have met. In the universe, measureless to us but measured in God, in the pain and passion of God my sin has been canceled, made not to be, but put away. Now God says, By the Man Whom I have ordained, through Whom the eternal things are manifest, in Him put your trust. That is a command. Master, "what must we do, that we may work the works of God?" said the cynical men of His day to Jesus. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." That was His answer. It is the first word of the new law. Believe. A man says, I will not believe. Very well, then there is nothing for you but the harvest of your own wrongdoing, the hell to which sin sends you. Remember, if you will proceed along the path of your own disobedience all that it involves here and forever of darkness and death is the issue of refusing to believe. I am talking in London. I am talking to men and women who know the evangel. You cannot begin there for the dark nations of the earth until you have preached the evangel. I am talking to men who know it. God comes in Christ, through Christ, revealing His righteousness, His expiatory suffering, His victorious life over and through death.

Grace there is my every debt to pay,

Grace to wash my every sin away.

That Grace is government, and God says, Now get back into My government and yield yourself to Me by obeying Me at the point of trusting Me. I come at the point of His grace and I find not merely the value of the Cross, but the virtue of the resurrection, and ultimately the victory of a realized ideal. If a man will not, then to refuse is to remain unforgiven. God is a God ready to pardon. I love that word of the ancient prophet, because ready does not mean merely willing, but fully equipped, to pardon.

So I come to Him in Christ, I come to Him with my sin—or put it in the plural my sins, I bring them all to Him—and I say, He cannot be just and forgive them unless He can find a basis for His judicial action in absolute truth, He cannot treat the sin as never committed unless He can put it away as to its virus, and as to its issue. That is what He has done, and because He has done it, He can pardon sin.

My final word is this. The experience of men for nineteen hundred years witnesses to the truth of the Christian proclamation. I know my sins are forgiven. If I say that all alone you must at least believe me to be honest in my conviction. When I multiply my testimony by the company in this house tonight who can say the same; and when that company is multiplied through this city and

land, by the numbers who are singing the song of assured forgiveness, and when that testimony is multiplied for nineteen centuries, in which men have confessed their certainty of the forgiveness of sins; you have a weight of evidence that is overwhelming. You dare not charge all the men who have made this claim with hypocrisy or with lunacy. Through nineteen centuries men have sung this song, and the testimony and burden of it has been, "I know my sins are all forgiven. Glory to the blessed Lamb."

Hear me again. The evidence of life rising to higher levels of righteousness witnesses to the truth of the experience. The man who really knows his sins forgiven is the man who rises and begins the life of conquest over sin. If a man say his sins are forgiven, and goes on deliberately sinning, he is a liar. The language is vigorous, but it is Johannine, that of the apostle of love. The man who tells me he knows his sins are forgiven, and continues in sin, is lying. That is not the normal experience of the Christian Church. If you deny me this affirmation, I ask you, Where have you been living? And on what have you been looking? You may quarrel with the Salvation Army; you may not like their flag and their big drum and their Hallelujah; but their one message is the forgiveness of sins, and the perpetual result of their preaching through all the years of their existence has been that sinning men have been saved from the power of sin. The demonstration, I repeat, of the truth of the experience affirmed is in the remade lives of men and women who go out to sin no more. I do not mean that forgiveness brings immediate victory. I do say that forgiveness creates the passion not to sin, and inspires the endeavor to be obedient, and presently realizes absolute victory.

So if we are sinners and know it, there are two things concerning which we need to be most careful. First of all, to remember that God sets up the Cross of His Son as the trysting-place to which we are to come, and the place at which we are to turn our back on wilful sin. Then we are to remember that by that Cross uplifted, or by that for which it stands—all the infinite mystery that lies behind it—it is possible, to use the apostolic language, for God to be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. So when all has been said, we sing the old song, and know the answer is ours as we sing:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee!

Let the water and the blood

From Thy wounded side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure;

Save me from its guilt and power.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: What Does God Require Of Man?

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This inquiry is the outcome of those which have preceded it. If it be granted that man has to do with God, the inquiry is natural and necessary: What does God require of man? If it be granted that God can forgive sins the inquiry is urgent and vital: What does God require of man? If it be true that I have to do with God, what does God require of me? If it be true that when I realize I am a sinner He can forgive sins, what does God require of me?

The inquiry is of supreme importance because it deals with fundamental matters; it gets back in human life, behind the incidentals, to the essentials; down in human life beneath the ripples on the surface, to the still majesty of the underlying tides. It is the first question of all life. It asks: What does the God in Whom I live and move and have my being, and Whose are all my ways, in Whose hands my breath is, require of me—His creation, over whom He still maintains the right of government in the material, mental, and moral realms? Because the inquiry deals with the foundations of life, it deals also with the whole superstructure.

The answer to the inquiry is contained in the writings which—accepting the facts of God as dealt with in our first study—interpret His will for men and His methods with them. These writings declare the requirements of God in terms of the ideal, and in terms of the actual. In God the ideal and the actual are identical. He is what He ought to be. All you postulate of Him which is true and high and noble, He is. In man they are not identical. The ideal and the actual are not the same in human experience. A man who was transparently honest before he met Jesus Christ and after, said, "To me who would do good, evil is present," by which he meant that the ideal was seen but the actual was out of harmony with it. On the other hand, Jesus said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." In that claim the ideal life is expressed in the words, "things that please Him," and the actual in the declaration, "I do." Jesus alone in human history united the ideal and the actual in His experience.

The ideal and the actual are not identical in human experience. Therefore I propose to answer our inquiry in two parts. First, the ideal requirement of God; second, the actual requirement of God. His actual requirements are that we may at last fulfil the ideal; but we look at them in separation in order that we may understand what the requirements of God for men really are.

The ideal requirement of God. I want first to state the terms of revelation, and having done so to consider the revelation of the terms. I go back to Deuteronomy, and to Micah; and then coming to the New Testament, listen to Jesus. My quotations are selected from the great books of authority. Deuteronomy is law in the terms of love. Consequently, it is the supreme book of authority in the old covenant. Micah was pre-eminently the prophet of authority. From these two great books of authority I take my selections from the Old Testament. Then I turn to the New, and come to Matthew, because therein I have the King, always speaking in tones of absolute and final

authority.

In the first we find what the law says that God requires. In the second we find what grace and truth say that God requires. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In these quotations from the law by Moses, and from grace and truth by Jesus Christ, we shall find the terms of the revelation of the ideal requirements of God.

I go back to Deuteronomy and find that God requires of man that he should love Him and serve Him, and keep His statutes. I come to Micah and I find that God requires that man should "do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God." In each of these declarations the word "require" is used in our translation, but the Hebrew words are different. They both convey the same idea, but there is a difference of emphasis. The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy means, This is what God inquires; this is what God asks. When Micah wrote he used another word with more fire in it, more force in it, which we may safely translate, This is what God insists upon. When the law was given it declared, in our simplest sense of that word, what God requires. But the law having been broken, Micah, calling the people back from their sins, used another word with another emphasis: God insists. The things that God insists upon are that a man shall walk with Him, shall do justly, shall love mercy. In the New Testament I find the requirements of God in words of Jesus, spoken in answer to a cynical inquiry by a lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets." Everything that Moses and Micah said lies in this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.... Thou shalt love thy neighbour." Hear one other word of Jesus in answer to our inquiry. It occurs in the middle of the manifesto. More criticism has been spent on it than on any other of the sayings of Jesus, criticism of an order more perilous than all higher criticism, criticism which attempts to accommodate the great words of Jesus to the low level of the living of people who think they are Christians and are not "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." What does "perfect" mean? The exact opposite of sin. Sin, the word most commonly used in the New Testament, means missing the mark. The root idea of perfect is hitting the mark. "Ye therefore shall be perfect." You shall not miss the mark, but hit it. You shall not fail, but succeed. You shall be all God meant you to be. Whether that is a promise or a command does not at all matter. Whether the mood be indicative or imperative is of no consequence. If it be a command, all His commands are promises. If it be a promise, all His promises are commands.

But what is the revelation of these terms? That God requires from every human being perfection, the realization of the ideal. That is God's first requirement. God expects me to be what He made me to be. That is perfection. God does not expect us to be angels, because He has not given us the angelic nature. He expects a man to be a man. He expects a woman to be a woman. He expects a child to be a child. There is nothing more out of harmony with the will of God than a child that ceases to be a child before it has ceased to be a child. There is nothing more out of harmony with the will of God than a man who does not come to manhood when he does come to manhood. Nothing insults high heaven more than a woman who does not become a woman even when she becomes a woman. Your perfection and mine will be as different as are our different lives in outward expression; as identical as are our two lives in life principle. I am not attempting to deal with the outward expression. In a congregation like this there are as many different expressions as

there are people; but the inner essential thing in all life is likeness to God, that is, perfect love and perfect truth. Under the command of these two, all the things of the life are to be realized, the artistic, the mechanical, the business; whatever is in us to be realized at its profoundest and its best. That is the will of God.

The passion for perfection is common to humanity. You cannot find a healthy being but that has a passion for perfection in some form. The only people who seem afraid of the word are Christian people. I am constantly asked, Do you believe in Christian perfection? It is a most absurd question, and I am always inclined to reply to it with another question, Certainly I do. Do you believe in Christian imperfection? The passion for perfection is in every healthy soul. Did you ever know a boy or girl who did not dream dreams and see visions of what he or she was going to be and do? Perhaps you in your folly sneered at them, and hindered them. That was a Divine passion in their heart, a desire to reach the goal, to hit the mark. The passion for perfection is indicative of the possibility of perfection. No man ought ever to be satisfied to be less than he is intended to be in the economy of God. God expects that every man shall be that. If you are satisfied with anything less than that, God is not. He requires, He asks, said the ancient lawgiver; He requires, He insists, said the thundering prophet of the closing days of Hebraism, that man shall walk with Him, do justly, and love mercy; that men shall realize their own lives, and realize them by living in harmony with Himself. That is what I mean by the ideal requirement.

All, so far considered, is related to our first inquiry, and the answer concerning man's relation to God. The require-merits of God thus understood result in the conviction of sin. Can anyone stand in the presence of his own life, the ideal possibility, and say, I am perfect? You say the instruments were imperfect to begin with. I am not discussing that at all. I admit it. If you admit it, you admit the thing I am asking you to admit, failure, sin. Because the instruments were imperfect to begin with, all the activities have been imperfect. When a man says, If that be the Divine requirement, I have failed, then he begins to ask the new question, What are the actual requirements of God for me? If there were nothing other than what I have been saying, then where are we? Where am I? Where are you? If the demand of God is realization of my life, and perfect realization, I have failed. When Pilate looked into the eyes of the Jewish priests, and said to them, "What I have written, I have written," he was giving expression to his own obstinacy, but he gave expression to a fact far more profound than he knew. What you have written you have written, and you cannot unwrite it. I cannot undo the failure of the past. There lie behind me the years that the cankerworm hath eaten. There lie behind me wasted opportunities. I care nothing if you tell me there have been no vulgarities in your life. My reply to you will be, What do you mean by vulgar? If you are measuring yourself by the ordinary man you may be a very respectable man, but if we measure by heaven's requirement, we are guilty sinners, every one, vulgar with the awful vulgarity of those who are cultured mentally perchance, but have no commerce with heaven and no traffic with God. No man sees what the Divine requirement really is without having to say, I also have failed, I also am a sinner.

Therefore our inquiry must now follow the terms of the actual. What does God demand of such a man? What does He require of me, a sinner? This brings us back to our previous inquiry. I will but state in briefest words the sum and substance of that message thus, God has provided plenteous redemption: forgiveness of sin through the value of His passion, and the dynamic for purity through the victory of His resurrection. In the light of that, what does God require? Come to the terms of the

revelation, and once again I take you back to the words of Jesus, startling words as we read them. The cynical men of His own age asked Him, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?"—What does God require of us? Christ replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent," or, as I think it should always be read, "That ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." That is what God requires of the man who has failed. Those of you who are not perfectly and experimentally familiar with all the meaning of this will admit that it appears a very surprising thing for Christ to say. Listen to it in the light of much preaching which we hear, "This is the work of God, that ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." There are those who tell me that I am to be saved by works. There are others who say, There is nothing to do, only believe. Christ says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe into Him Whom He hath sent." Who is right, they or He? If we say at once, as we do, that He must be right, then what did He mean? He meant unquestionably to claim that He was not King merely, but Saviour also. Realizing the fact of their failure, knowing their sin, He said, if they would believe into Him they would work the work of God. That is to say, God provided in Him for their cleansing, for their new birth, for a gift of new life in the energy of which they would be able to do the thing which God would have them do. Therefore, the initial responsibility is that men believe into Him. Why do I say into? Those familiar with the Greek New Testament know that the preposition eis, whenever used with the accusative, means motion into. It is not believe on—you can believe on Jesus Christ and lose your soul. You can believe everything about Him that was ever written and perish. To believe into Him is to hear His claim, and, knowing it true, to obey it. This is what God requires of men who have sinned and failed. Having made perfect provision whereby sin can be canceled and paralysis energized, God's requirement is that we believe into Him Whom He hath sent, that we yield ourselves to the Christ.

The revelation of these terms is that all a man needs for his remaking is provided in Christ Jesus. What does God require of man? That man take what God has provided. "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In that passage John uses two terms, receive, and believe, and shows that they are synonymous, thus suggesting that whichever helps us most we are free to use. Those who receive Him, who are they? Those who believe into His name. What is it to believe on Jesus? To receive Him.

God requires from me perfection. That is, the ideal. I cannot give it Him. What does He do for me? He provides for me in Christ forgiveness for my sins, and power to go and sin no more. Now what does He require of me? That I take what He provides, that I crown the King He presents, that I trust in the Saviour He sends, that I receive the life He places at my disposal. That is the first requirement for the sinning soul. God presents the one all-sufficient Saviour, revealing the pattern, providing the power, and commanding men everywhere to repent and believe into the Son Whom He hath set forth.

The requirements of God in grace are man's fulfilling of His requirements in law. The actual requirements are realization of the ideal requirements. Am I putting these two things into opposition to each other? By no means. Has God ever given up His ideal requirement for you or for me? Never. Does He by Jesus Christ consent to take something less than perfection in our life? By no means. Is the work of Jesus Christ that of asking God to excuse and let into heaven multitudes of incompetent souls? By no means. Was the work of Jesus Christ the making of a

provision by which a man can be hidden out of God's sight in his impurity? By no means—a thousand times, by no means. Did Jesus Christ come to fling a cloak of righteousness over the filthiness of my rags? By no means. A cloak of righteousness, a robed righteousness, surely yes. I can still sing what my father sang.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed

With joy shall I lift up my head.

The robe of His righteousness is never placed upon the filthiness of rags to hide them. The work of Jesus Christ is not that of bringing into the Kingdom of God men who are paralyzed and incompetent; but men made perfect. That is the meaning of the mission of Jesus. God's actual requirement is that man shall believe on Jesus, in order that His ideal requirement that man shall be perfect may be fulfilled. Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy." Was anything more stupendous than that ever written? That is what God requires. Nothing less than that will ever satisfy Him. He begins with the actual requirement that we submit ourselves to the perfect Saviour Whom He has provided, in order that that Saviour may realize in us all that we failed of, and all that we have lost.

I pray you remember, however, that in the first submission to Christ the perfect ideal is not realized at once. Saul of Tarsus was smitten down on the road to Damascus by the Lord of love and life, but thirty years after that, writing one of his most beautiful epistles, he said, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Thirty years of Christian experience and discipline; of fire, nakedness, peril, sword, and yet he had not yet attained, was not yet made perfect. God deliver us from the idea that by some mechanical dispatch we can come into all perfection of Christian character. I pray you remember this perfect ideal is not realized at once, but the perfect force necessary for the realization can be received at once. Before you cross the threshold of this house, before you leave Westminster Chapel, you can have all that you need for the ultimate. If Paul said, I have not yet attained, in the same letter he said, "To me to live is Christ." He had all the forces, as is indicated in the words, "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I persecute toward the goal." You say, That is wrong. Oh, no, it is quite right. When Paul said, "I persecuted the Church," he used exactly the same verb as we have translated press. He meant to say, all the zeal and passion and earnestness which he had put into the business of persecuting the Church he afterwards put into the business of attempting to reach the goal, and be what God would have him be.

I am perhaps speaking in the presence of men and women who have been Christians more years than I have been in the world, and who in the time of their Christian relation have in all probability been far more loyal to their Lord and Master, and far more simple in their faith than I have been, but these are the men and women who will be the first to say, We have not yet attained, we are not yet made perfect. I am also speaking to men and women who have only recently started the

Christian life. Let them remember that they possess everything that is necessary for ultimate perfection, because, having received the Christ, they possess Him in all His perfection, and in all His power; and at last when His work is done they will be like Him, presented faultless before the throne of God. Without these forces perfection is impossible. With them perfection is assured.

Hear me as I utter this last word, applicable alike to those who never yet have answered this actual requirement of God that they should yield themselves to Christ, and to those who longest have been following Him. Belief into is the preliminary, and perpetual condition for the realization of perfection. That is to say, belief into Christ is not an act, it is an attitude. I believed in Christ, you tell me, forty years ago. I care nothing at all about that. Do you believe in Him now? That is the question. I am not undervaluing your past experience. Thank God if you have a day about which you sing, a place to which you take pilgrimage. Some of us have neither day nor place. There were years in my Christian life when it troubled me that I could not put my hand on a day or an hour or place. It troubles me no more. Yesterday is gone. Jesus saves me now! Belief is an attitude, and there will never dawn a day upon our failing, sinning, yet trusting souls when we can afford to cease our trusting. There never will come a day so bright in our experience that we can walk wholly by sight, never a day in which we shall be able to cease to believe into the Son of God.

That is God's requirement. The actual requirement includes the ideal requirement. When I believe into Him, what does it mean? I will begin on the lower level. I shall love my neighbor as myself. I am silent because of the rebuke of it to my own soul, and to the souls of all such as are honest. You and I have no right to sing of our love to God unless it is expressed in our love to men. If I see my brother in need, and shut up the bowels of my compassion against him, how dwelleth the love of God in me? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is the ideal, and belief into Christ means that it can become and will increasingly become the real.

It may be as well in conclusion to leave out of view those ultimate reaches of the Divine requirement, never forgetting them wholly, and begin in the presence of His Christ set forth as God's righteousness, set forth as God's perfect Saviour for sinning and failing men. Let us believe into Him, trusting Him for absolution, trusting Him for power, and so looking into His face tonight in full abandonment, know that the Christ of God will perfect that which concerneth us. In order that it may be so here and now,

Jesus, I will trust Thee,

Trust Thee with my soul:

Guilty, lost, and helpless,

Thou canst make me whole.

As we believe into Him, we fulfil God's first requirement in order that at last we may fulfil His final requirement.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: The Opposing Forces Of The Religious Life--The World

The Problems Of The Religious Life: The Opposing Forces Of The Religious Life—The World

The world, the flesh and the devil constitute the trinity of forces which oppose the religious life. These are distinct from each other, yet they act in perpetual concert, so that any two of them are powerless apart from the third. I say this at once in order that we may realize the folly of dealing with the world alone, or with the flesh by itself, or with the devil as unrelated to both. Given the world and the flesh, minus the devil, and there is no opposition to religion. There is nothing inherently evil in the world or in the flesh. The flesh and the devil apart from the world cannot successfully oppose the religious life. The devil needs the media of the world to appeal to the flesh. The devil and the world apart from the flesh cannot make any appeal to the spiritual essence of man. The world can appeal only to flesh. The world plus the flesh, plus the devil, equals conflict. In dealing with the world as an opposing force to the religious life we shall consider, first, the world in itself; second, the world as opposed to religion; third, the world in relation to the flesh and the devil; and, finally, the victory over the world.

We begin, then, first with the subject of the world itself. There is a great deal of nonsense talked about the world and worldliness. A great many things are called worldly that are not worldly, and a great many things are never called worldly that are of the very essence of worldliness. We need to be very careful to understand what is the real meaning of the term "the world" in the New Testament when it is used in such sense as to warn us against it. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Such an apparent contradiction should at once compel careful investigation of the sense in which the world is a peril and an opposing force. Perhaps one suggestive illustration may be worth a great deal of argument at this point. I know men who denounce others for worldliness because these others play cards, and go to the theater, and dance. I am not now asking whether these things are worldly or not, but rather insisting that men who do none of these things may be as worldly as men who do them all. Worldliness does not necessarily consist in these things. I repeat, therefore, there is necessity for great care as we approach this subject.

I begin with the world in itself. Of course, you understand I am speaking strictly within the limits of the use made of that word in the New Testament. The word has become almost part of our everyday speech. The word "cosmos" originally meant simply order. It was then used to describe the whole of the universe because of its orderliness and its beauty. So that the world itself does not at all suggest evil. It does not hint at disorder but announces order. It has in it no suspicion of ugliness, but breathes the very spirit of beauty. That in itself is enough to make us pause and consider what is meant by the world, and how the world becomes an opposing force. When a child speaks of the world it thinks of the earth on which we live, and up to a certain point, quite accurately so thinks. May we not say that the word stands for the facts and forces of which man is

conscious in his everyday life. That is not a perfect definition, because there are multitudes of men and women who are conscious of facts and forces in everyday life which lie beyond the material. The world means the facts and forces of which material man is conscious, the facts and forces of which material man is a part, the facts and forces of which material man is or may be master. In childhood some of us were taught that the earth and the things therein were divided into three kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, animal. These things have two qualities in common. They are all material, and temporal. Material, that is appreciable by the senses. Everything of form. Everything of sound. Everything of fragrance. Everything of color. Everything of flavor. Everything of tangibility. The things that can be seen and heard, and smelled and tasted and handled. All that the senses can know is the world. I hope you have imagination, then the vastness of this breaks upon you, for it is a great world.

These material things are also temporal, transient, passing; none of them abides. The form and the color change and fade and pass. Sound, though it be the most discordant or the most harmonious, ends. The fragrance passes away. The flavor dies. Nothing on which man has ever laid his hand is lasting. All the rocks are crumbling. Temporal, transient, passing.

The world, then, is the sum total of things material and temporal. I feel the utter inadequacy of the statement in certain ways. One might stay to speak of trees and plants and birds and beasts and men and cities. I leave all that to your imagination. All this is of God. This very material world in the midst of which we live is so marvelous that we are driven to the conclusion that it is easier to believe it to be the work of God than to believe that it originated in any other way. I take up my Bible and go back to the story at its commencement of the origins, and amid all the poetry and marvel of that ancient story I read this, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." That is true until that hour. If you think of the world in its most material sense, if you think of the world in the simplest sense, there is nothing inherently evil in it.

Then in what sense can it be said that the world is opposed to religion? Let me answer that inquiry by quotation of one passage written by Paul in his letter to the Romans, "They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator." That is worldliness. It is when a man does that that the world is an opposing force to religion. Let us think of that a little more closely. What is the rational process. Given an object—I do not care what object, sun or star, bird or animal, tree or man—given an object, say a tree for the sake of illustration, behind that tree is a thought. Nothing ever has been, so far as human observation has any right to declare, but that the deed, the act, the fact, was preceded by a conception, an intention, a thought. Begin with the simplest thing in the wide world. I take in my hand this glass—an object. Behind it is a thought. It was seen before it was made. It was intended before it was constructed. Or take the most splendid and matchless building that your eyes have ever seen—the whole thing was thought before it was erected. What is true there we believe to be true everywhere. Here is a tree, a flower, more wonderful than the most splendid cathedral that man ever raised, far more mysterious than the most magnificent piece of machinery that man ever constructed. We may call it argument from design. I know it is the fashion to declare that argument exploded. I say it has never been answered. The rational process, then, is this. Behind the object is a thought; behind the thought is a thinker, for you cannot have a thought without a thinker, a mental mood without a mind, a conception without a conceiver. The rational process in the presence of the world is to pass through the object, sun, star, river, animal, to the thought behind it, and through the thought to the thinker, and in the presence of the thinker to bow

in worship and service.

What, then, is the irrational process? To take the object, sun or star, animal or tree, and worship it, and serve it. That is the meaning of Paul's argument concerning the Gentile world. Instead of worshipping the Creator they worshiped and served the creature. They stayed in the realm of the things seen, and did not pass through them to the actuality of the unseen things. That is worldliness.

Let me put it in another way. Worldliness consists in dealing with the material, without recognizing the spiritual of which the material is an expression, dealing with the things that are temporal without recognition of the things that are eternal, living in the midst of the transient without having commerce with the abiding. When a man begins the religious life he still feels the pull of the world, the temptation to deal with finite things, without placing upon them the measurement of the infinite, without weighing them in the balances of eternity.

Let me attempt to illustrate this in a yet more immediate and practical way. There may be worldliness in religion, in education, in commerce, in pleasure. I take these only as illustrative. The fact may doubtless be illustrated in many other ways.

There are two manifestations of worldliness in religion. One is ritualism, the other rationalism. A man may be a ritualist, and not be worldly. I want to grant that at once. It is high time we were beginning to learn the lesson of being perfectly fair to men from whom we most profoundly differ. A man may be a ritualist and not be worldly. I have known men who through form and ceremony and splendor of ritual have commerce with God. But when a man observes so many days, so many ceremonies, and the observance being over, he turns back again to all the things that are contrary to the will of God, that is worldliness in religion. Worldliness in religion is the idea that things that are of the world, beauty of form and color, and the fine fragrance of incense, constitute religion.

Worldliness may manifest itself in religion as rationalism. By rationalism I mean contentment with present conditions. When religion deals simply with the present conditions of men and women it is worldly in the extreme. Sometimes this type of religion charges those of us who believe in God and heaven and hell with being other-worldly, by which it makes unconscious confession that it is worldly. It is of the dust. It begins and ends there. Anything that attempts to deal with men simply on the level of this world, the betterment of human conditions, pure humanitarianism, is worldliness in religion. Hear me again. If a man have commerce with God and the eternities, he cannot be indifferent to the condition of his brother men in the slum. Let there be no misunderstanding of my position. In proportion as a man really lives the spiritual life, and has dealings with God Himself, he is hot and angry in the presence of all human limitation; but when a man attempts in the name of religion to deal simply with these conditions, and forgets the infinite and eternal, his religion has become utterly worldly. Worldliness in religion begins and ends in things that are material and sensual and passing.

Then there may be, as there is, worldliness in education. Education which deals simply with knowledge of the material and temporal, and never puts on these things the measurement of the infinite and eternal, is worldly education.

There may be worldliness in commerce. Someone says, That goes without saying. I pray you, then, remember that there may be the spiritual in commerce also. What is worldliness in

commerce? Commerce that is based on a passion for possession of goods to the neglect of God. Jesus Christ has given us an accurate picture of it. It is not a flattering picture; but you can hang it up in London today, and thousands of men, if they are honest, will see their own portrait. The rich fool, the man who says, My lands are increased, my wealth is increased, what shall I do? "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." He fed his soul on goods! That is worldliness in commerce, and ultimately it means selfishness, greed, oppression. There is worldliness in pleasure. That needs no argument. Pleasure in itself is not wrong. God made no half measures in His universe. When He made a fish and gave it fins it was that it might swim. When He made a bird and gave it wings it was that it might fly. When he gave me a laughing apparatus it was that I might laugh. I have not said a more religious thing than that tonight. God made man for pleasure. The ultimate intention of God for man is pleasure. When Jesus began that great Manifesto of His Kingdom which scorches and burns, He used the word "happy." I read in my Bible that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," but I never read that He will stop laughter, pleasure. Worldly pleasure is abuse of the senses by forgetfulness of the spiritual.

These are rapid and almost haphazard illustrations of what the word really means. Though you never go to the theater, you may be a very worldly man. Though you sit regularly—I will speak of no other place than this—in Westminster Chapel, and sing the songs, and give to the collection, you may be an absolutely worldly man. What is a worldly man? I ask once more. A worldly man is one who lives as though this were the only world. He may think about another. He may tell you in conversation that he believes in another. He may recite the creed on Sabbath, beginning with the august and stately measure, "I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, in business, at home, in pleasure, he lives as though there were no God in the universe. That is worldliness, though he recite the creed regularly and sings all the songs of the sanctuary. It is not the singing of songs, or the recitation on the creed that disproves worldliness. Worldliness is life lived in the dust to the forgetfulness of Deity, life that has no sense of the infinite and eternal, that does not bring the measurements of eternity and lay them on every half-hour.

Now I see how the world is an opposing force to religion. When it so engrosses my thought and attention as to make me unmindful of spiritual things, when it so obtrudes itself on my attention as to capture all my thinking and make me forget God, then it opposes religion. We have to face the fact that it is a very real force in opposition. "I see the sights that dazzle"—how often we have sung it, and how awfully and appallingly true it is!

For a moment we must stay here to notice the connection between the world, the flesh and the devil, because only by so doing can we understand how it comes to pass that the world opposes religious life. It ought to be the most natural thing in all material things to discover the presence of the spiritual. It seems as though it was impossible for the Man of Nazareth to touch anything of the earth but that somehow it flamed with the glory of the heavens. Yet He was quite natural. We hardly like to use these words about Him, yet you will understand me. A more artless and unaffected man never lived than Jesus of Nazareth. He loved the flowers, the gorgeous lilies of His own land. He looked at their beauty, and what did He say? Your Father clothes them, and "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Children, how He loved them! Yes, but

what did He see when He saw a child? The angel beholding the face of God. So you may pass through all His life and you will find a Man with feet firmly planted on the earth, of the earth, belonging to it, and yet different from the earth, Master of it, King of it. Whenever He touched it He revealed by His touch its relationship to the boundless spaciousness of eternity, in which forevermore He was at home. He stood on the plains of Judaea, and talked to men, and He used their own language. Their eyes looked at him. Their hands handled Him. There He was, and yet He spoke of Himself as the Son "in the bosom of the Father." That is the utter, absolute opposite to worldliness.

Now I ask this question. How comes it that the world which ought everywhere to reveal the heights, the world which ought to suggest God, makes me forget Him? Man's attitude in the presence of the world is determined by his conception of himself. To live in the flesh is to be imprisoned by the material and temporal, never to see through the garments of God in the green sward to the God Who wears them, but to see only the grass. A self-centered and self-contained life seeks its satisfaction in, rather than through, the material world. What is a self-governed life? It is a devil-governed life. A worldly, self-centered life always results from the dethronement of God, and the dethronement of God is always the result of listening to a lie from without. When you track back the forces that oppose religion, you find the devil behind them all. This world, all the fair and beautiful handiwork of God through which I ought always to find Him, hinders the essential spirit within me. Why? Because an enemy has come between my soul and God, and persuaded me to dethrone Him and enthrone self, and has blinded me so that I have lost the true perspective, and proportion of things, and the sense that discovers God everywhere. These are the themes of future discussion. They are stated now only that the intimate connection between the opposing forces may be recognized.

Finally, is there victory over the world? I read my New Testament statement, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." I go back to that passage, and I find that the object of the faith that overcomes the world is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The soul believing is begotten of God. The eye is opened, the ear is unstopped, the lost sense is restored. That is the final Christian evidence. You cannot make it known to any other man. It must be personal and immediate. No man need waste time trying to persuade me there is no God. I know. No argument you can adduce in proof of the existence of God will convince me. No argument you can adduce as against the existence of God will convince me. I know. As one man said in the presence of a material sign long ago, so say I in the presence of heaven and earth, on oath, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Mark the issues of faith. Life becomes God-governed. That is the devil's defeat. Self is found at last, realized within itself. Flesh is made subservient to spirit. Then "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world." Mark that well. I have not lost the world. I have found it. I have found it in that I have discovered that the material and the spiritual are related, that on every blade of grass shines the grace of God, and in all the prismatic colors of the rainbow is revealed His beauty. I have not lost the world. I have found it. Only the temporal is now seen in its relation to the eternal, and change and decay are no longer destruction, but the perpetual process of that which abides. The man who has faith has not lost his world, but he is no longer worldly.

What, then, is the final word of injunction in the presence of these opposing forces? Again I quote from the New Testament and from Paul. "Use the world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." That is to say, use the world, but never imagine that it is all; and never use it save in its relation to that larger whole of the spiritual and eternal. Deal with the things of dust, but touch them with the force of Deity. Enter into all that the senses can reveal to you of the life in which you live, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment, not to punishment but to judgment, the finding of a verdict, and the passing of a sentence, the creating of a destiny. All the things of the world are mine, but I am not to live in them as though they were the whole. I am to understand that they are things of dust and I am to treat them as such.

To go back again to that word of John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Dr. Chalmers' great sermon on that text is entitled, "The expulsive power of a new affection." What is the new affection? The true affection, love of God. What does it do for a man? Puts out of his heart that love of the world which makes him forget God, and puts into his heart a new love of the world because he sees it to be the handiwork of his Father. I remember as though it were yesterday something that happened in my own life at least thirty-seven years ago. I was a boy, and there came to my father's house a young man who had been brought to Christ in some meetings my father had been conducting in the Welsh hills. This young man was out in our garden talking to me about all sorts of things. I remember how he interested me, and how I loved him. Suddenly he stooped and picked a leaf from a nasturtium plant. He held it in his hand and said to me, "Did you ever see anything so beautiful." As a boy I looked at it, saw all the veins and the exquisite beauty. Then he said this, and I never forgot it. "I never saw how beautiful that leaf was until six months ago, when I gave myself to Christ." How true I know that to be now in my own experience. The worldly man loses his world. The godly man finds it. Where are you going for your summer holiday? I strongly advise you to get right with God before you go, and if you will, you will have such a holiday as you have never had. When a man crossing the ocean sits on deck and refuses to look at the sea because it is worldly, he is the most worldly man on board ship. He is self-centered and even though he is spiritually proud, he is godless and worldly. The love of the Father, let that fill your heart, and then what? Then all the things He made are exquisite with beauty. You will listen to the music of the thunder at night, and thank God that you are a child of the Thunderer. You will look at all the wonders in creation, and rejoice more than ever that you are the heir of the God Who made them, and that consequently they belong to you. I have lost neither poetry nor art nor music because I am His, in answer to the call of His grace. I have found them because I no longer believe that they are all. When you look on a painting and tell me it will fade, I tell you not half so soon as the pictures He paints. He is so great an artist that He flings a picture on the sky, and as you look it is gone, but in ten minutes there is another. All the things of beauty in the world are mine because I am His and He is mine. When you lose your vision of God you lose your sense of the eternal, and live wholly in the things of His beautiful world. Then you have imprisoned your own soul. May God deliver us from all worldliness by bringing us into such unity with Himself that we shall look nowhere without seeing Him, touch nothing without feeling Him, be in the midst of no circumstances without being conscious of Him.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: The Opposing Forces Of The Religious Life--The Flesh.

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Because of the near personal relation of the flesh to every human being, this subject is at once supremely interesting and vitally important. The flesh is part of the ego, part of myself, not all of myself, but part, and an essential part so far as the present life is concerned. The world is outside me. The devil is other than I am, a distinct personality. But the flesh is of my very self. I cannot escape it. It goes where I go, it abides where I abide; it is with me in my thinking, in my loving, in my willing. I have to take account of the flesh. I may be able to escape, in some measure, from the world in cloistered seclusions, and within stone walls. I cannot so escape from the flesh. I may be able to escape from the devil in certain surroundings, and certain atmospheres. I can never escape from the flesh. Consequently, I say we are dealing with a subject which is supremely interesting and vitally important.

Now I propose to follow the same line of examination as when I considered the world as an opposing force. First, the flesh in itself; second, the flesh as opposed to religion; third, the flesh in relation to the world and the devil; and, finally, the victory over the flesh.

We are greatly aided in this study by the Incarnation. Therein we see human nature according to the pattern, true to the ideal. We have no real understanding of what was in the heart of God when He said, "Let Us make man," until we know Jesus Christ. We may have studied human nature; we may have studied human history, we may have a large and varied circle of acquaintances and friends, but we never know man until we know Jesus Christ. It is graciously and wonderfully true that He is the Revelation of God. It is equally and as graciously true that He is the Revelation of man. I know the meaning of this life of mine only when I know Jesus. Through all the ages, so far as I may glance at them through the windows of history, secular and sacred, I see man after man, some rising above their fellows, conspicuous heights among the mountains, but I never know what man is according to the Divine pattern until my eyes rest on the one Man of Nazareth. In Him we are able to understand, as we never could apart from that revelation, the failure of all other men. Had there been no Jesus Christ in the world, and no record of Him, no image of Him stamped on the human consciousness, I can conceive that men might be very well satisfied with themselves. But no man who has honestly studied the portrait of Jesus which the gospels present, who has stood face to face with the Man of Nazareth and allowed Him to put the measurement of Himself upon life, has escaped the conviction that he ought to say, Lo, I have sinned!

I know the kinship between Jesus and myself; but, my brethren, it is when I am most conscious of the kinship that I discover the immeasurable, appalling, and awful distance between Him and myself. The distance would not appall me if there were not kinship, but it is when I know He is flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, blood of my blood, and then see Him rising into the infinite heights, towering above me in the sublime simplicities of His fulfilment of the ideal, in the simple sublimity

of His realization of purpose, that I know how low I have fallen.

Now, in that light of that revelation we turn to our consideration. The first necessity is that we should understand the meaning of the term, "the flesh." There are two brief passages which I am going to quote in order that their light may fall on the subject. The first is to be found in the opening chapter of John's Gospel. "The Word was made flesh." The second is to be found in the first letter of the same writer, in the fourth chapter, "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Then it is certain that flesh in the first and simplest condition is not sinful. There is nothing inherently sinful in flesh. There is another passage in Romans, but notice very carefully what it really says. He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He was not made sinful flesh, but in the likeness of it. He was made flesh, but not sinful flesh; and when you bring together these two words, sinful and flesh, you are recognizing the presence of something in the flesh, you are recognizing the presence of something in the flesh that does not belong to it, that ought not to be there. I lay my hand on this hand of mine, I touch this body of mine, and I handle and touch sinful flesh. But when the disciples in the olden days laid their hand on the actual flesh of the Man of Nazareth they laid their hand on actual flesh, but not on sinful flesh. And so I look at this Man—this ideal Man, this actual Man, this sinless Man, this Man Who challenged any to convince Him of sin, this Man Who claimed absolute holiness—and as I look I know that the flesh in its first and simplest condition is not sinful, that there can be flesh without sin.

What, then, according to that first Divine intention as revealed in Jesus, is the flesh? The idea is the instrument of the spirit, perfectly adjusted to the material underworld and to the spirit over-world. Man who is not a body, but who is a spirit inhabiting a body, is able to touch all the material through the medium of his flesh. When the psalmist, referring to the flesh, to the body, said, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made," he uttered a tremendous truth. Through the medium of the flesh man has been able to examine and discover, and manipulate, to exercise the dominion for which he was created. The body is the perfect instrument of the spirit, subservient to it, answering it; the medium through which the spirit touches all lower creation, and the medium through which all lower creation comes into living touch with the spiritual that lies beyond it. There is no inherent evil in flesh according to the original purpose and intention of God.

So that when you speak of the body of a man in terms of disapprobation be very careful lest you be found to blaspheme against God. For remember this body of mine is as much a work of God as is the spirit that indwells it, and it is a work of God made to fit the spirit, to be the dwelling place of the spirit, the temple of the spirit. Infinitely more sacred than any temple, or cathedral, or church that was ever erected is every human body. Made to be the instrument of the spirit, fearfully and wonderfully made, delicate in its organism, tough and tremendous in its strength, is the flesh.

How, then, can flesh be an opposing force to the religious life? Let me again cite three scriptures, and, at first, there may seem to be very little connection between them, and not much bearing on our subject. The first quotation is from the gospel according to Matthew, and the account which the evangelist there gives of words spoken by our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane to three of His disciples, who when they ought to have been watching were asleep. It is a word having a local setting and coloring, but revealing a great, and shall I say, an appalling truth. Jesus said to these men, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The second quotation is from the Galatian letter, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The Greek word, *epithumia*, may be translated "desireth." Let me use that word here. "The flesh desireth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." In the Revised Version the word "Spirit" is spelled with a capital letter, and quite accurately. The whole context shows that the apostle was referring to the Spirit of God. In the first quotation I made, the quotation from our Lord, the word should be written with a small s, for the reference is not to the Spirit of God but to the spirit of man. The third quotation is from the first letter of Peter, "All flesh is grass."

Now, what are the facts which these Scriptures suggest to us? First, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In that word Jesus revealed the fact of internecine strife in human life, that is, mutually destructive strife. In these very disciples there was strife between the aspiration of the spirit and the ability of the flesh. The spirit willing, conscious of the beauty of the religious ideal, having seen the glory of the Christ, and having earnestly desired to follow Him; and the flesh going to sleep. Peter had said but a little while before, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." That is the willing spirit. That is the essential man, the deepest man in Peter, desiring to be true to his Lord, declaring that he can die for Him. In the garden Jesus said, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour?"

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. That is the trouble. Over and over again you find in the case of the man who has never yielded to Christ the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. I know it is said that there can be no admiration of the good and true on the part of unregenerate man. That is not true. There are thousands of unregenerate men who know the beauty of holiness, but they cannot be holy. But now I am far more anxious to deal with the flesh as an opposing force in the lives of those who have yielded themselves to Christ, who see the ideal revealed in Christ, all the things high and excellent and beautiful. In such the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. I ought to watch, but I go to sleep. I ought to win, but I fail. Jesus Christ could not have said that of Himself, The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. In His case the spirit was willing, and the flesh was equal to the demands. There was never any failure. There was never any internecine strife between the spirit of Jesus and His flesh. His flesh was forevermore the instrument of His spirit, obeying it, answering it, serving it, helping it. Not so with other men. Not so with me.

Notice the second of these two quotations. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and the Spirit lusteth against the flesh." That is to say, there is not only internecine strife, but in human life there is antagonism to the purpose of God in the realm of the flesh. The spirit of God is leading me toward the heights and calling me to the spiritual outlook and conception, and the flesh is dragging me to the depths and suggesting that I live the life of the animal. That word sounds hard and uncouth. Are you in rebellion against that definition? Are you saying, "Not the life of the animal; you cannot speak of the cultured life of today as the life of the animal"? Absolutely, if the sum total of life may be thus expressed, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" That is animal life. It means food and warmth and animal comfort. The flesh is drawing every one of us to that. That is the temptation of it. That is the suggestion of it.

The Spirit of God is calling me to the life of spirituality, the life that takes in eternity in its outlook, and has dealings with God in all its transactions. The flesh says, Just for today, what shall I eat and what shall I drink?

Once again, "All flesh is grass." That is to say, the flesh has on it the stupor of death, and always asks for ease instead of effort, for licence rather than liberty, and the issue is riot instead of realization. All these things are things of death.

In this way the flesh is an opposing force to the Christian life. I am not entering tonight on the question of how this happened. I am simply dealing with the fact. You can have your own theory about how it happened. I have my Bible and I still believe that man has fallen, and the humanity which I share, and which I meet in the city and in the village, on land and on sea, both rich and poor, both bond and free, is one humanity, fallen humanity; not humanity climbing up, but humanity helplessly and irrevocably down, so that it never can rise, except by a miracle of Divine power lifting it out of the dust. I am dealing with the fact. The moment a man sees the spiritual, and answers it by following Christ, he becomes conscious of conflict with the flesh. The conflict of the child of God with the flesh is the conflict of the subjugation of a recovered empire. Before you were a Christian you lived in the flesh. Now that you are a Christian you live in the spirit. Your own spirit is enthroned. You had it in the prison and starved it and neglected it, and sometimes even said that you did not possess it. In the moment in which you gave yourself to Christ He put that spirit, your spirit, back on the throne of your personality, and He put it there in partnership with His own Spirit, in order to realize your whole life; and the first thing is that the flesh become subservient to it. But the flesh does not become subservient immediately. The flesh which so long was degraded by the fact that you allowed it to have its own way by answering its lust, and dwelling wholly within it, when put in its right place, under the spirit, rebels. Regeneration does not mean a sudden convulsion, of such a nature that all the fibers of my flesh cease to make their own demands. The fight is long and strenuous, and sometimes almost to blood. I want every young Christian here, every young man and every young woman who is fighting this fight, to remember that he or she is subjugating a recovered empire. You have set up the throne, but you have to win and cultivate and restore the whole territory. A man can be cleansed in a moment by the Spirit of God, but there is then the whole campaign of subjugation to go forward. What I do plead for is that you shall be patient. That very thought comes out in the words, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." That is a recognition of the fact that the flesh which has been rampant and masterful for years, when you take the throne in the fear and fellowship of the Holy Spirit of God, is not immediately subjugated, the long habits of years are not immediately broken.

Now, remember the relation of the flesh to the world and to the devil. As last time, I indicate this in very brief sentences, yet the three must always be taken in connection with each other. The degraded man is the man who degrades the world. The degraded world hinders the remade man. For the interpretation of the meaning of that I must refer you to the things I said when speaking of the world. The degraded man, the man who has lost true balance and proportion of things, and instead of being spirit with a body subservient, has become spirit imprisoned by flesh; he degrades the world. Then the world so degraded hinders the man in the moment in which he is remade. The old appeals and allurements of the world make their appeal to the flesh which has not yet come into the absolute consciousness of the mastery of the spirit.

The devil appeals to the degraded man through the degraded world, and he appeals to the remade man through the same medium of a degraded world, and thus fights against all the purposes of God in the man and in the world; for no man will ever be able to take hold of the world and use it as God intended he should use it and bring it to ultimate perfection unless he is a

spiritual man. God's purpose for him is defeated, and God's purpose for the world is defeated so long as he is degraded. When man has found his right relationship to God, and the flesh is what it ought to be, what it was in the Christ, then "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.... In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The earth will come to its ultimate fulness and realization when man has found his true relation to God, and to prevent that the devil presents the degraded world to man and attempts to lure him back to the things of the dust only, forbidding him to take into consciousness the things of the eternities.

Finally, can I have victory over this flesh life? Do I mean to say by the things already said that all the while and always I must be defeated? Assuredly not! I have said, and I believe, that the conflict is long and continuous, but defeat is not a synonymous term with conflict. I need not be defeated. There can be victory over the flesh. Hear these words of Paul in the letter to the Romans, the eighth chapter and ninth verse, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Take that whole passage, and be patient with me if I ask you to read it in the Revised Version, and notice particularly the spelling of the word spirit. You will find it written with a capital letter in certain places and with a small letter in others. After the most careful examination I am able to make, I am convinced our revisers have spelled the word correctly. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit," that is, your own spirit. If the Spirit of God dwells in a man that man is living on the spiritual side of his own nature, not on the fleshly side. I can live in the flesh or in the spirit. The difference between life high and noble and life low and ignoble is the difference between life in the spirit and life in the flesh. Life in the spirit means the spirit of man enthroned. Then is the flesh bruised and battered? Certainly not! What, then? The flesh is in its proper place, properly nourished, and forever more the servant of the spirit and never the master of the man. That is true life. Man can live in the flesh, answering every cry of his mouth and every appeal of his eye, and every itch of his hand, and every passion of his dusty nature. Where in such life is the spirit? Imprisoned, choked, starved, neglected. Where are you living? "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." If you have the Spirit of God, then you are living in the spirit and not in the flesh.

Then I turn to the Galatian letter, and find these words in the fifth chapter, "I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would." That is the statement of a principle. The flesh desires against the Spirit in order that you may not do the things that you would when you are following the Spirit. The Spirit desires against the flesh in order that you may not do the things you would if you are following the flesh. In the presence of the lust, the desire, the temptation of the flesh, what am I to do? "Walk by the Spirit." The only way of victory over the flesh is that of the reception of the Spirit and obedience to His direction. If we fight the flesh in the power of the flesh we shall be beaten by the flesh. If we have received this Spirit of God, Who takes our spiritual nature and puts it back on the throne, He says to us, Now, follow Me, walk by My rule, do the thing I suggest, obey Me, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

You say to me, Now you are becoming mystical. No, I never was more practical in all my life. The way of the Spirit is revealed in the simplest things of life and in the simplest way possible. When did you yield to the flesh last? I ask for no public answer, no answer made to me in language. I ask

for answer in your own heart. The moment you admit that you yielded you recognize the fact of allurements, temptation; and temptation and allurements recognize the fact that the voice of the Spirit was telling you the way, but you yielded to the flesh and obeyed it, and did not obey the voice of the Spirit. The Spirit said to you, Not that way home, but two miles round to be out of temptation! But you went that way home, and went down. Do not say that Christ cannot save you, and that the Spirit cannot keep you. It is a lie. If you will not obey Him He cannot. Of course, if you have never yet given yourself to Christ you do not know what it is to have the indwelling Spirit. The first thing necessary is the yielding of the life to Christ. Yield to Him. From the moment that is done, the Spirit is there the Mentor and Watcher, and infinitely more. Not the Mentor merely, but the Might you need. Not the Watcher only but the Worker able to deliver you. There is no man or woman here belonging to Christ who has fallen into known sin by yielding to the clamant cry of the flesh, but that if you are quite honest you will have to confess you did it wilfully and in disobedience to the call of the Spirit.

"The Spirit... shall quicken also your mortal body." That is not a reference to the resurrection. It is a present thing. The quickening of the mortal body means bringing the flesh into such subjection to the Spirit that the Spirit does master it. He breathes through the pulses of desire His coolness and His balm. He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free.

What I have desired to do supremely to-night—I know not whether I have succeeded—is to help every young Christian struggling in the presence of the pull of the flesh to understand that this fight is in the economy of your salvation, and that you are subjugating a recovered empire; and I want you to see that the only way in which you can have victory is that of obedience to the Spirit of God, Who interprets to your spirit the will of God. I want you to see, moreover, that if that be the only way it is a sure way; and so surely as we follow the leading and guidance and call of the Spirit of God resolutely we shall have victory not only over the world but over the flesh, and the flesh will become again an instrument of the Spirit. Our members yielded to Him, He will make use of them; the eyes of this poor earthly tabernacle may flash with the light of His love; the hands which have been ministers of iniquity may become ministers of His mercy to others; and the feet which have taken us into the highways and by-ways of evil may carry us, under the bidding of His love, on errands of mercy and loving kindness and help to the sons of men. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? Yield yourselves, therefore, and your members as instruments of righteousness." So comes the victory, and more than victory, the redemption of the flesh and the realization in it of all the purpose of God.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: The Opposing Forces Of The Religious Life--The Devil.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: The Opposing Forces Of The Religious Life—The Devil.

In this study, as in the previous ones, our appeal is made wholly to the Scriptures of truth. It is impossible to make such appeal and at the same time to deny the personality of Satan. To deny the personality of Satan as revealed in the Scriptures is to have to believe that all the evil things with which we are familiar today, and all the dark and dastardly crimes of the centuries, have come out of human nature. This the Bible does not teach. There are two chapters at the commencement of the Bible and two at the end in which we have glimpses of this world unaffected by the devil. In the two first chapters he is not seen. In the last two chapters he is banished. Through the rest he is recognized and referred to as an actual personality of evil, and that to me is a most hopeful doctrine. If humanity is a part of God, then all murders and lies are part of the activity of God, and that is impossible of belief. I know it is not quite fashionable to talk about the devil today.

Men don't believe in a devil now,
As their fathers used to do;
They reject one creed because it's old
For another because it's new.
There's not a print of his cloven foot,
Nor a fiery dart from his bow,
To be found in the earth or air today!
At least—they declare it is so!
But who is it mixes the fatal draught
That palsies heart and brain
And loads the bier of each passing year
With its hundred thousand slain?
But who blights the bloom of the land today
With the fiery breath of hell?
If it isn't the devil that does the work,
Who does? Won't somebody tell?
Who dogs the steps of the toiling saint?

Who spreads the net for his feet?

Who sows the tares in the world's broad field

Where the Saviour sows His wheat?

If the devil is voted not to be,

Is the verdict therefore true?

Someone is surely doing the work

The devil was thought to do.

They may say the devil has never lived,

They may say the devil is gone;

But simple people would like to know

Who carries the business on.

I shall follow exactly the same method as I have followed in the previous two lectures, speaking first of the devil as he is revealed to us in Scripture; second, of the devil as opposed to religion; third, of the relation between the world, the flesh, and the devil; and, last, of the way of victory over the devil.

The personality of Satan is revealed as distinctly in the New Testament as is the personality of Jesus Christ. To deny the one is to deny the other. In casting out demons Christ perpetually addressed Himself to them as to definite personalities, possessing men, and all through that New Testament story it is quite evident that the personality of the devil was believed in.

But now what does the Bible teach concerning this personality? First of all, the Bible never suggests that Satan is self-existent; and if not self-existent, therefore created; and if created, created by God. God creates everything good, and nothing evil. "Do not I, the Lord, create evil?" is a distinct declaration of Scripture, but read the context, and it is at once seen that the word "evil" there means calamity, judgment on a guilty city. Therefore it is perfectly evident that, according to Bible teaching, Satan being not self-existent, but created, and that by God, was therefore created good. And if today he is evil, he has fallen from his original estate.

There was a time when the disciples came back to Jesus, and said, "Even the devils are subject to us," and there fell from the lips of the Master these very remarkable words, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." There a whole history is condensed into a flash; and a great unveiling of truth comes almost with a blinding glare. The disciples said, Even the demons are subject to us, and Christ's answer in effect was this, You need not be surprised that demons are subject unto you in My name. Satan, himself, the prince of the hosts of wickedness, the lord of the whole empire of sin, is not enthroned, he is fallen from heaven. It is testimony borne by the lips of Christ to a primal fall; to the fact that Satan is one of the principalities, one of the powers, an angel, but an angel fallen as lightning from heaven.

There is very little doubt that Peter heard that word of Jesus, and when I turn to his epistles I find in the course of an argument he declared, "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." That is an inspired declaration of the fact that God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down, committed them to pits of darkness. Jude, in his brief epistle, gives us a still more detailed and remarkable account of the primal fall of angels. Here these words, "Angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation." The Authorized Version reads "their first estate." Which is the better translation I cannot tell. I should be inclined to change them both and read, "Angels which kept not true to first principles, left their proper habitation or residence, or sphere, or orbit, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." There is nothing detailed in all this, but there is quite sufficient to reveal all that it is necessary for us to know. It is the story of a fall of angels led by one. Jesus named the one in the forefront, the leader, "I beheld Satan as lightning fallen from heaven." Peter writes in the plural, "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness." Jude went a little more carefully into the matter and declared that they "kept not their own principality." They were not true to the principle of their own life, they left their proper orbit, habitation, residence, sphere, but they did not escape from Divine government when they so fell. He kept them "in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

What was the sin? Who shall dare to say? In Milton's "Paradise Lost" we have splendid speculation as to what the sin was; and in all probability more than speculation.

Satan is never spoken of as having any independent existence. He is never spoken of as having sovereign dominion. The Bible never suggests that he has successfully cast off the government of God: He is in rebellion against it, but still held by it. That is the meaning of the petition in the Lord's prayer, "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil." It is a recognition of the fact that the very forces of evil in the spiritual realm are still under the government of God. To imagine that the Bible teaches that Satan is a personality in the universe in rebellion against God successfully, is to contradict entirely what the Bible perpetually teaches.

Now notice what this means. The devil is not omnipotent. The devil is not omniscient. The devil is not omnipresent. Let me begin with the last first. The Bible never suggests the omnipresence of the devil. Someone says, The devil is here. How do you know? You have no proof of it. It is impossible for the devil to be in London and in New York at the same moment. To admit the creation of angels is to admit limitation and location. Whether you think of angels fallen or unfallen, I pray you remember none of them are omnipresent. They come, they go. They guard and watch the saints, for "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." So also with Satan and all the fallen angels, none of them are omnipresent. The number of them is so great that in every assembly, and over every man, some of them watch in order to destroy. But Satan himself, marshaling, guiding, commanding the hosts of spiritual wickedness, can never be in two places at once. Swifter than the lightning's flash, quicker than the thought of man can travel, he may encircle the globe, but he is not omnipresent. He is personal only in the measure in which any angel is personal. He is personal only in the measure in which man is personal.

Neither is he omniscient, knowing everything, seeing the end from the beginning, as God is able to do. Far more subtle in his wisdom, far more keen in his intuitions, far cleverer than man has ever been, but certainly not seeing all the ultimate issue from the commencement. And assuredly he is not omnipotent, not having all power. Go to the book of Job, and put all that wonderful story into brief words in this respect. The devil, full of subtlety, and malice, and determination to spoil the work of God in a human soul, could nevertheless not touch a single hair upon the back of a single camel belonging to Job until he had asked God's leave.

The protest against dualism is out of place when you are thinking of the devil, according to Scripture teaching. The protest may be a very excellent one according to much misinterpretation of Scripture teaching which has possessed or obsessed the minds of men. If you once deny the existence of the devil in the universe because God is all and in all, that is to postulate a doctrine of the universe which is unscriptural. That doctrine must equally deny the existence of man. Is man a personality? If you admit that he is, then you may also admit the possibility of a personality in the universe other than God, created by God, who in some way is out of harmony with God, is indeed in antagonism against God, and yet who is not coequal with God in power, or in knowledge, or in presence.

Now, for a moment take the other side of this matter, and think of his power as revealed in the scriptures of truth. Do not forget that he is spiritual in essence. All the angels are spirits, flames of fire, and Satan, one of the hierarchy of heaven, fallen, is a spirit. If it be true, as Tennyson says, that "Spirit with spirit can meet," referring to man's possibility of approaching God, it is equally true that the devil as spirit and man as spirit can meet, and in that fact lies the tremendous power of Satan, and of all those hosts that he commands, the army of fallen angels that are spiritual in essence.

Then also he is subtle in method. "Subtle" seems a weak word to use in connection with the devil. Paul describes the devil as an "angel of light." Peter describes the devil as a "roaring lion." Jesus refers to him as the "prince of this world." Each description suggests a different method, adopted according to the occasion, and according to the purpose—transforming himself into an angel of light to deceive if it be possible the very elect, appearing in awful ferocity and fierceness as a roaring lion to overwhelm the timid and afraid; the prince of the world offering to man all the kingdoms for a moment's homage, coming to men according to the method necessary to entrap them and spoil them, and harm them. This is awful subtlety.

Then, again, he is revealed in Scripture as being strenuous in enterprise and stupendous in execution. He is the leader of vast hosts. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." That is a graphic description of this army of spiritual forces fighting against everything: that is in harmony with the will of God. Those of us who accept the teaching of Scripture as final, recognize the place of angels fallen and unfallen. At the head of fallen angels, marshaling all, is the great head and center, the mightiest of them, the wisest of them, the most wonderful of them, his might, his wisdom, and his wonder prostituted in the universe of God to the purpose of fighting against God and yet forevermore held in check and never allowed to pass the limit of the government of God.

Now consider what is taught in Scripture concerning the devil as opposed to religion. All I have attempted to say concerning him tonight as revealed in Scripture makes it patent that he must be and is the enemy of religion. Let us again appeal to Scripture for his character in relation to man. Jesus said concerning him, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." A lie is essential evil. Jesus said, "I am the Truth," that is, essential good. A lie is the direct opposite. The original lie in human history was a denial of the creature's relation to God, and a suggestion in the heart of man that God was hard, unkind, capricious, prompting man to rebellion against Him. If I come to the writings of the Apostle John I read that he thus describes Satan, "The evil one." That is a term that describes him absolutely. He is the very embodiment of sin. Let me take you to three other descriptive words in order that we may see how he is opposed to religion. He is described as "the god of this world," as "the prince of the world," as "the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." Put these three descriptions together and you will see that in this wonderful personality of evil, mastering the hosts of evil, there is the exact antithesis of all we know of God—One, "God the Father"; the other, "the god of this world"; one, "God the Son"; the other, "the prince of the world"; one, "God the Holy Ghost"; the other, "the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." Thus in this personality there reside all the things that are opposed to the things in God. In God the Father there is essential government, in "the god of this world" there is disorder, evil. In God the Son there is grace, and in the devil there is everything opposed to grace. In God the Holy Spirit there is guidance for the sons of men and for the world: the devil is forevermore leading men away from the true path out into the desert and out into darkness. He is not coequal with God, but in the measure of his personality he is antagonistic to God, to His government, to His grace, to His guidance, forevermore trying to lead men astray.

"The god of this world." The world is devil-governed until this hour. Go to the homes of darkness in the far distant places of the world, and you will see that the fact is awfully patent. Is London governed by our God? Is love the master principle of human life? If not, then what? This. It is each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. Men are under the government of Satan. Through all that great and remarkable antithesis the devil is seen, not coequal with God, not omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent, but a fallen seraph, far more wondrous in wisdom than any son of man, with more subtle and marvelous power than man has ever yet possessed, marshaling the great hosts of fallen angels, and fighting against all the things that are in the will of God.

It becomes evident that he is the active and awful enemy of any man who begins to live the religious life in the true sense of the word. God loves man, and therefore the devil hates man because the devil is against God. God loves Christ in man, and therefore the devil hates Christ in man, and will prevent, if he can, the outworking of the Christ life in human character. Christ's mission was "to destroy the works of the devil." The devil's mission is to prevent that, and to destroy the works of Christ. If I am beginning to live the life that is obedient to God's rule, the life of loyalty to Christ, the life in which the purposes of Christ and the plans of Christ and the power of Christ are present, then immediately I become one against whom the devil, either in actual person or through those who serve under him, is at war. The young Christian asks, How is it I am being tempted as I was never tempted before? There is the answer. Because the moment in which you turned your life back again toward God you became one against whom the devil is at war. That is

the declared fact in the passage to which I have made so many references, "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers." This is the terrible fact, and the man who does not face the fact is a fool. Our enemy patiently waits for the moment of weakness and is utterly merciless. It was a terrific word written in the book of Job, "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" There is a whole revelation of the devil's method in that word "considered"—watching for the opportunity of weakness and the place where to break in. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and the castle is only as strong as its least guarded door, and the devil is watching for the weak link, and for the least guarded door. There are men he will never tempt with a glass of wine, because a glass of wine is no temptation to them. Your least guarded door, your weakest link, pride, or passion, or lust, the intellectual, the emotional, the volitional, he is watching, mark the awfulness of the figure, watching. "Hast thou considered My servant Job."

It is against this enemy that we have to fight. That leads me to a brief word on the devil in relation to the world and the flesh. These are the media through which he acts, and in which he hides. You can find only one great occasion in all human history when the devil came out into the open. That was when in the wilderness he met Jesus Christ. He was not in the open in the Garden of Eden. He did not for a moment suggest that man should fall down and worship him there. What he said was, Please yourself! He suggested that man should leave the first principles of his life as the devil had left his, and depart from his proper habitation as the devil had departed from his. Is not that the primal sin? Is not that the sin of Lucifer, the son of the morning. Is not that the heart and center of all evil, self-pleasing? The devil hid himself. So he does today. In the middle ages the devil was portrayed by artists as with horns and hoofs. If you paint him so today no one will know him. Marie Corelli, in her Sorrows of Satan, gives her last picture of the devil going into the House of Commons. If he ever makes any appearance in London that is far nearer the truth than the horns and hoofs. That is part of his strategy, part of his subtlety. He is hiding today in half our theology and in half our new-fangled philosophies. We are told today that man has to fight against the beast in him, that there are angel and beast in him, and that if the angel in him will fight hard enough he will trample the beast under his feet. There is an element of truth in all that. But what has turned man into a beast? Lurking behind the flesh, making it the medium of his suggestion, is the devil. Once I say he was dragged into the open, and advisedly I say dragged. If the devil could have escaped that ordeal he would have. Jesus was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, led of the Spirit in the wilderness while being tempted of the devil. God dragged the devil out into the open. It is an appalling picture of the subtlety and power of the devil, but it also reveals the fact that all the artifice and subtlety of the devil is helpless when a man stands square in the will of God, and makes it the master passion of his life. Take that story of the temptation and consider it carefully, and you will see the limitation of the devil. He has only three avenues along which he can ever approach the citadel of man's soul, and they are all revealed there. The real enemy that we have to fight is not the beast in us, but the devil behind the beast. It is not the flesh and the world but the devil's misrepresentation of the world: "The god of this world hath blinded their eyes." The arch enemy, the master enemy, the one real foe of their religious life, is the devil and all the hosts that he commands.

Are we to be defeated by this foe? The apostle in the passage I read to you recognizes the conflict, "our wrestling" It is very definite conflict. We are to put on the whole panoply of God, we

are to stand, to withstand, and having done all to stand. So that victory is possible according to the apostle's outlook. If you ask me the way of victory I take you back again to a passage which puts the whole truth into simplest form. James said, "Submit to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submit! There is deep reason for this. It gets down to the root of the whole matter. The devil's sin was rebellion, and his method with man is to propose rebellion, and the moment a man submits to God he crosses the devil's plan and purpose. The idea is that of a soldier. Submission is the first law of success in warfare. There can be no ultimate victory save under discipline and submission.

What next, "Resist." After you have submitted to God there will be conflict, but the conflict will be under orders, under the command of One Who knows every method of the enemy, Who holds in His own hand the reins of ultimate government. So that the conflict will no longer be in unexpected places. We sang about the devil being ambushed, but God knows where he is ambushed. The man who is really submitted to God starts out to real difficult conflict, strenuous fight, but he is under the command of One Who is never caught unawares, Who knows the whole field, the whole plan of the foe, Who never lost a battle, and Who never will, Whose soldier never will, so long as he obeys, and so long as he follows. Mark James's confident assertion, "Submit to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That is the way of victory. I cannot add anything to it. Indeed, I am inclined to think that in any attempt to add I am in great danger of subtracting from the force and power of the simple statement. Submit and resist. Some man says, but I fail and fall. I hear the voice and I yield, I sin; why do I sin? Because you have not obeyed this method, Submit, and resist. I have known men who have submitted seriously, earnestly, sincerely, but they have fallen. Why? They did not add to submission resistance. I have known other men who have resisted, who are resisting, and they say, How is it I am beaten? I have put up this fight against the devil, and I am down again. You did not begin your resistance by submitting. If a man submits and never fights, God will not, cannot, lead him to victory. If a man fights without having submitted, he has not put himself under discipline, under orders, and he will be beaten. Or you submitted but never fought. The word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is very striking, "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." You submitted but there was no resistance, you did not burn your bridges behind you. You locked the whisky up in a cupboard in case you should need it some day, and you were drunk in a month. There was no fight. You kept the impure picture in your own private cupboard and you were back in your devilish licentiousness within a week. You have got to put up a fight. Put yourself under control, act under the Captain's orders. Submit now, and resist the moment the devil meets you. That way lies victory. The old quaint hymn which we never sing now is nevertheless true if it be rightly interpreted:

Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees.

I said, when it is rightly interpreted. If you get on your knees and do not fight, Satan is not at all afraid of you. If you know what it is to get to your knees and gather strength, and then fight, all the forces of the fallen intelligences are not wise enough, and all their might is not strong enough, to overcome you. Submit, resist. Let the two words abide with us as we part.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: Is The Religious Life Possible?

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This is the question of one who desires to live the religious life, but who is afraid. I do not think that a man who sees nothing attractive in the religious ideal will ever ask that question. It is rather the question of one who considers that the teachings of Jesus constitute, to borrow the great Roman Catholic phrase, counsels of perfection.

The question is the result of conviction: first, of the ideal requirement of God, that what God requires of a man is the perfecting of his life; and, second, of the strength of the forces that oppose. Such a man, standing between the ideal and the opposing forces, asks, Is it possible to be what God would have me be in the presence of these forces that are against me?

The question is not only the result of a conviction, it is the result of doubt. It is the result of doubt as to the power of Christ. I am not saying that such doubt is sin. It is honest, sincere, but it is doubt of the power of Christ when a man says: There is the ideal, here are the forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil; you, Christian preacher and Christian people, tell me that Christ is able; well, honestly I am not sure! It is doubt of the power of Christ.

Sometimes the doubt, while being of the same nature, is of another accent. It is doubt of the salvability of man. That is an awkward word, an old theological word. We can do very well without it, but we cannot do without the idea that it suggests. Doubt as to whether it is ever possible for a man such as the inquirer feels himself to be to reach the height of the Divine purpose and plan. Can I ever be what God wants me to be? Is it possible for such as I am? I say it in order to touch a sympathetic chord in the heart of those who are asking the question, there are hours in my life today when that doubt comes to me. I can believe for other men more easily than I can believe for myself. Sometimes it seems far more possible for God to deal with other men than to deal with me. There are hours of heart-searching and examination, when I ask myself, Is it possible that I shall ever be what God wants me to be?

Our answer to the inquiry is, first, that the Bible teaches that the religious life is possible, and also that human experience agrees with this teaching of the Bible.

Let us take that general statement and deal with it from two standpoints. I first affirm the possibility of living the religious life by declaring that in the economy of God it is made possible. Second, I affirm that because it is made possible in the economy of God it is possible in the experience of man.

The religious life is possible in the economy of God because of the nature of man, and because of the nature of God. In a previous address we came to the conclusion that man has something to do with God because God has everything to do with man. In other words, that man is in nature such as to make possible the religious life, that God is in nature such as to make possible the religious life on the part of man.

When I speak now of the nature of man I am not referring to it as I find it today. I am speaking rather of essential human nature, human nature according to the Divine creation. Such human nature we know only as we know Jesus of Nazareth, "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," was the Divine word, according to the Genesis story. Where is this being? I cannot find him in London. I cannot find him the world over. I cannot find him in human history, read it where I will. Yes, I find him, but not as God made him, not as God meant him to be, not according to the pattern. Once and once only I meet Him in the process of the centuries. In lonely, superlative, imperial splendor, one figure rises above all the rest, the archetypal Man, that which was in the heart of God when He said, "Let Us make man." I am kin of that Man. My humanity is His humanity. I prefer to put it that way than to say His humanity is my humanity. My humanity is His humanity. In Him I see most clearly that man has essential capacity for the religious life. Man is capable of knowing God. Man is capable of loving God. Man is capable of obeying God. Let me examine these matters a little more carefully.

Man is capable of knowing God. There is in every man the capacity for the knowledge of God. If you question that, let me begin upon a very low plane. I will come to the very lowest of all. The consciousness of the supernatural is in every human being, the consciousness of that which is over the natural, above the natural, beyond the natural. That consciousness expresses itself in some of the races of men as we know them today in the strangest ways, in ways that we may look upon with contempt. Here is a man in the heart of Africa who has traveled hundreds of miles driving cattle before him to trade with a white trader, and suddenly in consternation he refuses to trade. Why? Because he finds out he has left behind him what we call his fetish, a little piece of stick, a bit of leather, an absolutely worthless thing, but it is that man's symbol of the supernatural, of that which lies beyond the material. That poor African says, I cannot trade with you, I must go back; and he will tramp back, hundreds of miles, in order to obtain his fetish. And we laugh at him! I would that people who believe in God had always the same honesty of conviction. The trouble is that a great many professing Christian people will trade cattle without God when the African will not trade cattle without his fetish. That is a low level of consciousness of the supernatural, ignorant and foolish, and the cultured man laughs at it, pities it, holds it in contempt; but it is evidence of an instinct which goes far out beyond the base, and beyond the material. Let me put the same thought in other words: every man knows the infinite! You deny me that at once. You say, No, that is what no man knows. Finite man cannot know the infinite. What is the infinite? Your answer is that the infinite is that which has no boundaries, no limitations. In that answer you reveal the fact that you have thought it; and in your thinking of it you know it. No dog knows the infinite. The moment in which you have grasped the conception of that which is limitless, boundless, as to time or place, your mind has encompassed that which you can never understand, fully and finally, but you know it. Listen to the word of the old writer, "God hath set eternity in their heart." That is the capacity for knowing God Himself. Jesus said, "This is the life of eternity, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." I am not suggesting for a single moment that all men know God. I am affirming that in every man there is capacity for knowing God. Man can talk to God and hear Him speak, hold communion with Him and know in the deepest of his inmost soul the fact of His being. Man is made for God. That is the light that lighteth every man. It is the strange, mystic, inward capacity for God which is of the very nature of God.

So far I have only spoken of the lowest evidences of light. What is the highest? "Our fellowship is with the Father." The man of the world is just as ready to smile at the fetish of the African; but his smiling does not alter the absolute fact that in this house there are men and women who know experimentally the meaning of that word, "Our fellowship is with the Father," men and women who still, to use the figurative language of the ancient writing, talk to God face to face as a man speaketh with his friend. Although you deny the assertion, you cannot deny the light that sometimes lingers on the face, the light that never was on sea or land, the light that made the face of your mother gloriously beautiful in spite of all your cynical skepticism. Men and women hold fellowship with God. I am not describing that fellowship, but only affirming that the capacity for it exists.

There is also capacity for love. The lowest form of that capacity in religious application is selfish love of safety, the thing that makes a man say, "What shall I do to be saved?" That is the lowest form of love. The highest is the selfless love of sacrifice. Here is the lowest form of love to God, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." You say, That is very high. It is indeed infinitely higher than any other love we know of, but it is yet selfish love, quite proper, perfectly right, but self-centered. God generates it in the heart by dying for men, therefore it is worth generating, but it is the lowest form. If you want to know the highest form of that love here it is, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." That is the ultimate form of love for God. Every man is capable of this love, of this going out of the soul in adoration. Give any promiscuous audience today one hymn to sing—whether North, South, East, or West; in city, or village, on land or sea, I care not—you will find that hymn will touch a responsive chord in the heart, even though it be forgotten a moment afterwards;

Jesu, Lover of my soul,

Let me to Thy bosom fly.

I never hear that hymn sung by a great crowd of men, women and children—hundreds of whom sing it without understanding it—but that I am conscious for the moment they are singing it on wings uplifted. Without their knowing it, they are giving supreme evidence by that emotion of man's ability to love God. There is capacity in man for love of God.

Then there is capacity in every human being for obedience. The lowest manifestation of it is duty, and the highest is delight. I say the lowest is duty. Duty is high, noble, beautiful, but it is the lowest relationship that the soul bears to God. We have been told often, and rightly, of the nobility of duty; but after all is said and done, we have never entered into the highest heights of spiritual experience until we have canceled the word "duty" and substituted the word "delight." "I delight to do Thy will, O my God"—that is infinitely more than duty. Duty, yes, but duty transfigured on the holy mount until it becomes delight, the delight of doing the will of another. The capacity for that is in every human being.

Thus to see man in the essential fact of his nature, capable of knowing God, of loving Him, and of obeying Him, is to be convinced that it is possible for man to live the religious life.

That, however, is finally demonstrated by a consideration of the nature of God. What is the nature of God? You may express the whole fact in one word, and I choose so to do, and then to take two thoughts in elaboration thereof.

"God is love." That sounds very commonplace because we have said it so often. It has become so familiar that no preacher can say it and hope to move an audience by the declaration of it, unless as the poor sounding words fall from his lips they are baptized into power by the presence of the Holy Ghost. "God is love." Love is not attribute. Love is essence. Love is to everything else in God what character in a man is to the characteristics of a man. Do you ever write a character for a man? Some man has left your employ, and you say you will give him his character. You cannot write his character. You do not know his character. You can write two or three characteristics, you cannot write his character. You may have a very accurate estimate of a man's character. That estimate is formed by the observation of his characteristics, the different expressions of his essential nature. As are the characteristics of a man to his character so are the attributes of Deity to His essence. Mercy, beneficence, holiness, righteousness, are all expressions of love.

The religious life is the life that is bound to God, the life that is obedient to God. Is it possible? It is possible because He, being Love, seeks on the part of man for such action and attitude as is for the best and highest for man himself. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. My dear old friend, Margaret Bottome, the founder of the order of King's Daughters, told me of a child who was asked that question and answered it accurately, and then the teacher said, I wonder if you can tell me what the chief end of God is! To glorify man and enjoy him forever, answered the child. Rarely have theologians come so near the truth! What glorifies God in me? All the best that can ever come to me. It is when I reach the highest in my own life, when my intellect takes in the widest sweep and most accurately knows the details; when my emotional nature is under the sway of the mightiest love; when my volitional nature is most full of authority because most perfectly under control; that God is glorified in me, because He is Love. He never forgives in man anything that harms the man. What is that which you have to give up to be a Christian? Something which is spoiling you. God is as fierce as lightning against it. Why? Because it harms you. At the back of the thunder are the tears. Behind the awful fire is the tremendous love. If only we can get to know God we shall see the possibility of the religious life, because we shall find that He is Love and is set upon our well-being.

Take out of that great essential and final fact these two matters. First, because God is Love He is patient; and if you want to understand that, think of the relationship between father and child. Second, because God is Love He is reasonable; and if you want to understand that, think of the ideal relationship between the perfect king and the subject of such a king. Patient. A father is interested in the development of his child, and therefore is patient with the feeblest effort of the child toward the ultimate perfecting; and is gentle in his method. The feeblest little child in your home is the one who interests you most. You are interested in it as you see it growing up, developing, and, oh, the delight of your heart at the strange, mysterious sounds that it makes when it tries to talk. Mothers can always understand the baby language. I will tell you something if you will not tell the mothers. I do not believe babies say half the things mothers say they say! But that is a man's ignorance. If I have got some of you back home, face to face with your youngest child, that is what I wanted. Do you know that what you feel toward that child is in kind what God feels toward us? There is nothing elegant in the walk of a child before it can walk; but is it not the most beautiful thing in the whole world? I have been watching a wee bit lassie trying to walk on my lawns at Mundesley. There was nothing elegant in it, but there was poetry in it, music in it. All that I feel about my bairn is a dim shadow of what God feels about me. There is nothing elegant in my

walk as a Christian man. It is clumsy, awkward, bungling in the sight of heaven, but "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Patience with the feeblest effort issues in gentleness in method. That was a great word of the psalmist, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." What is gentleness? George Matheson once wrote a little article in one of the religious periodicals. I cut it out and still have it somewhere. I cannot remember the exquisite, poetic wording of it, but the thought of it was with me now. Said George Matheson, we speak of gentleness and often do not understand it. We speak of the gentleness of the brook as it ripples through the summer fields. There is no gentleness in the brook. It is going as hard as it can, and all the strength it has it is exerting to make the pebbles rattle. You may speak of gentleness when you stand beside the mighty sea on a summer day, and when in its mighty strength you see it kiss the shore and bathe the feet of the child who is paddling. Gentleness is strength held in reserve. God's gentleness makes men great. Think what He could do and think what He does. Think how He lays His hand upon us in our feverishness as tenderly as the sunbeam falls on the face of a sick child. The sun could blast to a cinder, but it kisses to health. "Thy gentleness hath made me great." That is God.

Then there is the reasonableness of God. He has perfect knowledge of every one of us and He demands only that we fulfil the real purpose of our own life. He never asks anything that we are unable to give Him. The trouble is that we set up false standards and imagine they are God's standards. The first great word of the prophet to the sinning people of old was, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord." He never makes demands upon man that man is not equal to answering.

By the nature of man who is capable of knowing God, of loving God, and of obeying God; and by the nature of God Who is love, and has patience, and is reasonable, I submit to you that it is possible to live the religious life.

In conclusion, let us mark the conditions. Look at man as he is. His nature is perverted. He does not know God. He does not love God. He does not obey God. You say, Ah, now you are coming to the real difficulties. These are the real sources of the question, Is the religious life possible? Very well, let us face them. Man does not know God. The carnal mind does not know Him, neither can it. Man does not love God. He is afraid of Him, hates to hear His name, escapes from the man who talks about Him, avoids the places of His worship, and taboos the subject of religion at his dinner table. Man does not obey God. He does not take God into account when he goes into business.

Yet to such men there come voices of truth concerning God, visions of the ideal concerning themselves. Then they find not only that their nature is perverted, but that it is paralyzed, and each exclaims, "When I would do good evil is present with me." Is the religious life possible to a man like that?

The answer to the inquiry now is the answer of the Christian evangel. First of all, how does God answer that inquiry? I go back to one of our earlier subjects. Can a just God forgive sins? Without going again over the arguments, I repeat the affirmation that He can. He can be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus. If that once be accepted I want you to see what it leads to. God can pardon sin. What does that mean? The pardon of sin means a new vision of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In the moment in which a man's sins are forgiven and he knows his sins forgiven he sees God as he never saw Him before. You can listen

to me if you like quite theoretically, but I make this affirmation on the basis of experience and testimony. There has fallen asleep this week a man whom I loved with my whole heart, a man who has been an inspiration to me in this chapel over and over again as I have preached. Ned Wright, as you know full well, forty years ago was a prize-fighter and a burglar, and, as he himself would have admitted, just about as low down as it was possible for a man to get. I cannot tell you all I am thinking about him. I have seen him sit over yonder on Wednesday afternoons, and in the Institute Hall, as I have lectured on John's Gospel, and on no face has there been a more glorious light; and when one came to speak of God, and the love of God, and the ways of God, his face shone with the brightness of an angel. When did all that begin? Forty years ago, when he knew his sins forgiven. Up to that moment he had feared God and hated God's people, and kept away from them; but with the forgiveness of sins came a vision of God and he came to love Him. Have you had that vision of God? It was that vision which made Scheffler write:

O God, of good the unfathomed sea,

Who would not give his heart to Thee?

That is where the religious life begins. The forgiveness of sins always means a new vision of God. You have thought of God as a King, a Potentate, mighty, awful, terrible, exacting; but He says in your deepest soul, when you have put your trust in Him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and you find He is tender, gracious, loving. Out of that knowledge comes the religious life.

Pardon not only means a new vision, it also means as a result of it, love. To see God is to love Him. Then it means desire to obey Him, for to love God is to desire to please Him. Mark the order and see how everything comes out of that first fact of forgiveness. Man knows his sins. The forgiving word is spoken in the innermost recesses of his soul as he submits himself to Christ. He sees that God is love and he loves. Then he desires to serve and obey. That is the passion of the religious life.

The answer of God is not merely pardon. It is power immediate and progressive. The moment in which a man yields himself to Jesus Christ and receives pardon of sin power is at his disposal. It does not work mechanically, however; it must be appropriated. Whereas there is all power at my disposal, it is only at my disposal as I make adjustment. God puts power at the disposal of the soul that trusts in Him, but we have to make contact, to obey, to put ourselves in line with His condition.

That leads me to the last word I want to say. What are the conditions on which the religious life is possible, in view of the pardon God gives, and in view of the power He provides? First, an act of abandonment to Jesus Christ. Then an attitude of abiding in Christ. There must be a moment in which I take my life and hand it over to Christ, God's Son and my Saviour, sent forth from the Father for the doing of this work. After that I must abide in that attitude of abandonment. I am not saved today because I believed twenty years ago. I am saved now because I believe now. There must be not merely the act by which the life begins, but the abiding by which the life continues.

The religious life today in the midst of present limitation is the life which has found its true center, and which is adjusting the circumference to that center. There is a great deal to be done, a great deal to be learned, many disciplines to be passed through, a great deal to be accomplished ere the work is done. There are tenses in the Christian life. It is perfectly accurate to say we were saved then, pointing to a date, an hour, a place. It is perfectly accurate to say, We are being

saved, the continuous process. It is quite accurate to say "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The final stage is yet ahead.

In the presence of limitation, the life religious is the life which has found its center in God, and which through struggles, through strain and conflict and stress, is adjusting the circumference to that one center.

The psalmist said, "My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." I sometimes think, in some senses, that is the most wonderful verse in the Bible. "Followeth hard" is one word in the Hebrew. It quite literally means, impinges upon Thee, clings, adheres, abides fast, clings! It is the strongest of words, indicating tremendous effort. Now listen, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." The Hebrew word "upholdeth" means sustains, holds fast. I can take these two Hebrew words and translate with perfect accuracy, "My soul clings fast to Thee: Thy right hand clings fast to me." No violence is thereby done to the text. That is the real thought. That is the religious life. The soul clingeth fast—conscious of perils, the world, the flesh and the devil, all the forces that are against it—clinging fast to God; and all the while this great assurance, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." Remember the religious life is life centered in God, and occupied earnestly, definitely, about the business of putting the circumference into true harmony with the center. That is not done in half an hour. It will never be complete until in the rapture of the morning of the second advent He will fashion anew even the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory. I cannot yet be perfect at the circumference, but I can be right at the center.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: Is The Religious Life Necessary?

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I confess to a great sense of difficulty in approaching this subject, resulting from the obviousness of the reply from my standpoint. To me the question is as though one should inquire into the physical realm, Is it necessary to breathe, to eat, to act? Nevertheless, the question is asked, and if we are to deal with it we need to get at the viewpoint of the man who asks it. We must understand his attitude of mind. The question moves on a much lower plane than the one we discussed last week. In that there was recognition of the beauty of the ideal, and the only question was one of fear whether it were indeed possible to live that life. In the inquiry that we are taking tonight the ultimate perfection of the religious life is not so much in sight as the conditions upon which that ultimate perfection can be realized. I think if a man says, Well, after all, is it necessary? he is not referring to that highest ideal of the religious life, that ultimate requirement of God that man should be perfect in his own being. He is rather standing face to face with the conditions which are imposed when a man is asked to give himself to Christ and to begin the truly religious life.

If a man is to live the religious life he must submit to authority, the one true final authority of the will of God. He must renounce all the things which he knows to be out of harmony with the will of God. It is necessary for him to cultivate the habits of the religious life; he must give himself to prayer, to the study of the Word, to perpetual watchfulness, and to service on behalf of others, without which the religious life is never possible. There must be discipline and diligence. When a man faces these conditions he asks, Is the religious life necessary? I think what he means is, "Suppose I decline, what will happen?" As I understand it, that is the question that we have to face. Such inquiry involves the necessity for restatement of the positive values of the religious life. The positive is the revelation of the negative. In proportion as we see what these values are we shall see what is the result of living the irreligious life.

I propose to confine our consideration to the individual. Taking a human life, and believing it to be spiritual in essence, I want to think of it in its continuity, but recognize the line of division at death. So in two parts I shall ask this question. Is the religious life necessary for the life that now is? Is the religious life necessary for the life that is to come?

That is a very old-fashioned method of dealing with this thing, but I know of no other possible. I put the dividing line there simply because it is there. The fact of death must be admitted and taken into account. It is sometimes affirmed that we have no right to appeal to the fear of man by preaching about death. The fear of man? I do not appeal to the fear of man when I speak about death. Are you afraid of death? Why? No man ought to be afraid of death. Why do you not like to hear about death? I will tell you, in the words of inspiration, "The sting of death is sin." That is why you do not like to hear about death. So I keep that dividing line which is quite a simple and natural one, and

one that we all have to admit.

What are the values of religion in the life that now is? First of all, let me speak of the principle of the life of religion, then of its method, and so lead to the results of the religious life.

First, then, as to the principle. What is the principle of the religious life? The mastery of the will of God. There are very many things I am not proposing to deal with which nevertheless must be taken for granted, all those necessary matters which cannot be neglected if men would come into proper relationship to that will, "Ye must be born again," "Repent and believe." All these are simple terms that indicate how man is to readjust life, when it is out of harmony with God. The ultimate principle is that of the recognition of the sovereignty of God, and the beneficence of His will, followed by the abandonment of all other mastery, and the acceptance of that will as the perpetual, unceasing, and ever applicable law of the life.

The method of the religious life is that of obedience to that will discovered and accepted. What does obedience mean? Inquiry, consent, activity. Perhaps that is not quite clear. Let me pause with my words for a moment. First there must ever be inquiry. For a man to say that he accepts the will of God as the master principle of his life, and then having said so in the sanctuary or in conversation, to go out and take up his business, or to make a friendship, or to decide on where to spend his holiday, or to select a house, without ever seeking to know the will of God, is the utterest nonsense, and indeed is blasphemy. There must be inquiry. The religious life in its method asks what is God's will for me here and now, today and in this matter? I said here recently that the blasphemy of the man who prays, "Thy Kingdom come," and never seeks the Kingdom, never submits to it, is more perilous than the blasphemy of the profane swearer in the slum. Someone has written questioning that. I stand by the declaration. The man in the slum was born in the atmosphere of swearing, has always sworn, does not know he is swearing. I have heard some such men in the early days of their Christianity swear in prayer, but there was no blasphemy in it. For any man to say, "Thy Kingdom come," or to recite the creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," and then to refuse to submit his life to Him, for six days in the week, is blasphemy of the worst kind. The religious life inquires, waits for the voice, seeks to know. When the light comes the will consents to it and inspires actual obedience. Until the consciousness is borne in upon the soul, that this or that is the will of God, the religious man never moves hand or foot.

What are the results of such principle and method? What are the issues of making the will of God the master principle, of following the method, of making inquiry after the will, consenting to it, and rendering it active obedience? In such life there is, first of all, realization of fellowship with God. The man, woman, yea, or little child, who, not able to state the thing, not able to formulate perfectly the principle of life, nevertheless is submitted to God—that man, woman, little child, knows what fellowship with God means. The day is not gone when God speaks in the deepest soul of man, woman, or child if they will but listen. The consciousness of fellowship is the first result.

That fellowship means the appropriation of all forces. I believe that word of Paul in his Roman letter, "To them that love God all things work together for good," means not merely that God is laying His hand on all things and taking the keen edge off them and blunting that which would hurt, and making everything come right at last. The statement is not that all things will be compelled, but that all things work together for good. All forces are at the disposal of the man who is living in harmony with God. All the forces of life are at the disposal of the man who is living in harmony with

God, so that the very things which harm one man help to make the man whose life is homed and centered in God. This means in its final statement, that the religious life is life more abundant. Life more abundant means not that there is superadded to your human life a life of another nature, but that your own human life comes to its fulfilment and realization. When a man is living the religious life whatever is in him by nature is glorified, fulfilled. He comes into possession of what he is. There is no more significant word, and yet no word that we more lightly consider, than this word of Jesus, "Whosoever shall lose his life shall find it," not another life, not an angel's life, not the life of some other person, but his own life. It is when a man is living the life of right relationship to God, and, consequently, is living the life in which all the forces under the government of God minister to his making, that he comes to fulfilment of his own life. What is in you? Someone went into the studio of David Cox—or one of the artists, I have heard the story told of several—and, looking at one of his pictures, said to him, I never saw anything like that in nature. The artist answered, No, you only wish you could. Have you that vision, the artist's vision? Can you stand by the sea, and, looking out over the waters, see glories which I cannot see? Is your life homed in God, responsive to His volition? Then that vision is not dimmed. You will see, as you never saw, that the light of God in your inmost soul illumines all your outlook on nature. What is in you—music? I love to hear music, but I am no musician. I always come to decision as to whether a piece of music is classical or not by the blackness of the page! That is not your outlook on music. You hear symphonies. If you are right with God you will be more keen in your appreciation of music than you ever were in your life. I am not talking in figurative language. I am talking about actual music. The touch of a godly man on a harp will bring out finer music than any other touch. A human life is lifted, ennobled, glorified, brought to its own when it is life lived in relation to God.

Reminding you that the positive reveals the negative, take the life irreligious, the life that has no vision of God, that never waits for His voice, has no sense of the eternal, no commerce with the spiritual, no traffic with the unseen, the life which Peter describes when he says, "seeing only the things that are near." Was there ever more graphic description of the irreligious life than that? "Seeing only the things that are near." What is the principle of that life? Self is enthroned! The exclusion of God, which means the exclusion of perfect knowledge and the exclusion of all-sufficient power. What is the method of that life? Self-served. That is obedience to unintelligent desire, strife after experience without ability to realize. What is that? Friction, fret, fever. What is the result? Self lost. Hunger without bread. Thirst without water. Desire without ability. The illustrations of what I am trying to say in brief words are to be found everywhere. They are to be found in the East End of London. They are to be found in the West End. The East and the West are still far apart, but they are tremendously near together. The East and the West talk two languages, but out of one humanity. Give me a man of the East End who is living a godless life—he lives for himself. He was born in the very atmosphere of blasphemy. He is away down in the depths. When we begin to deal with statistics and political economy we speak of the submerged tenth and of the upper ten. Both are submerged so far as their humanity is concerned. Take the man in the East end, hot restless life, unable to find quietness, satisfaction, peace. Bruised, bitter, rebellious, angry! The word that you use to describe that man's condition is despair. I cross over from the East to the West, and here I find culture. Mark me very carefully, I am not undervaluing culture and education. Let no man charge me with such unutterable folly. I find culture and refinement. I find something in the West that it has taken centuries to produce. There I hear another word. It is not an English word this time but a French word, as though by the

use of a French word you could heal a wound. I hear the word ennui. Do you imagine when you hear someone say ennui that it is a small thing. It is hell! Culture, refinement, things that are quite beautiful, admirable in most ways, but in the heart, no rest, no peace. I know the things whereof I speak. I know them better tonight than I did four years ago. I have had to listen to story after story, and to share agony after agony, and to come into definite touch with this thing. The godless life is anchorless, rudderless—no peace, no quiet—fever, friction. All the finest things absent in spite of the culture and refinement that the schools can give and the process of the centuries can give. The light of the infinite morning is never on the brow. The breath of the eternal hills never brings recreation. No grasp of God and therefore no grasp of life. I submit to you that if you simply take the life that now is, godless life has lost its own key and secret, and does not possess the power to realize itself. The godly life is the life that holds the key to all the treasure house and admits into the richest and best, even of the present life.

I bring you now to the dividing line, and speak of the life to come. Take the positive again. Let us see what the religious life is. How does the life to come begin? It begins with death. What is death? Transition. The laying aside of a tent. The entry on the consciousness of vaster environment. That is death. The tent is laid down and the occupant passes on. Of course, I am taking for granted the authority of this Book and the whole testimony of the Catholic Church [church universal]. I am not going to argue these things. I simply state them. The great Lord and Master of us all uttered words once full of light on this subject. I have often quoted them in other connections; let us see them in this connection. He said, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." What is the concept of life that lies behind that? Do you see what the thought of Jesus about human life is? Let us express His thought in His own words, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." Or again, "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?"—What is this conception of life? That the individual is spiritual in essence. That is the Christian conception of individuality. What, then, is death? Simply the moment when a person passes on to another plane, on to another level. You remember the exquisite, marvelous line in the course of the slave's dream in which the author describes the passing out of the slave into liberty through death, and speaks of the body of the slave as a worn-out fetter which the soul had broken and cast away. That is the Christian conception of death. I want to take again a side issue for a minute. I do not want anyone to imagine I am callous in the presence of death. I am not. I know its bitterness to those who are left. I hate the idea that no tears are to be shed in the presence of it, that we are to steel our hearts against emotion. I am looking at death from the standpoint, not of those who are left, but of those who go. This is death. The earthly tabernacle, the tent, dissolved; then a building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The earthly tabernacle dissolved. I remember Moody saying to a group of friends, "Some day you will see in the newspaper that Moody is dead. Don't you believe it. The day you read that in the newspaper, Moody will be more alive than ever he has been." That is the Christian outlook, triumph over death.

What is the relation of that life to this life? When you begin to see that death is simply the laying aside of a tent and the going on of the same person, what is the relation between the life that now is and that which is to come? It is necessarily most intimate. There is continuity. The set of the life is the same five minutes after as five minutes before death. The direction, the conception, the character, the trend is not changed in the hour of death. A great many things are changed.

Environment is changed. It is a new plane, a new level, a new world, but the direction is the same. I think there are some people who imagine that when they cross over in their essential life they are absolutely changed by the passing. Not so. There is no warrant for such teaching in the New Testament. You are exactly the same. There will be a great deal to learn on the other side for most of us, and I think we shall not know it all immediately, but the direction will be the same. What is to be the principle of that life? Exactly the same as the principle of life here, the mastery of the will of God. What is to be its method? Exactly the same as that of the life here, obedience to the will of God. What is to be the result? The result of the life here I said was life more abundant. The result of the life there is life most abundant. Christian people for a long time have been praying for dying grace. Such prayer is a waste of time. What we need is living grace. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." The statement "he was not," does not merely refer to the method by which he was taken, but to the method of all his life for three hundred years before he went. He was not, God took him into fellowship. He went with Him along the way of earth through those centuries and then Enoch was not, the earth had lost him but God had gained him into fellowship a little closer, but in the same direction. Death is not going to do anything for me that Christ has not done, or cannot do, save bring me to a larger outlook, and leave me more free for development along the very lines on which I have been progressing, if I am a child of God, from the moment I received the Christ life.

If these are the positive aspects, mark well the negative. What is the beginning of the life to come for the man who is irreligious? Death. What is death for that man? Exactly what it is for the other, transition, the laying aside of a tent, the entry upon a vaster environment. What, then, is the difference? Let me answer that question, by asking another. Is there still a point of identity? Yes, there is. As in the life of the saint the word that marks the relation of this life to the life that is to come is continuity, so also is it in the life of the godless man. The set of the life here is the set of the life hereafter. The direction of the life here is the direction of the life hereafter. When a man lays aside the tent he enters upon a larger, more mysterious, wonderful existence. What is he there? What he is here. You ask me about a second probation. The word of God has nothing to say about a second probation, and I have nothing to say about it. I do know of the present probation, and I know that the probation of today is to every man in the world, and I know that the basis of the present probation is the light a man has, and not the light he lacks. As a man passes out of this life into the next the matter of supreme importance is not what he believes about Jesus, for there are thousands who have never heard His name. What is the matter of supreme importance? The set of the life, the direction of the life. The matter of supreme importance to me as I pass out of this world is not the actual influence of the moment, but the direction, the master passion of the life, the thing that drives and impels and inspires, for that is the central thing after all. "As he reckoneth within himself so is he." What is your thinking? That is the deepest of you! Is it passionate desire to do the will of God? That is the set of your life and death does not change it. Is the deepest thing in your life desire to please yourself? That is the set of your life and death does not change it. You go out into the vaster environment in which vaster environment you discover more terribly and awfully your inability to satisfy the deepest cry of your own life. Hunger without bread. Thirst without water. Desire without answer.

I pray you consider his question. If life is one and indivisible; if I have now began the life that runs on, and if continuity is the word that tells the story of that which is to come in its relation to that

which now is, then I ask you to carefully consider the question: "Is the religious life necessary?" You must decide whether or not you are prepared for the continuity of the life you are now living. Strip yourself of the habit of saying your life is this, or that, or the other. These are the methods by which you are attempting to satisfy the deepest thing in your soul. Do not measure your life by the method but by the purpose in your deepest heart. That is a difficult thing to get men to do. Take that round of pleasure, of strenuous work amassing wealth, and has a moment come in your life when you have said, "My soul, in this pleasure, in this wealth, thou hast found thy resting place"? Have you really found it? It is not the fact that for the moment pleasure is pleasure, that wealth is a delightful possession and gives you power that matters. The inquiry is, "Have I in my inner heart and life found rest in these things?" For, remember, the life that is to come is a continuity of the life that is, only all the present things, the transient things, will have passed away and the soul will go out in its nakedness, in its loneliness, and if it have not found satisfaction it will lack it forever. In the life religious the soul goes out in its loneliness, but if it have satisfaction in fellowship with God, it is satisfied forever.

The religious life is the life of obedience to light. The discussion of the problem of the heathen in Africa or in London is irrelevant, I am not dealing with it. What is your light? Put yourself into contrast, some of you, with the people in the West end. Some of them have had no more chance of vital godly life than the worst man in the East end slum. Put yourself into contrast, and remember this, you are not going to be judged by their standards nor they by yours, but each by the standard of the light possessed. Your light is not a rushlight that you yourselves light in a room which you have darkened by pulling down all the blinds. The light by which you will be judged is the light of the Christian revelation, as you have been brought up in its very presence and atmosphere. The religious life is the life that obeys the light. God as revealed in Christ. Man as revealed in Christ. That is the light. The religious life is obedient to it. Are you obedient to that light? Here is the almost overwhelming difficulty of the hour. These lectures have provoked letters, the majority of them kindly, courteous, but terrible in their revelation of the fact of how men will fritter away their time and strength and intellect on the fringes of things, and refuse to come to the central purpose. As to whether verse thirty-nine in chapter thirteen, is in harmony with verse forty-one in chapter twenty-two, a man is going to risk his eternal welfare on that. Suppose they do contradict themselves utterly, take out of your Bible that one imperial lonely splendor of Christ and walk in the light. That is the religious life. Is it necessary? Again I say, I leave you to decide. For me it is necessary, in order that I may live the life that now is at its highest, best. Necessary, entirely, absolutely necessary in order that when the fetter is broken and thrown away I may find home, and refuge, and rest, and fulfilment of my being. For I lack rest forevermore, if I have deliberately chosen in this life to disobey the light.

The Problems Of The Religious Life: Is The Religious Life Worth While?

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In this question the emphasis is changed once more. In the first question, whether the religious life is possible, the beauty of the ideal is not for a moment questioned, but the possibility of realization is doubted. We attempted to answer that inquiry by declaring the religious life possible because of the nature of man, because of the nature of God, and, finally, because of the plenteous redemption that God has provided, even for the man who has failed.

The second question moves on a lower plane than the first. The man who asks it does not question the beauty of the ideal, neither does he doubt the possibility of realization; but in view of the conditions he inquires, Is it absolutely necessary? We attempted to answer that inquiry by declaring that the religious life is necessary for the life which now is, and for the life which is to come, in order that life may be fulfilled. The life that now is is less than life, unless it be the life religious; and the life that is to come and this life are one, death makes no change in a man's character. He passes over the boundary line and the set and direction are the same on the other side as on this side. Consequently, to admit the necessity for the religious life here in order that life may be fulfilled, is to be compelled to admit its necessity for the life to come.

The man who asks the third question admits the beauty of the ideal, admits the possibility of realization, admits the necessity for the religious life, if life is to be fulfilled; but, in view of the cost, suggests that perhaps after all it is hardly worth while, and inquires, Why not be content with something less than the best? Is it worth while?

I said, I think in the first of these last three addresses, that there is a descending scale in these questions. The man who asks, Is it possible? is asking a question on a higher level than the man who asks, Is it necessary? And the man who asks, Is it necessary? is on a higher level than the man who asks, Is it worth while? I have known cases in which these three questions have been asked and always in this sequence. In fear and trembling, a man confronted with the beauty of the ideal of the religious life asks, Is it possible? He is brought to conviction that it is possible, and then he asks the second question, Is it necessary? He is brought to conviction that in order to reach perfection of life it is necessary, and then he asks this lowest question of all, Is it worth while?

The first question is a question of desire mingled with doubt. Is it possible? The moment there comes to a man the conviction that it is possible a new peril is created, that of attempting, somehow, to find an excuse for not yielding to the truth. Then follows the next question, which is a mixture of conviction and compromise. When this is answered and a man knows that it is necessary to the perfecting of life, again a new peril presents itself, and the third question is a mixture of rebellion and risk. It is with that question we now have to deal.

In order to answer that question there are two things we must consider. First, the cost of the religious life; and, second, the value of the religious life.

The man who says, Is it worth while? is thinking of the cost, and of the values, and he is trying to strike a balance. Is it worth while? Let us see clearly, if we can, both the cost and the value.

I begin with the cost, and I want to say in your hearing as clearly as I know how that the religious life is costly. Whatever others may say, Jesus was perfectly clear in His teaching about this fact, and I do most solemnly say, especially to young men and women, be very suspicious of the preacher or teacher who tells you that the religious life is simple and easy. I dare any man to make that affirmation on the basis of what Christ taught. There is nothing more remarkable in the ministry of Jesus Christ than the fact that He forevermore repelled men by the severity of His terms. Oh, there was a wooing winsomeness about our blessed Master, and men crowded after Him wherever He went; it was only to look at Him to want to go with Him, only to listen to Him to be captured, and men said and said truly, "Never man so spake." But as the multitudes thronged and pressed Him, He turned upon them and uttered things so severe as to scatter them like chaff before the wind. All the way, from the beginning to the end of His ministry, Jesus Christ insisted on the fact that the religious life is costly. I make my appeal tonight wholly to His own words.

Let us see what Christ thinks about the cost of the religious life. In chapter fourteen of Luke's gospel, it is recorded that thrice over He said, "cannot be My disciple." Hear the connecting words: "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple." "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." If we had never read those words before, and had not been so busy trying to lower the standard of Jesus in order to accommodate it to our own ideas, they would startle us so that we hardly dare sleep tonight. Look at them: except a man hate all the nearest and dearest, he cannot be My disciple. Except a man take up his own cross, he cannot be My disciple. Except a man renounce all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple. I pray you notice carefully what is involved in this threefold word of Jesus on the cost of the religious life. The first word indicates that if a man is to live the religious life he must submit himself to the absolute mastership of Jesus. "If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sister, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." By all of which He meant that if a man is to follow Him he must put Him absolutely first, so that if the love of father or mother or wife or children, of brethren or sisters, or of his own life, shall at any moment or in any circumstances, for any reason, conflict with loyalty to Him, that love must be crucified. That is the supreme and most appalling claim ever set up on the soul of a human being. That is where Christ begins. I know the difficulty of the word "hate" in this passage, but we must remember that in this Eastern language there was little light and shade. It was positive or negative. Love and hate stood opposite to each other. What Christ demanded that men should do for Him, He did for men. On another occasion He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." One day they came to Him and said, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to Thee," and He replied, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?... Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." By which He meant to say, there is an affinity far higher than that of blood relationship, that of the spiritual relationship of those who do the will of God.

That is the principle underlying this word of Jesus. A man must make his relationship to Christ as revealing God, and so his relationship to God, his attitude toward religion, the supreme thing in his life. If he allows the love of father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister, or of his own life, to conflict with his loyalty to Christ and to God, then he cannot be a disciple. There are many of us here who do not know how costly a thing that may become. I confess there is a sense in which I do not know the costliness of that requirement. I was born of Christian parents and my love for them never conflicted with my loyalty to my Lord; but no farther back than last Saturday night I talked with one person after our meeting who was face to face with that old word, actually, positively, at the present moment. Love of father and love of Christ were in conflict. I need go no further with the story. There it is. Christ says, If it causes a conflict like that, you cannot be My disciple unless you put Me first. That is the cost.

He said a second thing, "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple." Some time ago I attempted to deal with that word of Jesus and His illustration of it in Luke. I want in a hurried manner now to repeat what I said then. What did Christ mean when He spoke about building a tower and going out to fight a battle? The popular interpretation has been that Jesus meant to say if a man is coming after Him he had better count the cost. He meant nothing of the kind. What He meant was this. You are not to count the cost. It is I Who must count the cost After the stern words to which I have made reference in which He demanded that a man should love Him before father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sister, and his own life, He began to explain the severity of His own terms. "Which of you desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost?... Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king, doth not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?... Therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." He said, in effect, You ask Me why My terms are so severe. I will tell you. I am come into the world for building and for battle, and I cannot commit My enterprises to any save those I know I can depend upon. It is He that builds the tower, not I. He is the King conducting the warfare, not I. Because He is here to build, and here for battle, His terms are severe. I must, He says, have men and women coming after Me who will take up their own crosses and follow Me as I take up My cross: men and women who will not faint or grow weary when the battle thickens, or until the building work is done.

First, the devotion of the disciple must be so supreme that all other loves are put into abeyance. Second, the one ambition of the disciple must be for the enterprises of Jesus, for His building and His battle. He must take up his own cross, that is to say, there must be crucifixion of any thought in the life of the disciple of place or power. So long as I am seeking place for myself or power for myself, I cannot be His disciple and I cannot help Him in His building and battle. In order to be a Christian man, in order to be a disciple of Christ, in order to live the religious life, there first must be devotion, absolute loyalty; and, second, there must be such abnegation of self that there shall be no seeking for place or power, but, the enterprises of Christ possessing the soul, willingness to take up the cross daily and follow Him.

Once more, "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." First, devotion, then ambition, now possession. If a man is to live the religious life he must lay all his treasure at the feet of his Lord, and recognize not only that what he is he is for Christ, and what he does he does for Christ, and that what he has he holds for Christ.

Renunciation of what a man has does not mean flinging it away, but placing it at the feet of the Lord and recognizing that the man of vast possessions is a steward for the Master. I am weary to death of people who are telling us that we ought to give a tenth of our income to God. I believe the whole movement is wrong. Not one single farthing of yours belongs to you if you are a Christian. All that a man has is to be renounced. You are to spend this in dress dress for the glory of God, and that in food for the glory of your Lord, and that in recreation for the glory of your King; but over the superscription of King Edward there is the superscription of the Cross of Christ and the Kingdom of God. All that he has is to be renounced, so that the disciple no longer says that anything he has is his own, it belongs to his Lord and to his Lord's enterprises and to his Lord's work. We are a long way off from it yet, but these are the terms of discipleship according to Christ. I repeat, it is costly. If you want to know why there has been decrease—and I feel more able to speak about it this week because the Congregational statistics have been published and there is decrease there also. I hate these statistics. The hunt for increase is part of the reason of the decrease at the present hour. Be that as it may, if you tell me there is decrease not merely in numbers but in spiritual intensity and fervor, I ask why? It is because we have lowered the standard of discipleship and talked to men as though it were easy. We have to get back to the ideal of Christ which presents the religious life as strenuous, severe, costly. When we get back there we shall increase. I admit the cost, and if you stand outside and say, Is it worth while? your question is justified so far. It is a costly business to be a Christian. You can call yourself a Christian and sing hymns and give to collections and drift through the world and never do anything for God or humanity. But if we are going to be Christians indeed, Christ men and women, religious men and women in the profound meaning of the great word, there is blood in the business, there is cost in the business. Go back for one brief moment to the ninth chapter of this Gospel of Luke and see the illustration. One man said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." To another man Jesus said, "Follow Me." The third said, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." That passage is remarkable if you keep it in its setting. "It came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Nothing more significant than that was ever written. Jerusalem was hostile to Him and He knew it, but He stedfastly set His face to go. Jerusalem was doomed and He knew it; but He stedfastly set His face to go. Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, not immediately; but after long processes and centuries and millenniums there should be a Jerusalem from on high, and He stedfastly set His face to go. On His way, with His face stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem, a man came to Him and said, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Jesus answered, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head," which was an explanation to the man not merely of what the man would have to do but of what Jesus was doing. He said to another man, "Follow me," and the man said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." I never understood that until I was talking to Dr. George Adam Smith about it, and he told me this story. He was traveling in Syria, and desiring to get into a part of the country where no ordinary guide ever takes the traveler, he went to a young Arab sheikh—whose father was still living—and told him that he wished to go to this out-of-the-way part, and wanted him to accompany him as guide. The Arab sheikh said it was impossible for him to do so. Dr. Smith pressed him, and, at last, with a salaam, the sheikh said, Suffer me first to go and bury my father, which did not mean that his father was dead, for his father was sitting by him as he spoke. It is the Eastern method of saying, I have family ties and affections that I cannot break

away from. Christ said, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the Kingdom of God." His face was toward Jerusalem, and that was the attitude of His soul, passion for the Kingdom of God overcoming all lower instincts.

Once again, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Put that into close contrast with "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God." There is illustration of the religious life. Jesus of Nazareth was religious. He had not where to lay His head. He had no possessions, nothing which could prevent His progress toward the ultimate goal. His passion for the Kingdom of God overcame all lower instincts, and He never gave a backward look, but plowed His furrow straight to the ultimate victory. Now, remember that if He said these things when His own face was set toward Jerusalem, He said them to men on the subject of their following Him, and they are illustrations of the great principles revealed in the fourteenth chapter. That is the cost of the religious life. Is it worth while? That is the question.

What is the value, if that is the cost? The cost is the denial of self, therefore the value can never be stated as what I gain, but what others gain. I wonder if you take me at that point. Is it worth while? How am I going to answer it? By telling you what you will gain by being religious? No. You will gain. Jesus put the personal equation into these tremendous words, only He put it the other way, "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" If you want the personal equation there it is. You ask, Is the religious life worth while? Christ asks, Is the irreligious life worth while? I am not going to deal with that equation. I want to show you the value, not in the gain that comes to you personally, but in the gain to others. The gain to Christ if you will be a religious man, the gain to the world if you will be a religious man.

The gain to Christ. I take three words because they are all His words, and I am going to put them in the singular as though I were talking to one man only. If you will give yourself to Christ and begin the religious life, Christ will gain a friend. Christ will gain a witness. Christ will gain a servant. Christ will gain a friend. What does that mean? Identity of interest. Unity of purpose. Harmony of method. If you will give yourself to Christ, Christ will have a friend where you live, where you work. He will have a man in that store whose interests are His interests, whose purposes are His purposes, whose methods are His methods. Christ will gain a witness, that is, one who is a sample. How is London going to find out what Christ can do? Not by preaching, unless the preaching makes samples. A witness is not necessarily one who talks, but one who reveals. Christ will gain a witness, a man of whom other men will say, That is what Christ means. Christ will gain a servant, that is, someone whose one business will be the preparation of His Kingdom, someone through whom there will be the operation of His power. Christ's gain, if I may but lay that upon you tonight, is it worth while? Yes, for the sake of Christ and God it is worth while that you should be good, and religious, a Christian. I am coming more and more to think that is the final reason and the final impulse. The man who led my father to Christ still lives, Richard Roberts, in the Wesleyan ministry. I have at home a little book written years ago by Richard Wrench, being a pen-and-ink sketch of Richard Roberts. He says of Richard Roberts that his highest ambition was to place another gem in the Redeemer's diadem, to weave another garland wherewith to deck His brow. I believe that. I believe that is the highest ambition of all. Never mind whether you gain anything or not, Christ will gain immeasurably if you are a Christian.

If so, it follows that there will be gain to the world. What will be the gain to the world? Let me state three things. First, the maintenance of a testimony to the reality of the spiritual and eternal. To live the religious life really, truthfully, the life that has commerce with God, the life that counts with God and on God, daring even in this unbelieving age to season the speech with salt and to say, "If the Lord will," I will do this or that, is to live so that the world gains one man at least who lives as though there were a God and as though there were eternity. It is a great gain in this age. There is so much life that seems to shut Him out. But the world will gain more than that if you are religious. It will gain this, that in you there will be perpetual antagonism to all the things that are contrary to the will of God and which therefore destroy man. You will become a fighting man. Some of you are quite astonished at that. It is quite true, only you will fight the right thing. You cannot be a Christian man and be wholly a man of peace. Dr. Dale was once asked if he believed in peace at any price, and he said, Yes, even at the price of war. I am not discussing the Peace Congress. That is not in my mind. I think that all war as between man and man with weapons that are carnal, and where there is bloodshed, is begotten in hell. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but we have a real warfare. If you become a religious man, a Christian man, you are going to fight everything that spoils your brother, because the thing that spoils your brother wounds the heart of your Father. The world will gain another man fighting the wrong for the establishment of the right. The world will gain in you if you are a religious man, one full of sympathy for all who are scattered, distressed, wounded, and one who out of that sympathy will work in order to uplift and to bless. Is this worth while?

When Moses wanted Hobab to accompany him, he said to him, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." What was the result? Hobab did not go. He was one of those independent men who said, No, thank you, I do not care for you to do me good. I will go my own way. Then Moses said, Come with us "and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes," and he went. "Come with us, and we will do thee good." No. Perhaps he ought to have gone. It is quite true that Moses could do him good and the company of the people of God could do him good. There are thousands of men today to whom that invitation does not appeal. I have resolutely tonight not said to you that it will do you good to be religious, but you can be eyes to somebody else if you are. You can do somebody else good if you are religious. If you are not careful you ought to be careful about the perfecting of your own life, but if not, then for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the world you ought to be good, you ought to be religious. It is only by submission to this one Lord Christ that I can ever hope to be able to help to bring in the Kingdom of love and truth and purity, and to bring in that Kingdom it is worth while.

My appeal to you, then, in answer to this question is on the highest ground. I affirm the costliness of being a Christian, but I declare the value issuing far outweighs the cost. If only you and I will give ourselves to this same Lord Christ—I say nothing tonight of the effect on our own life—what I say is this, it is worth while to do anything for Him, and it is worth while to do something for the world.

One Lord there is, all lords above;

His name is Truth, His name is Love,

His name is Beauty, it is Light,

His will is Everlasting Right.
But, ah! to Wrong, what is His name?
This Lord is a consuming flame
To every wrong beneath the sun:
He is one Lord, the Holy One.
Lord of the Everlasting Name,
Truth, Beauty, Light, Consuming Flame!
Shall I not lift my heart to Thee,
And ask Thee, Lord, to rule in me?
If I be ruled in other wise,
My lot is cast with all that dies;
With things that harm, and things that hate
And roam by night, and miss the gate—
The happy gate, which leads to where
Love is like sunshine in the air,
And Love and Law are both the same,
Named with an Everlasting Name.
Because I want to help to bring in that order, it is worth while.

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Christ Jesus—Mighty To Save and To Keep

In looking back over the subjects we have considered together I am quite conscious that I have laid myself open to the charge of having approached these inquiries prejudiced in favor of Christianity. I at once admit the fact. To me religion and Christianity are synonymous terms. Do not misunderstand that. I recognize as fully as any man that there is much sincere religion in the world which does not call itself Christian, but of all other religions I would say,

They are but broken lights of Thee,

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Consequently, if I speak of religion I speak of Christianity. In this final address I want, as I am able, to give my reasons for that prejudice. Broadly stated, they are that Christ answers my first questions satisfactorily, masters my enemies completely, disposes of my difficulties perfectly. Or more briefly, as indicated in the title, He is the all-sufficient Solution. This conviction is the result of knowledge of Him, which, in turn, results from experience of salvation. My prejudice in favor of Jesus Christ is not due to any theory I hold concerning Him, it is due to what He has done, and is still doing for me.

I shall ask you to follow two lines of consideration. First, Christ the all-sufficient Solution; and, second, Christ the all-sufficient Saviour.

First, Christ as the all-sufficient Solution. The first questions of the religious life are: Has man anything to do with God? Can a just God forgive sins? What does God require of man? Has man anything to do with God? What is Christ's answer to that inquiry? The New Testament introduces me to a Man Who in actual life presents a perfect ideal. I do not think I need stay to argue that. I am inclined to think that it will be granted not merely by those who stand within the center of the Christian Church, but by all competent judges outside the Christian Church. It is a remarkable fact, and it is well that we should be reminded of it sometimes, that the most scholarly and brilliant critics of Jesus Christ have always ended by putting some wreath upon His brow. Every man who has come to the study of Christ presented by the gospels, while perhaps denying certain things which the gospels say concerning Him, does nevertheless admit the perfection on the ideal He presents. I start with that fact in answering this inquiry. I then ask what does this Man say in answer to the inquiry, Has man anything to do with God? The whole of His life and the whole of His teaching attest the fact that man must have to do with God, because God has everything to do with man. Think for one moment of the teaching of Jesus. His teaching concerning God was teaching which declared God's knowledge of man, God's love of man. God's government of man. You may gather up into one brief sentence His whole message to man about his relationship to God: "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness." First, before what? What are the things

that lie around the text in the great manifesto? Not luxuries, but the necessities of life. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Christ says of them all—recognizing the necessity for them by a word full of tenderness and beauty, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"—that they are not first. "Seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness." That is the word of a Man, admitted by foes and friends alike, to be the most perfect man ever presented to the vision of humanity. When I look at Him, I say Thou art the Man of all men I would rather be like. If Thy Manhood is the explanation of my humanity then I long to realize my own life. If it may ever be like that life in which there was the combination of strength and sweetness, that life in which there was mingled the thunder of fierce denunciation and the tears of infinite pity, then I want to be like that. When I would learn the secret of that life, He says, "Seek ye first His Kingdom." "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him... the things which I heard from Him these I speak.... I do nothing of Myself." "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." The master passion of His life was the will of God. The whole of His life was a life that had commerce with heaven, traffic with God. When I look at the ideal humanity of Jesus and ask its secret I discover that its secret is His profound, intense, personal conviction that He had to do with God, and that His whole life was a life or relationship to Him. His first recorded words are these, "I must be about My Father's business." His last recorded words are these, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." That answers my first inquiry. I have to do with God. I must find God and obey God.

I take the second of these inquiries. Can a just God forgive sins? How does Christ answer that question? I know that here we touch the realm of mystery because our finite mind cannot appreciate perfectly the infinite mind and the infinite power. Let me state the case thus. First He exercised the prerogative, He claimed to be able to forgive sins. He distinctly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." But He revealed the method also. By the mystery of His Cross He unveiled God's attitude toward sin, and God's activity in the presence of sin. In the hour of the Cross He did not try to persuade God to change His mind; but working together with God He unveiled before the astonished gaze of man that passion of God whereby He is able, Himself bearing human iniquity, to forgive it, to cancel it, to set the prisoner free. You say that is all theory? Follow me yet further. He told men they were forgiven. He has been telling men they are forgiven ever since, and men have entered into the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. They have professed to know sin forgiven. You say that is only human profession, and I reply that men have exemplified the truth of their profession in the new lives which they have lived. I hold that the last and ultimate proof of the absolute Deity of the Man of Nazareth is the consciousness in the soul that sin is forgiven by what He is and what He did. The demonstration that sins are forgiven is to be found in the fact that a man whose sins are forgiven mourns the sins forgiven to the end of his life and fights against them, and rises on the basis of that deep and inner consciousness to life that is pure and strong and holy. That is the supreme miracle of Christianity. When you are next theorizing about the atonement, and the forgiveness of sins, spend an hour in the slums, in a Salvation Army barracks, and look into the faces of some of the men; find out what they say, what they are, and hear from their lips the repetition of the apostolic word, "We are His witnesses." In the Cross He drew the veil a little way aside, and I see God in Christ, suffering, and so setting me free from sin. I cannot believe in the possibility of the forgiveness of sins by a just God until I come face to face with the Christ. Then, whatever the theory may be, I know, and so my second inquiry is answered.

Take the third of these inquiries. What does God require of man? The answer is Jesus Himself as the Revelation of God's actual requirement. He requires of every man that he shall be like Christ. Christ is the pattern. I pause there because it is a most alarming thing to say, or it ought to be. Before Mr. Gladstone died he said one of the greatest weaknesses of the age was the weakened sense of sin. I believe that with all my heart. I am sometimes told today that men are not convinced of sin as they were in the days when our fathers preached. How are you to account for it? That is an inquiry that would take me more time to deal with than I have, but let me say this briefly. We are not preaching the perfections of Jesus as we ought. If we were, and men measured themselves by Him, there would be a profound and awful conviction of sin. Whenever I come into the presence of Christ I tremble. When I put what I am by the side of what He is, and then, when I discover that He is the Revelation of what was in the heart of God when He said, "Let Us make man in Our image," I know my sin. So, when I ask, What does God require of man? that is Christ's first answer. If that were all, I should be of all men the most miserable and the most helpless. The Man upon Whom I look is infinitely more than the perfect ideal. He is also the One Who comes down to me in my ruined condition and communicates to me a new life. Christ is not merely pattern, He is power. He is not merely a vision, He is virtue in the old root sense of the word.

Strength into strengthless souls He speaks,

And life into the dead.

When I ask what God requires of man He first shows me the pattern, and then teaches me that God requires of the man who cannot attain unto it that he shall submit himself to Christ, Who will perfect that which concerneth him, and at last in spite of all the paralysis make him what God wants him to be. What does God require of man? To be like Christ. What, then, does God require of me? That I shall give myself to Christ and trust Him. If I do, what then? Presently He will present me faultless before the presence of His glory. I am not afraid any longer to know what God requires of me, for I hide me in that rock, I follow that King, and through processes it may be, of discipline, pain and suffering, He will make me all that God wants me to be.

Then I turn to the opposing forces, the world, the flesh and the devil. I prefer now to take them in another order, because, as I have said in dealing with them separately, it is the devil we have to deal with finally. The world and the flesh are all right if only we can get hold of the devil and deal with him. The world is God's world, fair and beautiful. The flesh in itself, essentially, primarily, according to Divine intention, is not evil. "An enemy hath done this," I say whenever I see tares in the field.

What did Jesus do with regard to Satan? He first dragged him into the light. God led Jesus into the wilderness in order to make the devil stand out in the light. He was led of the Spirit in the wilderness. He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. With what result? A Man standing quietly within His own Manhood and obeying the law of God masters the devil at every point. He puts Himself in the will of God and stands squarely there, and the devil is defeated. In His life He mastered the forces that harm and spoil humanity. Paul, in one of the most daring phrases of his writings, tells us what He did with Satan in death. Speaking of the principalities and powers, the subtle forces of spiritual antagonism that thronged around the dying Christ, Paul says, "He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." So whenever I meet the devil now I meet a vanquished foe. The woman's seed has bruised the serpent's head. In Christ humanity has won its

Armageddon as against all the spiritual hosts of wickedness. There is a good deal of administrative warfare going on, I still have to fight, but I fight under a victorious Lord against a vanquished foe.

What about the flesh? He took flesh, and sanctified it by taking it. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. The apostle is very careful to show that His flesh was not sinful, but in "the likeness of sinful flesh." The purely flesh life of Jesus was as holy as His spiritual life. The flesh was subservient to the spirit, the body was the instrument of the Spirit. The eye was the window of the spirit, and was never allowed to gaze on that which might harm it. His body was the temple of His spirit. His spirit reigned over His body, and so the very flesh-life of Jesus was pure and spotless and beautiful. And mark this well, He did not bruise His flesh. He never scourged Himself. He left His brutal enemies to that work. He did not produce holiness of spirit by bruising and battering the flesh. That idea was born in hell. His life was a perfectly natural life, so natural that His critics said He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. He loved flowers and children, went to the wedding feast, as well as to the house of mourning. His life was perfectly human, and because of the mastery of the spirit it was perfectly holy. Then through that mystery of death, which we must ever reverence and never can fathom, He set free His own life; and by regeneration He gives His life to other men, so that in the power of it they also begin to live the life of holiness, cleansing themselves from the filthiness of flesh and spirit in the power of His indwelling life.

What of the world? He entered it, and He redeemed it by entering it. He entered into its joys and its sorrows, never for one single moment so living that men could think of Him as ascetic. He entered into the world and loved its mountains, its seas, its children, its flowers, and all wonders. May I borrow a word of Paul and apply it to Him? He used the world as not abusing it. Then by the suffering of His death He introduced into broken creation healing forces that shall never cease their working until the whole creation which today groans and travails in pain shall be remade, and shall sing the song of redemption. He entered into the world and redeemed it, as He redeemed man. By redeeming man He put him back on his lost throne, over the things of the cosmos, in order that at last the desert should blossom as the rose, and the sin-scarred earth become what God meant it to be, a veritable paradise for the dwelling of man. So this great Christ masters the enemy, and by so doing restores all the physical and material to its proper place of subservience, thus making possible a fulfilment of the Divine ideal.

I turn to the last group of questions. The first, Is it possible? is answered at once by the things I have already said. If man sees the beauty of the ideal of the religious life and asks, Is it possible? Christ says, Yes, it is possible if you will admit Me and crown Me. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The religious life was quite impossible to scores of people in this building until they admitted Christ, and crowned Him and trusted Him. From the moment in which they did so they have found it possible.

Is it necessary? He answers that inquiry by His revelation of what life ought to be. He gave us some glimpses of the far-flung splendor of the ages to come, showing us the value of one human life, as He held in His own hand the balances. "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life."

Finally, Is it worth while? You will remember in dealing with that inquiry our answer was that it is worth while, not simply because of what it means to us, but for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the world. Christ inspired that heroism in the heart of every man who feels it. He is the File-leader of faithful souls, the first of the hosts; and everything heroic, everything done for the sake of those who are suffering, all toil endured for the sake of others, all this is due to the inspiration of that one supernal life by which Christ says to men, It is worth while to be right with God in order to lift other men.

Finally, Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour. Here I take one brief and all-inclusive declaration of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Let me take a minute or two with the terms of that declaration. "To save," what does this mean? The word here translated save simply means to render safe. I was very interested in looking this up to find the Greek word translated in different ways. Here are some of them. "To heal"; "preserve"; "do well"; "be whole." These translations are interesting, because all the thoughts suggested by them lie in this great word, "He is able to save to the uttermost." He is able to heal. That is the initial thing. That is the first thing I want. I cannot live the religious life because I am spiritually diseased. But He heals me. Then He is able to preserve. I would like to be a Christian, but if I start I am afraid I cannot. On this side of the Atlantic, North, South, East, and West, I have heard the same phrase, I am afraid I cannot keep it. On the other side I have heard the phrase, I cannot hold out. The answer is, He is able to preserve. Both these expressions show that men have a wrong idea of salvation. I am afraid if I am a Christian I shall not be able to keep it. Keep what? You have nothing to keep, you have to be kept. I am afraid I shall not hold out. You have not to hold out. You have to be held. There is responsibility. The responsibility is that of maintaining always the attitude of repentance and faith, the back turned on sin, and the face turned to the Christ. These conditions being fulfilled, He is able to preserve.

"To save" is a great and gracious word. Do not drop it out of your vocabulary, and do not drop it out of your experience. "He is able to save." It begins just where our need begins, with healing. It continues with the continuity of that need, with preservation. He is able to do all this. I love the word because it is a word that man needs to hear. Man cannot do the thing he supremely wants to do. He knows the beauty of holiness, but cannot live it. "He is able to save." Christ gives virtue where man lacks. He touches paralysis with power.

Take the next term, "to the uttermost." That is a great word that occurs only twice in the New Testament. It signifies the fullest measure, the furthest extent. It occurs in that wonderful story of the woman who was bent so that she could not stretch herself up. She walked doubled up, with infirmity, and could not straighten herself, to the uttermost. "He is able to save to the uttermost." You say, Spiritually I am decrepit, I cannot stand straight, or go straight. He is able to make you straight as He made that woman straight. That is the first application of it. He is able to save to the fullest extent, that is, the whole of your life, volitional, emotional, intellectual. It is one of the greatest words in the New Testament.

Tarry a moment longer with the terms, for the terms are everything in this declaration. "He is able." The Greek word from which we have derived our word "dynamic" is here. In the case of the woman who touched the hem of His garment Jesus said, "Virtue hath gone out of Me"; that is

dynamite. He is able to save. You say you cannot be saved. God help you to fix your eye upon this Saviour. It is not what you are able to do. It is what He is able to do, to heal, to preserve, to set right all that is wrong in your nature, to preserve you against all the forces that oppose you, and to present you faultless at last.

What are the conditions upon which He saves men. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him." The goal, God. The way, through Him. How, then, can I live the religious life? By turning back to God. How am I to find my way back to God? Through Him. There is mercy, there is pardon, there is power through Him. So that tonight if you are perplexed with problems, the place in which to begin the work of solving them is Christ. If a man shall give himself to Christ I do not mean that all his intellectual problems will be solved at once. By no means. Again suffer words of experience. My intellectual problems are by no means all solved. Sometimes men come to me and say, You believe that Bible from cover to cover? By all means, but I do not perfectly understand it. I do not understand the problem of evil. I do not understand how God wrought in the mystery of His own Being in order to atone. I do not understand all the Bible teaches about the ages that lie beyond, either concerning the wicked or the good. Some men do, or think they do! I am content to postpone many things. The one sure and certain thing is, that we can be good if we trust Him. I like that word "good." That is why I used it.

There was no other good enough

To pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate

Of heaven and let us in.

How does He do it?

He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good.

I do not ask you to shut your mind to your intellectual difficulties, to say that these things do not matter; but to get right at the spiritual center of your life, and then to correct the circumference therefrom.

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